

Role of Emotional Intelligence in Managing Stress and Anxiety at workplace

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of emotional intelligence is a growing topic for behavioural investigation as researchers strive to understand its influence on various social interactions. Recent research indicates that emotions play an integral part in Managing stress and Anxiety at workplace. A review of the literature highlights the need for examination of the relationship of emotional intelligence as an overarching concept to the Management of Stress and Anxiety. The researcher examines two null hypotheses that investigate the measurement of emotional intelligence as a predictor in managing Stress and Anxiety. 120 Management students were taken for the study. Emotional Intelligence Scale, Stress Inventory and General Anxiety test were used for the measurement of all the variables. Descriptive statistics, Correlation and Regression analysis were used for data Analysis. Results indicate that there was a significant relationship between Emotional Intelligence and the variables of Stress and Anxiety. Stress management component and anxiety component; emerge as statistically significant with respect to the relationship with Emotional Intelligence.

INTRODUCTION

People who rise to the top of their field whether it is Management, Psychology, Law, Medicine, Engineering or Banking are not just good at their jobs. They are easy-going, flexible and optimistic. In other words, it takes more than traditional cognitive intelligence to be successful at work. It also takes 'emotional intelligence,' the ability to restrain negative feelings such as anger, self-doubt, stress, anxiety and instead focus on positive ones such as confidence, empathy and congeniality.

In an era of shifting paradigms, one should be able to develop its human resources as a source of competitive advantage (Schuler, Dowling & De Cieri, 1993). In order to develop and enhance workforce capabilities and to successfully compete in the 21st Century, organisations have to embark on future oriented human resources strategies. It could be argued that the individual competencies of the workforce in any organisation would determine its overall success. This success, among other things, may be

attributed to the socio - behavioural characteristics and adjustments these individuals have to make in their job-role and position-power to gain common ground in any organisational setting.

Over the last decade Emotional Intelligence (EI) has drawn significant interest from academics and HR practitioners throughout the world. The development of emotional intelligence skills is important because it is an area that is generally overlooked when skills development programs are designed. And yet research shows that emotions, properly managed, can drive trust, loyalty, and commitment. Many of the greatest productivity gains, innovations, and accomplishments of individuals, teams, and organisations have occurred within such a framework (Cooper, 1997).

Emotional intelligence is a social intelligence that enables people to recognise their own, and other peoples' emotions. Moreover, emotional intelligence enables people to differentiate those emotions, and to make appropriate choices for thinking and action (Cooper and Sawaf, 1997; Mayer and Salovey, 1993). It is an intelligence that may be learned, developed and improved (Perkins, 1994; Sternberg, 1996).

According to Salovey and Mayer (1990), emotional intelligence includes an "ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions". A related definition adds the "ability to adaptively recognize emotion, express emotion, regulate emotion and harness emotions" (Schutte et al., 1998). Personal or emotional intelligence has been found to vary by age or developmental level and gender (Gardner, 1999).

Emotional intelligence may be defined as the ability to use your awareness and sensitivity to discern the feelings underlying interpersonal communication, and to resist the temptation to respond impulsively and thoughtlessly, but instead to act from receptivity, authenticity and candour (Ryback, 1998). At its best, emotional intelligence is about influence without manipulation or abuse of authority. It is about perceiving, learning, relating, innovating, prioritising and acting in ways that take into account and legitimise emotions, rather than relying on logic or intellect or technical analysis alone (Ryback, 1998).

Emotional Intelligence is now being considered to be important in organisational factors such as: organisational change (Ferres & Connell, 2004; Singh, 2003); leadership (Ashkanasy, 2002; Dearborn, 2002; Gardner & Stough, 2002; Weymes, 2002); management performance (Slaski & Cartwright, 2002); perceiving occupational stress (Nicklaou & Tsaousis, 2002; Oginska-Bulik, 2005); and life satisfaction (Palmer, Donaldson & Stough, 2002). To meet organisational ends (Lord, Klimiski, & Kanfer 2002), it is not uncommon to use emotions and emotion related thoughts and behaviour as the ingredients in an institutionalised recipe of emotional culture.

BASIC COMPONENTS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (EI)

EI is distinct from but complimentary to academic intelligence, the purely cognitive capacity measured by IQ. Unlike IQ that does not significantly change over one's life time, emotional intelligence can be taught and learned. It requires commitment to develop one's competencies and skills through repeated application, practice, and feedback. EI has basic components such as:

Self-awareness : Self-awareness is the heart of emotional intelligence. It is the foundation on which most of the other elements of emotional intelligence are built, the necessary first step toward exploring and coming to understand yourself, and toward change. It is the ability to recognize and understand your moods, emotions, and drives as well as their impact on others. Emotional self-awareness is also about knowing what motivates you, what brings you fulfillment, and what lifts your heart and fills you with energy and aliveness.

Self-regulation : Self-regulation or impulse control is-the ability to regulate your emotions and behavior so that you act appropriately in various situations. It involves resisting or delaying an impulse, drive, and temptation to act, responding versus reacting.

Interpersonal skills : Interpersonal effectiveness involves being empathetic (i.e., being aware of, understanding, and appreciating the feelings of others); being a constructive, cooperative, and contributing member of your social group; and, establishing and maintaining mutually satisfying relationships.

Adaptability : Adaptability is the capacity to cope with environmental demands by effectively and realistically sizing up and flexibly dealing with problematic situations. It is the ability to adjust your emotions, thoughts, and behavior to changing situations and conditions.

Stress Tolerance : Stress tolerance is the ability to withstand adverse events, stressful situations, and strong emotions without falling apart but by actively coping with stress.

General Mood and Motivation : Two factors that facilitate emotionally intelligent behavior are optimism and happiness. Optimism is the ability to look at the brighter side of life and to maintain a positive attitude even in the face of adversity. Happiness is the ability to feel satisfied with one's life, to enjoy oneself and others, and to have fun and express a positive mood.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AT WORKPLACE

A manager is a person who has to manage the mood of their organizations. The most gifted corporate leaders accomplish that by using a mysterious blend of psychological abilities known as emotional intelligence. They're self-aware and empathetic. They can read and regulate their own emotions while intuitively grasping how others feel and gauging their organization's emotional state.

Intelligence (EI) has been recently validated with major skill areas that can influence your career and create abilities that improve your worth at work. A very recent and excellent review of the EI literature (Dulewicz and Higgs, 2000) demonstrates clearly that EI impacts on work success.

Studies of close to 500 organizations worldwide, reviewed by Goleman, indicate that people who score highest on EQ measures rise to the top of corporations. 'Star' employees possess more interpersonal skills and confidence, for example, than 'regular' employees who receive less glowing performance reviews.

'Emotional intelligence matters twice as much as technical and analytic skill combined for star performances,' he says. 'And the higher people move up in the company, the more crucial emotional intelligence becomes.' Bosses and leaders, in particular, need high EQ because they represent the organization to the public, they interact with the highest number of people within and outside the organization and they set the tone for employee morale, says Goleman. Leaders with empathy are able to understand their employees needs and provide them with constructive feedback.

Different jobs also call for different types of emotional intelligence. For example, success in sales requires the empathic ability to gauge a customer's mood and the interpersonal skill to decide when to pitch a product and when to keep quiet.

"Don't bring your personal problems to work" is one variation of the argument that emotions are inappropriate in the workplace. Business decisions, so the argument goes, should be based on information, logic and calm cool reason, with emotions kept to a minimum. But it is unrealistic to suppose that emotions can be checked at the door when you arrive at work. Some people may assume, for a variety of reasons, that emotional neutrality is an ideal, and try to keep feelings out of sight. Such people work and relate in a certain way: usually they come across as rigid, detached or fearful, and fail to participate fully in the life of the workplace. This is not necessarily bad in some situations, but it is usually not good for an organization for such people to move into management roles. The same would be

true for people who emote excessively, who tell you how they feel about everything. Simply being around them can be exhausting.

Developing emotional intelligence in the workplace means acknowledging that emotions are always present, and doing something intelligent with them. People vary enormously in the skill with which they use their own emotions and react to the emotions of others—and that can make the difference between a good manager and a bad one. It's not overly egalitarian to suggest that most professionals, managers and executives are fairly smart people (of course there can be glaring exceptions), but there can be a huge difference in how well they handle people. That is, the department manager may be a genius in technical, product or service knowledge—and get failing marks in terms of people skills.

STRESS AT WORKPLACE

The workplace had become a high stress environment in many organizations cutting across industries. Employees were experiencing high level of stress due to various factors such as high workload, tight deadlines, high targets, type of work, lack of job satisfaction, long working hours, pressure to perform, etc. Interpersonal conflicts at the workplace, such as boss-subordinate relationships and relationships with peers, were also a source of stress.

Experts believed that the dysfunctional aspects of stress could directly impact an organization's performance and also affect the well-being of its employees. Stress at the workplace was linked to absenteeism, higher attrition, and decreased productivity. Stress led to fatigue, irritability, poor communication, and quality problems/errors.

High stress levels also affected the morale and motivation of the employees. Prolonged exposure to stress without effective coping mechanisms could lead to a host of physical and mental problems. For instance, stress could lead to stress-induced gastrointestinal problems, irritable bowel syndrome, acidity, acid reflux, insomnia, depression, heart disease, etc. Moreover, stress could push the victim toward high risk behavior such as smoking, drinking, and substance abuse. Stress-related illness led to increase in absenteeism and attrition affecting the profitability of the organizations.

Organizations cutting across industries were gearing up to provide employees with a stress-free healthy environment. The efforts to address this issue were more pronounced in some industries than others. Experts felt that, though stress at the workplace is a global phenomenon, professionals in some industries were more susceptible to stress than others. For instance, surveys conducted in 2006 and 2007 in the UK and the US respectively, found that employees in Information Technology (IT) industry (including the ITeS outsourcing industry) were the most stressed. Accordingly, these organizations had started implementing various unconventional methods to decrease stress at the workplace.

Even in India, organizations had woken up to this menace and were resorting to novel methods including teaching the employees dancing and music, trekking, etc, to reduce stress at the workplace. For instance, Tata Consultancy Services Ltd. had started different clubs like Theatre Club, Bibliophile Club, Adventure & Trekking Club, Fitness Club, Sanctuary Club, Music Club and Community Services Club, etc. Infosys Technologies Ltd. focused on increasing self-awareness and provided the employees with guidance on how to cope with stress through a series of workshops by experts.

In addition to conducting stress management workshops, organizations were also conducting off-site picnics, games, and inter-departmental competitions. Some companies were also using a system of mentors and promoted open communication to improve interactions and camaraderie at the workplace. Employees in most of the established companies had access to in-house counseling centers. Some companies had also employed nutritionists to provide healthy food at the office canteens and counsel the

employees on healthy eating habits and lifestyle. Some companies were also considering employing psychologists to counsel their employees.

Experts felt that organizations were resorting to creative methods to address the issue of stress at the workplace, but more action was required on this front, both in terms of assessment of the situation and implementation of concrete steps to tackle the problem.

ANXIETY AT WORKPLACE

In today's economic upheavals, downsizing, layoff, merger, and bankruptcies have cost hundreds of thousands of workers their jobs. Millions more have been shifted to unfamiliar tasks within their companies and wonder how much longer they will be employed. Adding to the pressures that workers face are new bosses, computer surveillance of production, fewer health and retirement benefits, and the feeling they have to work longer and harder just to maintain their current economic status. Workers at every level are experiencing increased tension and uncertainty, and are updating their resumes.

Work is one of the leading sources of stress and anxiety. Dealing with strict supervisors, chances of a demotion, whether you can get your job done on time and ultimately, the fear of getting fired can really give every worker something to be anxious about.

In any workplace, there is an existing system that you are forced to adhere to. These may include rules, regulations and office policies. Sometimes anxiety is brought about the fact that there may be some conflict of interest between doing what you think is right and what the present system dictates. This may be further illustrated when workers have to deal with customers or with their relationship with their co-workers. It is human nature to ease his or her own anxiety - either by adapting or leaving your workplace.

Like other forms of anxiety, job-anxieties can present in the form of panic, hypochondriac fears, work-related worrying, post-traumatic stress, or work-related social anxieties. Anxiety can lead to avoidance. Job anxiety can therefore be one explanation for sick leave, work absenteeism, or early retirement. Otago University study has shown that 45 per cent of newly diagnosed cases of depression or generalised anxiety disorder were directly related to workplace stress. 12 per cent of people who experienced stress at work and had no history of mental health problems had a first episode of depression or anxiety at the age of 32. People with high levels of psychological demands at work were 75-80 per cent more likely to suffer from depression or anxiety than those with the lowest levels (Martin, 2007).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Stress does not have the same impact on every one. There are individual differences in coping with stressful situations. Some people go to pieces at the slightest provocation; while others seem unflappable even in extremely stressful conditions. It is here Emotional Intelligence (EQ) come to our rescue and guide us to respond appropriately to different stressors.

Some people thrive on stressful situations while others are overwhelmed by them. What accounts for the varying ability of people to handle stress? Needs to say its your Emotional response to a particular situation that makes the difference. EQ helps you to cope with stressful situations. Stress Management therefore largely depends upon striking an emotional balance between a potential stress condition and your reaction to it. Researchers proved this fact in their studies.

Emotional intelligence, an essential factor responsible for determining success in life and psychological well-being, seems to play an important role in shaping the interaction between individuals and their work environment. The study conducted by Oginska et al., (2005) which was aimed to explore the relationship

between emotional intelligence and perceived stress in the workplace and health-related consequences in human service workers. The results confirmed an essential, but not very strong, role of emotional intelligence in perceiving occupational stress and preventing employees of human services from negative health outcomes. They concluded that the ability to effectively deal with emotions and emotional information in the workplace assists employees in coping with occupational stress therefore, it should be developed in stress managing trainings.

Emotional intelligence (EI) may predict stress responses and coping strategies in a variety of applied settings. Matthews et al., in his study (2006) compared EI and the personality factors of the Five Factor Model (FFM) as predictors of task-induced stress responses. Results confirmed that low EI was related to worry states and avoidance coping, even with the FFM statistically controlled. However, EI was not specifically related to task-induced changes in stress state. Results also confirmed that Neuroticism related to distress, worry, and emotion-focused coping, and Conscientiousness predicted use of task-focused coping.

Studies conducted by Montes-Berges et al., (2007) with nursing students have shown that emotional intelligence is a skill that minimizes the negative stress consequences. They examined the role of perceived emotional intelligence (PEI) measured by the Trait Meta-Mood Scale, in the use of stress-coping strategies, in the quantity and quality of social support and in the mental health of nursing students. The results indicated positive correlations between clarity and social support, social support and repair, and social support and mental health. Hierarchy regression analysis pointed out that clarity and emotional repair are predictors of social support, and emotional repair is the main predictor of mental health. These results show the importance of PEI in stress coping within the nursing framework.

Naidoo et al., (2008) has conducted a survey to gain some understanding of the explanatory factors for stress and an evaluation of the role that emotional intelligence (EI) plays in the experience of perceived stress (PS). It also aimed to compare EI and PS and explore the association between academic background, satisfaction with career choice and EI, and PS in first year dental students. The Survey was conducted on 43 male and 55 female students, Results of Correlation analysis between EI and PS indicated a statistically significant inverse relationship between EI and PS. Stepwise regression analysis identified significant predictors of PS as gender, previous higher education qualification, satisfaction with decision to study dentistry and EI. The t statistic indicates that EI is relatively the most important predictor of PS. The finding revealed that low EI is associated the stress.

RATINALE OF THE STUDY

This study represents the systematic attempt to find out the role of emotional intelligence in managing stress and anxiety at workplace. The main objectives of the study are :

- To examine the role of Emotional Intelligence in Managing Stress at workplace
- To examine the role of Emotional Intelligence in Managing Anxiety at workplace
- To examine relationship of Emotional Intelligence with stress and anxiety

PROBLEM

Each and every research starts with the problem, the basic element of research which helps to transform an idea into concrete research operations. A problem is an intellectual stimuli calling for an answer in the

form of scientific inquiry. The statement of the problem is : “Role of Emotional Intelligence in Managing Stress and Anxiety at Workplace”.

HYPOTHESES

The hypotheses of the present study are :

- The emotional intelligence will correlate negatively with stress and anxiety
- Emotional intelligence will be predicted through levels of Stress and Anxiety

METHODOLOGY

SAMPLE

Random Sampling technique was used in the selection of sample of the present study. The present study was conducted on a random sample of 120 (86 males and 34 females) MBA students from different management institutes in NCR- Delhi. The participants ranged from 21 to 26 years of age (M = 23.5).

MEASURES

For the present research study following measures were used :

1. Emotional Intelligence Scale

The Emotional Intelligence Scale was developed by Schutte et al. (1998). It is a 33-item scale with a five-point Likert-type scale. As suggested in Salovey and Mayer's theory of emotional intelligence (1990), the instrument has three categories: (a) the appraisal and expression of emotion assessed by 13 items; (b) the regulation of emotion assessed by 10 items; and (c) the utilisation of emotion assessed by 10 items. Participants read each statement and decide whether they 'strongly disagree', 'disagree', are 'undecided', 'agree', or 'strongly agree' with the statement.

Schutte et al. (1998) reported a Cronbach alpha (α) of 0.90 for the internal consistency for adults with mean age of 29.3 (S.D. = 10.2) and $\alpha = 0.78$ for test-retest reliability after a two-week interval on the scale for a smaller group drawn from the sample. Schutte et al. (1998) reported predicted validity of $r(63) = 0.32$ for first year GPA of college students, for discriminant validity they reported $r(41) = -0.06$ for the correlation between the scale and SAT scores, and $r(22) = -0.28$ to 0.54 for subscales of NEO Personality Inventory of scores of college students.

2. Stress Inventory

The stress inventory was developed by Hari, S. (2005) is a tool to measure the amount of stress experienced in daily life. It is a 66 – item scale with five alternatives, 'fully agree' 'agree', 'undecided', 'disagree' 'fully disagree'. This Stress inventory is Based on the writing of James (1982), Sutherland and Cooper (1990) and Pohorecky (1991). It covers 8 areas of stress which includes Stress as a predisposition, Source of stress in family, Source stress in occupation, Subjective assessment of situations, Somatic outcomes of stress, Psychological outcomes, Specific patterns of responding to stress, and Engagement in tension reduction activities.

In order to ascertain the reliability of the inventory, internal consistency as determined by split half method was calculated on the basis of responses given by a sample of 50 college students. The product

moment co-efficient of internal consistency as corrected by Spearman- Brown formula was found to be 0.74. To test the temporal consistency, the inventory was administered to the same of 50 college students after 4 weeks. Test-retest coefficient of correlation was found to be 0.79 and temporal consistency to be 0.88.

3. General Anxiety test

The general anxiety test is a tailor-made test. This test is not intended to give a diagnosis for anxiety. This test is helpful in identifying anxiety symptoms. The test is having 10 items where subject have to respond in ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ manner. The test-retest reliability after a two-week interval was 0.74 for a smaller group drawn from the sample of 60 students.

SCORING OF THE TESTS

Hand scoring was done by using separate scoring keys for different tests. Emotional Intelligence scale and Stress inventory were scored by the scoring key provided with the manual of respective test. In General Anxiety test the scoring was done simply by adding the number of ‘yes’ at each item of the test. Total number of ‘yes’ was the total score of an individual on the test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To fulfil the main objective of the present study, the obtained data were subjected to a number of statistical analyses by using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS 13.0). Although the analysis most pertinent to the objectives of the study was Regression Analysis, Descriptive statistics and Pearson Correlation were also used. The results of various analyses have been presented in separate headings.

1. Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the Mean and standard deviations of all the observed variables. Descriptive statistics was worked out to know the pattern of score distribution. A perusal of table 1 reveals that the mean score on Anxiety variable is 4.40 with the standard deviation of 1.79. The mean score on Stress is 136.54 with the SD of 17.34 and on Emotional Intelligence (EI) the mean score was 124.97 with the SD of 10.92. It shows that the scores on Anxiety variable ranged Average and Normal. Similarly on Stress and Emotional Intelligence variables the score ranges average and above average but normal.

Table 1 –Mean and Std. Deviation

Sr. No.	Variables	Mean	S.D.
1	Anxiety	4.40	1.79
2	Stress	136.54	17.34
3	Emotional Intelligence (EI)	124.97	10.92

2. Correlations

Correlations among all the 3 variables were computed through Pearson’s Product Movement method. It was aimed at examining the degree of association between the measures of Anxiety, Stress and Emotional Intelligence. A careful inspection of inter-correlation matrix (Table - 2) reveals that all the variables correlate significantly with each other. The inter-correlation between Anxiety and stress is .710, which is

significant at 0.001 probability level. It shows that the people who are having high stress are having more chances to develop anxiety. It can also be said that the stress can be the root cause of developing Anxiety in a person. The correlation between the measures of Anxiety and Emotional intelligence is also significant. The inter - correlation between the both is -.667, which is significant at .001 probability level. Here the correlation between the both is negative but significant which shows that the people with low EQ (Emotional Intelligence) are having high anxiety, so it can be said that there is a negative association between the both. The correlation between stress and Emotional Intelligence (EQ) is negative but significant. The inter-correlation between the both is -.547 which is also significant at .001 probability level. It shows that people who are highly emotionally intelligent are having less probability to get stressed.

Table 2 – Inter- Correlation Matrix

Variables	Anxiety	Stress	E I
Anxiety	1.00	.710**	-.667**
Stress	.710**	1.00	-.547**
E I	-.667**	-.547**	1.00

**** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.**

3. Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was computed to assess the strength of relationship between dependent variable and a set of independent variables. Regression Analysis provides an opportunity with little ambiguity to assess the importance of each of the predictors to the overall relationship. The results of regression analysis for the dependent variable Emotional Intelligence (EI) are presented in table 3. It is clear from the results that the regression analysis accepted both (Anxiety and stress) the variables as a significant predictor of Emotional Intelligence. In Overall both the predictors contributed Multiple R of .675. The F ratio computed for the significance of multiple R is 48.98, which is significant at .001 probability level.

**Table 3 Final Summary of Regression Analysis
Dependent Variable: EI**

Multipal R	.675		Df	SS	MS
R Square	.456	Regression	2	6468.17	3234.08
Adjusted R Square	.446	Residual	117	7724.75	66.02
Standard Error	8.125	F	48.98	P	<.001

Variables in the Equation

Variables	B	SE B	Beta	t	P
Anxiety	-3.34	.592	-.562	-5.804	.001

Stress	-9.28	.061	-.147	-1.52	.131
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CONCLUSION

The present investigation was conducted to find out the role of emotional intelligence in managing stress and anxiety at workplace. After analyzing the results, it can be said that the hypotheses of the present study i.e., the emotional intelligence will correlate negatively with stress and anxiety, and Emotional intelligence will be predicted through levels of Stress and Anxiety, is partially conformed. The findings of the present study indicates that the low and high level of Emotional Intelligence establish relationship to some extent with stress and anxiety. Negative correlation of Emotional Intelligence with stress and Anxiety highlights that emotional intelligence will prove helpful tool in dealing with stress and anxiety at workplace.

The studies conducted by Oginska et al., (2005), Matthews et al., (2006), Montes-Berges et al., (2007), Naidoo et al., (2008) etc, also reveals similar results. So it can be said that 'emotional intelligence,' is the ability to restrain negative feelings such as anger, self-doubt, stress, anxiety and instead focus on positive ones such as confidence, empathy and congeniality. So one should emphasize on developing emotional intelligent to overcome stress and anxiety at workplace and to get success in life.

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