



Emotional Quotient and Stress Management : an exploratory study

KEYWORDS

Emotional quotient, Stress, Stress management.

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ABSTRACT *Regardless of where one lives in the world one cannot escape the defining forces of our times i.e. .globalization and change. The increasing change in organizational culture, structure, specialization has led to increase in work load, the necessity to maintain a competitive edge over others. This has led to increase in the stress levels of the workers today and to deal with it IQ and QE plays a very important role. IQ has been the benchmark to measure the ability of brain in the earlier times; however a new yardstick of EQ is introduced which measures one's ability to handle and decipher emotions. IQ and EQ may not have direct correlation in stress management but EQ plays a major part if handling stress. A review of the literature emphasizes on the need for examination of the relationship of emotional intelligence as a concept that is overarching in managing stress at workplace. In this paper we will use qualitative method to assess 50 management professionals on their EQ and its relation in stress management. The results will be analyzed and presented.*

INTRODUCTION

In a globalized world rules of workplace are constantly changing; new yardsticks are being used today to judge the people. This is not merely in terms of how smart a person is or what is his or her expertise or qualification, but also how well that person adjusts well with the colleagues and how well they handle themselves and the situations. These new rules predict who is most likely to become more successful performer and who is more likely to fail. One of the new yardstick is Emotional Intelligence or Emotional Quotient which is now been recognized as an important component of an individual and psychologists are researching on this component. Emotional Intelligence is a person's awareness, self confidence, self control, commitment and integrity and a person's ability to communicate, influence, initiate change and accept change.

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". Emotional Intelligence is relatively a new concept. Prior to this Intelligence Quotient was the yardstick to measure the capability and confidence of the individual. Intelligence Quotient is a person's ability to comprehend numbers an interpret it. It is the ability to learn new things and think logically and analytically. People high on IQ are practical, analytical and their brains rule over their heart and they believe more in facts and figures. They succeed in their work as they have strong theory based knowledge and are practical. IQ helps an individual to succeed in life as it enables the individual to think logically analytically and comprehend the situation and facts. Logical and analytical thinking and reasoning is one component of individual, emotions is the another component. Though IQ is still used to measure the capacity of an individuals' intelligence EQ has also become important. Both go hand in hand if an individual has to survive this competitive world of conflict, stress, pressure, interpersonal problems and of change.

Individuals rising on the top of the management hierarchy are not necessarily just good at their job, but they are also flexible, easy going, and optimistic. Hence having cognitive intelligence is not just the parameter that is required to excel, emotional intelligence takes a lot to overcome the feeling of anger, stress, anxiety and helps the employees to focus on the positive and the beneficial side of the work. EI though a new concept has drawn the attention of many academic experts and the HR professionals all over the world. According to a few research works done by the experts it is noticed that when emotions are managed by the employees it can drive trust, loyalty and commitment from them. However the sad part is that this area of EI is generally overlooked when a skill development program takes place. But if these practices are indulged in, they lead to a high productivity gain and accomplishment of the organization as a team.

Emotional Competent person is able to survive this phase of constant changes in an organisation. It determines one's potential to learn practical skills. Emotional Competence shows how much of this is translated into on the job capabilities. Today HR managers are looking out at individuals who are willing to adapt to new changes and are excellent at maintaining relationships at workplace and can handle impulses and emotions. EQ competencies call for higher levels of trust, confidence and reliance in an organisation and thus every organisation wants their employee to be high on EQ as they are assets to the organisation. Organizations are often characterized by hierarchical relationships, and stark differences and emotionally competent person can handle these situations well and can succeed.

BASIC COMPONENTS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (EI):

EI is distinct as well as complimentary to cognitive intelligence that is measured by IQ, IQ does not importantly change in the life time of an individual however emotional intelligence can be taught and learned, but it requires commitment to develop the strengths and the skill sets through practice, repeated application and feedback. The basic com-

ponents of EI are:

Self-awareness: Emotional intelligence has a heart that is self-awareness which is the foundation which acts as a base for the building of the other EI elements. It is the first necessary step taken toward the way of exploring and coming and understanding oneself and moving towards change. It is the ability to recognize and understand the moods, emotions, and drives as well as their impact on others. Emotional self-awareness is also about knowing what motivates and brings fulfillment and also lifts the heart filling it with energy and aliveness.

Self-regulation: also known as impulse control,, this is an ability to regulate nes emotions and behavior so that it can be used appropriately in various situations. This involves resisting or delaying an impulse, drive, and the temptation to react and rather indulge in responding. Interpersonal skills: this plays an important role as it involves being empathetic, cooperative, and constructive and a contributing member of the 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 one's emotions, thoughts, and behavior to changing situations and conditions. It also involves the capacity one has to cope up with environmental demands by flexibly and reasilisticly sizing up and dealing with problematic situation.

Stress Tolerance : It is the ability to withstand adverse events and deal effectively by coping up with stress in an active manner.

General Mood and Motivation: these are the two factors that facilitate the optimism, happiness and an emotionally intelligent behavior. Here optimism means to look at the brighter and the positive side of the life whereas happiness is the ability to feel satisfied by having fun and hence expressing a positive attitude.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AT WORKPLACE

A manager is a person who manages the mood of the organization; however the management of the mood by the employees themselves plays a very important role. Today employees have to be self aware and empathetic and should have the ability to gauge and grasp the organization's emotional state. Emotional intelligence is twice as important as the technical and analytical skills that are required by the employees. Employees having empathy are better able to understand the needs of the organization and hence can manage the emotions for their benefits. Different jobs also call for different types of emotional intelligence. It is generally said that emotional and personal problems should not be brought to work, however it is unrealistic to assume that emotions can be checked whenever the employee arrives at the workplace. Developing EI at the workplace means acknowledging that emotions are an inseparable part of the life of the employee, they are always present and hence something intelligent should be done with them. It's not an egalitarian thought to suggest that the management executives are smart, but there is a huge difference as to how well they handle the situations and people around them..

STRESS AT WORKPLACE

With globalization and increase in privatization the work environment has become a battle where employees do their best to achieve the goals for the organization; this in turn leads to a lot of stress and negative emotions in the employees, and hence causing interpersonal conflicts. Stress at workplace leads to absenteeism, higher attrition, and decreased productivity. Stress led to fatigue, irritability, poor communication, and quality problems/errors. Stress affects the morale

and motivation of the employees as it is inversely proportional to the productivity and efficiency of the employee. It can also push the victim towards hazardous habits of smoking, drinking and substance abuse. High level of stress and feeling of alienation may lead to Egoistic suicide. The Great Depression of 1929 in the U S lead to sudden altercation in society which lead to high attrition rate and indirectly also caused increase in suicides which was directly proportional to the increase in the stress levels.

METHODOLOGY

The researchers have used Questionnaire developed by Singh and Chaddha which has been taken from their book 'Emotional Intelligence At Work'. The present EQ test measures three psychological dimensions such as emotional sensitivity, emotional maturity and emotional competency. This EQ test has a test retest and split-half *reliability* of 0.94 and 0.89 respectively and *validity* of 0.89. It has been attempted online by more than 25,000 persons worldwide. The questionnaire consists of 22 situations which tests the sample on their EQ. It is a close ended questionnaire with an option list of 4 choices wherein the sample has to select any 1 answer. A Stress Management Questionnaire developed by Della Franklin has also been used.

Stress management scoring

If most of your answers are "A," it means that you're a very active and reliable person. You address problems by either dealing with them directly instead of letting things resolve themselves. It's most likely that your stress coping mechanism is turning stress into positive stress (Eustress) which allows you to benefit from it while dealing with it at the same time. You usually achieve this by distracting yourself with a hobby or resorting to some form of exercise. The combination of your sound mind and healthy body will enable you to withstand a good degree of stress.

If the majority of your choices end up as "B" you're most likely a very relaxed, laid-back and logical individual. You take your time with things, minimizing the chances of error on your part. It is also this very methodological approach to things that allow you to root out most problems before they even become problems. Chances are you rarely deal with problems, and when you do, it doesn't affect you as much as it normally should, and you perform as though nothing happened. The only drawback to all these traits is you are prone to becoming too passive. You run the risk of overlooking problems or giving yourself too long a time to deal with things and thus you may find yourself facing a problem that you could have nipped at the bud.

Mostly "C" answers would reflect your relatively poor coping mechanisms. You're probably irritable and always want things to go your way, which is never the case in life. You become frustrated because of this and you end up putting unnecessary tension on yourself. Your nature could also be attributed to some life-changing event that may have happened recently. It might be advisable to seek professional help and start changing the way you see problems when they come. It would also be a good idea to start getting into shape, as a physically healthy person will receive stress much more favourably than one in poor health.

The researchers have used Quantitative method of research design in this study. It is an exploratory research work which tends to look at how emotional quotient helps to deal with stress in a global world and workplace. The universe is every individual working in the corporate with a work experience of one year and more. The sample size consists of 50 samples from IT and Marketing sector respectively, as this has been assumed by the researchers that stress levels are high in these sectors and the method sampling used in the research is multistage random complex sampling. Multistage sampling is used because the sample has been stratified in to two segments of IT and Marketing and it is further divided into

the clusters of 25 samples from each stratified sample. In this research the independent variable is stress and dependent variable is emotional intelligence and extraneous variables are level of works, personal life, relations, and organization culture and organization structure.

RESULTS

Among 25 subjects of marketing sector 11 of them have high EQ level in a range of 311-400 with their sensitivity level being their core strength followed by emotional stability and competencies level. Subjects with high EQ level have better capabilities to cope up with organizational politics; emotions handle stress in a positive manner and can manage their personal and work life well. Such individuals high on EQ can interpret and manage their feelings and others feelings very well and can also manipulate them for their benefits. High on maturity shows that these individuals can High maturity level gives an individual confidence to perceive challenges as learning opportunities. As a result these individuals constantly grow and improve. Such individuals are also high in their adaptability skills and are flexible to adjust with situations.

8 subjects have high EQ level on a scale of 217-310 with maturity being the core strength for most of them followed by emotional stability and then competencies. Such individuals are very empathetic and understand other people's opinion and view point well. individuals can also cope up with stress well and can also control their anger, feelings, interpersonal relationships, stress in an effective manner but do tend to give up after an extent and have to put in extra efforts in order to not to give up. These individuals are adaptable to certain situations and are also flexible.

5 subjects were found to be with moderate EQ on a scale of 201-270 which showed that these individuals to tend to lose their cool in situations of stress and pressure. These individuals were found high on their competencies and low on their sensitivity. Such individuals are more focused on their goals and feelings and tend to ignore others feelings at times. They are high on their competencies thus they are work centric and are less focused on feelings. They are very practical individuals who are Moderate with their EQ as they tend to think more from their brain for each and every problem and solution.

It was found that the employees who were on the "very high" scale of EQ fell in the category of "A" when managing stress which showed that they were active and reliable people and would convert distress into eustress effectively. The employees who were on the "High" and "Moderate" scale of EQ fell in the category of "B", as these people were very relaxed and logical when approaching the problems, which also showed the methodological approach followed by them.

According to the analysis of both the sets of the questionnaires the researchers have concluded that there is a direct relationship between EQ and stress management in a better way. It is also observed that the samples very high on EQ ranging from 311-410 fell in the A category of stress management analysis. They had the ability to manage stress in the best possible way by converting distress in to eustress and use it for the benefit of themselves and the organization by manipulating their emotions and others emotions also to the fullest. These samples are also effective in maintaining a work life balance in the best possible manner. The employees who were high and moderate on the EQ ranging from 271-310, and 201-270 respectively, fell in the B category of stress management analysis. These employees were high on their maturity and competencies and a little low on emotional stability and hence unable to use their EI to the fullest to cope up with stress. However these people can still maintain a decent work life balance.

CONCLUSIONS

Thus the researchers have concluded that there exists a direct positive relationship between EQ and stress management. Also the importance of having a high Emotional Quotient and its benefits are been observed. The research also substantiates the thought that for an employee to be an effective leader in the long run it is necessary to have that extra emotional intelligence in them to rise to the top of the ladder and effectively establish a good connection with the other employees. The results of this study can be applied in learning adaptive skills like building social skills to have good support system, and practicing stress management skills.

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