



EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN WORKPLACE AND ITS IMPACT ON OCCUPATIONAL RELATED STRESS- A STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO IT PROFESSIONALS IN INDIA.

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ABSTRACT

The amount of work stress in industrial sector specifically in IT sector is increasing day by day. This paper focuses to investigate the relationship between the Organizational Role stress and Emotional Intelligence. Data has been collected using structured questionnaires from IT professionals. The relevant tools such as Factor Analysis and Correlation have been applied for data analysis. The outcome of the study reveals that emotional intelligence has strong relationship with organizational role stress. EI is positively associated with task-focused coping and challenge appraisal. It is also found that EI is negatively associated with avoidance and threat appraisal. It is also felt that EI can be made a part of regular training programs as EI of an individual can be enhanced at any point of life.

KEYWORDS : Emotional Intelligence and Organizational Role Stress

1. Introduction

Occupational stress is an exploding phenomenon in the current global scenario. The impact of which is costs severely for the employees and organization. (Cotton and Hart, 2003). Though enormous studies have been done on stress, there is yet for a precise agreed definition of stress, however, the current definition states it as the relationship between employee and the operating environment, which is taxing or enduring employees wellbeing. (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984, p. 19). Demands of organization influence the levels of stress among the employees and organizational performance. (Cotton and Hart, 2003). Hence, it is mandatory to understand the apt way to overcome the problem whereby a conducive working environment can be created.

Organizations today are in the race to enhance market share. With the advent of new technologies especially in the manufacturing sectors automation has become common in most of the companies. In such a scenario employees have compelled to adapt to the new environment to be glued to their organizations as most of the organizations operate in a transactional mode. In such a scenario role stress is the most symptoms we find with most of the employees. Gone are the days when they would have learned a technology and continued with the same way of operations till they retire. Today upgrading and at the same time adapting to the new environment is vital. Hence we can anticipate the level of stress under which they operate in the current world. Emotional intelligence plays a vital role in such an environment, whereby they would be able to adapt to any stressful conditions.

In the current global scenario organizational stress is considered as one growing problem which severely impacts the employee and the organization. (Cotton and Hart, 2003) organizational targets have a direct influence on the employee's stress level which in turn impacts the organizational performance. Hence its imperative to understand the causes of stress and whereby we can reduce the level and enhance the productivity level of the organization. With this, we can reduce the stress by applying appropriate stress-reducing interventions. In this article, we would be finding the relationship between EI and ORS. Whereby enhancing EI we can reduce ORS level. Simmons and Nelson (2001)

Models of Stress

Though there are different models of stress our current focus would be on studying stress related to work. From this angle, there are two broad approaches ie., transactional models and stimulus-response models (Cassidy., 1999) when stress occurs due to stressors within the environment then its stimulus-response or stressor – strain model. It could include factors like high work pressure and minimal control at work (Karasek., 1979). Excel workload, Role conflict, and

role ambiguity. (Kahn et al., 1964). Researchers done on Stimulus-response approaches focused on identifying different variables that which would facilitate in reducing stress level. Transactional theories concentrated on the psychological process that would link the employee to the working environment. According to these thinkers, organizational stress arises because employees are not able to cop up with the environmental pressure being faced by them in the operational scenarios. (Lazarus 1999). According to Lazarus psychological stress is the environmental pressure arising out of the threat or challenge being faced by the employee and his incompatibility to match the scenario.

Work pressure, appraisal, coping and outcomes.

Work pressures arise from the work environment/situations that an employee is working and employees are expected to overcome that. There may be multiple pressures within the working environment, all of which can lead to psychological stress. This arises and increases as the employee goes up the ladder in his career. Though all the work pressures won't lead to stress like deadlines and hours work can result in job satisfaction as well stress. (Cavanaugh et al., 2000).

An appraisal is a process of analyzing the environment by the employee with regards to well being (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). It can be divided into two primary and secondary. Primary appraisal ensures whether the perception is relevant and the existing factors would help in dealing with the situation.

Secondary appraisal can be seen from a broader perspective. It evaluates the resources and coping options which would facilitate in reducing stress level. It is the selection of coping strategies available to deal with the demand while coping involves implementing the choices. (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984, p. 110) coping is the level of adaptability of an employee to respond to the situation where he constantly changes the cognitive and behavioral efforts to meet the external and internal resistance. It includes task-focused coping where the employee manages to meet the challenges. When the level of adaptability is low, employees avoid and deny the responsibilities and distancing from themselves. Avoidance is done generally when it's a threat than a challenge (Lazarus., 1999) Positive affects demonstrate the level of individual's sense of fervent and similarly negative can influence emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt etc (Watson et al., 1980) Long-term outcomes of work pressure covers work performance, morale, satisfaction, and health.

Emotional intelligence

Employee's differences can sway appraisal, coping and outcomes. Our current study pivot on the role of emotional intelligence on ORS

El is the individual's capacity to evaluate, control and utilize emotion effectively according to the scenario. El is essential for successful functioning as it holds with the ability to understand and share the feelings of another, stress forbearance and other social and physiological skills are necessary for effective functioning at workplace. El skills include the Self-Awareness, Self-Regulation, Self-Management and Self-Motivation. The self awareness is the link which facilitates outcomes in an organizational setting. It's with this quality the employee can adapt to different scenarios. This helps us to perceive the needs of the individuals and accordingly helps us to motivate them. It helps to understand the feelings and issues in the employee and helps to overcome it. This, in turn, builds up the trust and enhances the level of engagement of the employee with the organization and the work. Effective El enables to understand the emotion which is the backbone of any effective manager. The El of managers is interconnected to employee's total perspicacity of workplace climate (Goleman, 1995)

It is observed that the role of emotions influencing individuals appraises and responding to potentially insist upon situations (Cartwright et al., 2003). Those managers who have great El, the have good health condition, less suffering from subjective stress and well being. These factors affect the management performance widely. It's inferred that employees who are able to control their emotional states are found to be happy and healthy workers as they are able to put across their feelings and present their moods as per the scenario. They are able to cope with all the type of work pressure and never get into avoidance scenario.

The talent to delineate and regulate emotions in relative to the demands should ease the effective management of peculiar resources people who are able to realize and regulate their own emotions and recognize those of residue when conferred with a demand are more presumable to appraise the locus as a challenge than as a threat (Matthews et al., 2002).

- H1: El is positively correlated with challenge appraisals
- H2: El is negatively correlated with threat appraisals.
- H3: El is positively correlated with task-focused coping.
- H4: El is negatively correlated with avoidance.

The present study analyzed the relationship between appraisal, coping and affective outcomes.

2. Methods

Participants and data collection

As mentioned, the purpose of the study is to find the relationship between El and ORS (Challenge appraisal, threat appraisal, task-focused coping and avoidance) with a random sample of 326 professional employees working in different IT companies around India are the research population of the study. Stress levels among IT professionals are higher (Harris Interactive, 2011) is one of the reasons that we chose IT professional has a sample of the study. Before going to the collection of data we did a pilot study consist of 18 professional from the group, which is randomly selected. The pilot study help to understand the time require to filling questionnaire and understandability of the questionnaire. The pilot study helps in slight/minor modification of questions.

With the help of recruitment agencies, we collected the email of individual working in IT sector and contacted through mail and asked for voluntary participation in the research. We send the online forms to for filling to those who are agreed to participate in the study. To reduce the error due to collecting data at a single point of time, the survey conducted in two different point of time such as after the first set of a questionnaire sent the next set sent after two weeks.

A total of 142 respondents completed both the questionnaire, showing a 43.5 percent response rate. From the total responds 78 (54.9%) were female respondents and 64 (45.1%) were male respondents. 58 female and 48 male respondents were married. The

average age of the employees was 34.1 (SD 7.2) among them 46 percent were graduate, 32 percent were postgraduate and remaining were having other professional qualification.

Measures

All the data were collected through structured questionnaires. There are several scales are developed by different authors to measure emotional intelligence (Higgs et al, 2000, Law et al, 2002, Van Rooy et al, 2004). In this study, we use El questionnaire developed by Schutte et al (1998). The scale contains 33 items and all the factors are measure with five point scale, ranging from 1= strongly disagree, to 5= strongly agree. The items are like "emotions are one of the things that make my life worth living" (Schutte et al., 1998). The reliability of the scale was 0.83 (Cronbach's alpha) and it is identical.

The challenge appraisal and threat appraisal were measured using cognitive appraisal scale developed by Skinner and Brewer (2002) a total of eight items were included in the questionnaire. Four items are measuring challenge appraisal and threat appraisal measure using an item like "I was thinking about the good consequences of performing well" (Skinner et al., 2002) 5 point scale used to answer the question (1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree). The Cronbach's alpha for the challenge appraisal scale was 0.76 and for threat was 0.77. Both the construct were meeting identical reliability.

A 28 item scale developed by Carver (1997) brief COPE is used to measure the coping. From the total 28 item, we on taken 20 item because the remaining 8 items are relating to substance abusing and religious coping are found to be lack of reliability (Carver, 1997). The questionnaire asses coping actions like self blame, self distraction, behavioural disengagement, venting, active coping, use of emotional support, planning, humour, use of instrumental support, positive and acceptance. Items are rate by 5 point scale (1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree). The reliability for the scale is gratifying (Cronbach's alpha -0.78).

Data analysis

From the skewness and kurtosis figures and Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, it is found that the data normally distributed. Factor analysis is conducted to find the principal components and factor loadings in El and Brief COPE measure. To identify the relationship between emotional intelligence and threat appraisal, challenge appraisal, task-focused coping and avoidance we have done a correlation analysis.

3. Results

Factor analysis

The emotional intelligence scale having 33 items and done the factor analysis using varimax rotation method. There were three items got factor loading less than 0.3 and it was removed, the item was loaded with three principal components. The factors loaded under three components explain a variance of 42.8 percent. The major three component extracted from the factor analysis are appraisal and expression of emotion, regulation of emotion and utilization. All the three components such as appraisal and expression of emotion (8 items), regulation of emotion (13 items) and utilization (9 items) got an identical reliability of 0.85, 0.78 and 0.84.

The Brief COPE scale having 20 items and done the factor analysis using varimax rotation method. All the items got factor loading more than 0.5 and the item was loaded with two principal components. The factors loaded under two components explain a variance of 56.3 percent. The major two component extracted from the factor analysis are avoidance and task-focused coping. Both the components such as avoidance (8 items) and task-focused coping (12 items) got an identical reliability of 0.86, and 0.82.

Correlation Matrix

Table. 1
Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Appraisal and Expression of emotions	3.47	1.119	142
Regulation of motion	3.10	.959	142
Utilization	3.49	.881	142
Challenge appraisal	3.82	.819	142
Threat appraisal	3.05	.889	142
Task-focused Coping	3.88	1.018	142
Avoidance	2.15	.995	142

Table. 2
Correlations

	Appraisal and Expression of emotions	Regulation of emotion	Utilization	Challenge appraisal	Threat appraisal	Task-focused Coping	Avoidance
Appraisal and Expression of emotions	Pearson Correlation	1	.068	.198**	.585**	.135	.606*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.109	.000	.000	.121	.013
	N	142	142	142	142	142	142
Regulation of emotion	Pearson Correlation		1	.045**	.646**	.215	.433*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.109		.000	.087	.002
	N	142	142	142	142	142	142
Utilization	Pearson Correlation	.198**		1	.787**	-.509*	.724*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.003
	N	142	142	142	142	142	142
Challenge appraisal	Pearson Correlation	.585**	.646**		1	.058	.414*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.000		.125	.007
	N	142	142	142	142	142	142
Threat appraisal	Pearson Correlation	.135	.215	-.509*		1	-.252*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.121	.087	.000		.031	.000
	N	142	142	142	142	142	142
Task focused Coping	Pearson Correlation	.606*	.433**	.724**	.414**		1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.013	.002	.003	.007		.000
	N	142	142	142	142	142	142
Avoidance	Pearson Correlation	.028*	-.157**	-.160**	-.204*	.567**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.028*	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	142	142	142	142	142	142

Sig. (2-tailed)	.040	.000	.000	.184	.000	.000
N	142	142	142	142	142	142
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).						

Table 2 shows the correlation between the variables. The challenge appraisal shows a significant relationship with the components of emotional intelligence. Such as all the three components Appraisal and Expression of emotions, Regulation of emotion and utilization were showing a significant positive relationship with the challenge appraisal at one percent level. But in the case of threat appraisal haven't any significant relationship with Appraisal and Expression of emotions and Regulation of emotion. And it shows a significant negative relationship with utilization.

On the other hand, the task focus coping has a significant positive relationship with Appraisal and Expression of emotions, Regulation of emotion and utilization. Appraisal and Expression of emotions showing a positive relationship at 5 percent level and Regulation of emotion and utilization are significant at 1 percent level. And it shows a significant positive correlation with challenge appraisal at 1 percent level and showing a negative correlation with the threat appraisal at 5 percent level. Avoidance shows a significant negative relationship with the Regulation of emotions and utilization. It establishes a significant positive relationship with the threat appraisal at 1 percent level.

Hypothesis 1 is accepted, as emotional intelligence all three component such as Appraisal and Expression of emotions, Regulation of emotion and utilization having a significant positive relationship with the challenge appraisal. Hypothesis 2 is partially supported because only utilization having a negative relationship with the threat appraisal remaining two components hasn't any relationship with threat appraisal. Hypothesis 1 is accepted, as emotional intelligence all three component such as Appraisal and Expression of emotions, Regulation of emotion and utilization having a significant positive relationship with the task focus coping. Hypothesis 4 is supported because emotional intelligence variable such as Regulation of emotion and utilization shows a significant negative relationship with the avoidance.

1. Discussion and Conclusion:

The current study intended to look at how far emotional intelligence can influence ORS especially in an IT sector. It is consistent with the earlier research studies, which had pointed out the negative interactions with peers, employers, customers, and dyads are the main source of occupational related stress (Cooper et al., 1988; Rundle-Gardiner and Carr, 2005). According to Matthews et al. (2003), it is opined that these demands are apparent by the existence of a low level of trust, supportiveness and listening to and the approach adopted in dealing with issues and problems that face the organizational employees. Further, when these interpersonal interactions are not satisfactory, it is followed by stress.

If an employee possesses a low level of EI, it would enhance the level of stress as the employee will not be able to analyze the issues. EI possess ones ability to understand the emotions of others and to transform one's behavior to manage the situation (Matthews et al., 2003).

It was observed that when demand was put across through threat, the focus on task coping became low and negative impact was felt. On the contrary, it was learned that focus on task was higher and positive when challenge appraisal was associated. Hence, it paves for further deliberations that diverse factors are associated with positive versus negative outcomes or ORS (McGowan et al., 2006). Further, it was also learned that EI was positively associated with task-focused coping, it was also observed that by able to perceive the feelings of employees they were able to facilitate positive

outcomes. It is also learned that EI was negatively associated with avoidance, negative effect, and threat appraisal. It substantiates the earlier research findings where it was inferred that high EI would facilitate adaptive appraisal and coping strategies (Matthews et al., 2002). Our current study also infers the same.

It is learned that emotions has a vital role in managing one's emotions and feelings and further modulates role in appraisal and coping occupational related stress. Hence, EI plays a vital role in the management of emotions in oneself and of others.

2. Limitations:

The study was on IT employees in India, and it remains yet to see whether the same scenario and application to take place in manufacturing and hospitality industry and further in other countries as the culture varies.

3. Directions for future research

There are several factors like EI and its development, managing skills may enhance the coping with work related demands. So the further research is needed to identify these factors (Cassidy, 1999).

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