

Role of Emotional Intelligence in Managing Occupational Stress Among Middle Level Executives



Management

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ABSTRACT

Modern business organizations are under severe work pressure and competitive work environment outcome of which is higher level of stress among employees and executives. No organization is free from stress. A higher-level stress impairs physical and psychological health of executives and employees. It has been observed that prolonged stress leads to undesired behavior. Middle-level executives the backbone of organizations, particularly large ones. They are the vital link between an organization's senior leadership on one hand and the ground personnel on the other. The purpose of this study is to ascertain the relationship between emotional intelligence and occupational stress. Further, it evaluates the level of emotional intelligence helps the executives to overcome their occupational stress. To fulfill the aim of the study 42 executives were randomly selected from Coimbatore as participants. To evaluate the level of emotional intelligence, thirteen dimensions have been administered in the questionnaire. Correlation and Regression analysis were used to analyze data. Moreover, results indicate that emotional intelligence can be used as a potential moderating variable in the stress process and improving the performance of the executives.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the pace of work within organizations has increased rapidly. This increase can be attributed to many factors, which include technological advancement, global competitiveness, continually changing economies as well as changes in the organizational structures. Consequently, the demands placed on individuals employed in organizations have also increased. In addition to the technical and economic factors affecting organizations, employees face a number of other challenges like greater workload, increasing job insecurity and lack of role clarity. The companies need people who have both technical knowledge and social and emotional abilities which will enable them to delight the customers. Emotional intelligence can contribute to developing these skills and abilities that are linked with this aspiration.

A new development approach is needed to help middle managers master the skills and mind-set they need to succeed in today's flatter organizational structures. EQ is believed to be one of the factors, which influences stress among managers. Emotional intelligence is increasingly relevant to organizational development and developing people, because the emotional quotient principles provides a new way to understand and assess people's behaviors, management styles, attitudes, interpersonal skills, and potential. Emotional intelligence provides a buffering effect in perceiving the work environment to be less stressful. Individuals with high level of emotional intelligence, pronounced by the ability to recognize and express emotions as well as to manage and control them show the ability to better cope with stress and suffer less from adverse health outcomes.

The research in this field becomes more desired in case of Middle Level Executives as they go through the emotional turmoil besides the pressures of the competitive environment. They are often confronted with challenging situations and problems, which cannot be resolved by intelligence alone, for which emotions are equally required. Since emotional intelligence is expected to play a major role in moderating behavioral issues and related outcomes so it will be desirable to study emotional intelligence among business executives.

2. Related Works

Shah and Gole(2008) drew attention on organizational stress, in which they have stated common acknowledged

ment is a critical issue for Managers of Manufacturing companies. Their study examined the relationship between job stress and job satisfaction and performance among 100 Managers. Their findings of the study to suggest that higher stress level are related to lower performance where as higher job satisfaction indicates higher performance.

Albrecht (1979) argues that mostly the stressors are emotionally induced. "These are based on peoples' expectations, or the belief that something terrible is about to happen. Thus, emotionally induced stress arises from one's imagination." Albrecht believed that the society's prime health issue is anxiety and he classified stress induced by emotions into four categories: time stress, anticipatory stress, situational stress, and encounter stress.

Abraham (2000) deliberated that the social skills component of Emotional Intelligence is related to positive interpersonal relationships and it increases the feeling of job satisfaction and decreases occupational stress. She further stated that these social skills foster networks of social relationships which in turn increase an employee's commitment to the organization.

Slaski and Cartwright (2002) investigated the relationship between measures of emotional quotient, subjective stress, distress, general health, and morale, quality of working life and management performance of a group of retail managers. Significant correlations in the expected direction were found, indicating that managers who scored higher in emotional quotient suffered less subjective stress, experienced better health and well-being, and demonstrated better management performance.

Darolia and Darolia (2005) studied the role of emotional intelligence in coping with stress and emotional control behaviour. The research clearly established that emotionally intelligent people who are able to understand and recognize their emotions, manage themselves appropriately so that their impulsiveness and aggression is kept under control in stressful situations.

Ismail, Suh-Suh, Ajis and Dollah (2009) conducted a study to examine the effect of emotional intelligence in the relationship between occupational stress and job performance. The outcome of the study clearly stated that relationship between occupational stress and emotional intelligence significantly correlated with job performance.

Statistically, the results confirmed that the inclusion of emotional intelligence in the analysis mediated the effect of occupational stress on job performance.

3. Emotional Intelligence and Occupational Stress

Emotional Intelligence can be defined as the ability to identify, consider and control emotions in oneself and to recognize them in others, brought on by a combination of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management. Emotional intelligence is the capacity to effectively perceive, express, understand, and manage your emotions and the emotions of others in a positive and productive manner. Emotional intelligence of the executives shared the relationship with their leadership practices. Emotional intelligence empowers the manager with the ability to grasp intuitively what others need and want and develop strategies to fulfilling those needs and wants. Goleman (1998) opined that an emotionally intelligent person is likely to be skilled in two key areas namely – ‘personal competence’ – how one manages the self and ‘social competence’ – how one manages relationships. It enables us to modify our feelings and influence what happens in the world around us. Emotional intelligence is one’s subconscious ability to create positive outcomes in ones relationships with others and with one, by being in control of how one responds to the world around.

Occupational stress, in particular, is the inability to cope with the pressures in a job, because of a poor fit between someone’s abilities and his / her work requirements and conditions. It is a mental and physical condition, which affects an individual’s productivity, effectiveness, personal health and quality of work. Occupational stressors are aspects of the work environment that cause strains, poor psychological health or well being of the individual. The increasing demands in the workplace as well as the overall increasing demands in lives of individuals (dual career families, family pressures, advanced technologies, job insecurity) all contribute to increased levels of stress experienced by individuals. It is now generally accepted that prolonged or intense stress can have a negative impact on the individual’s mental and physical health. Also, stress represents an added cost to the organizations in terms of labor turnover, increased absenteeism and poor work performance.

Emotional intelligence is increasingly relevant to organizational development and developing people, because the emotional quotient principles provide a new way to understand and assess people’s behaviors, management styles, attitudes, interpersonal skills, and potential. Emotional intelligence provides a buffering effect in perceiving the work environment to be less stressful. Individuals with high level of emotional intelligence, pronounced by the ability to recognize and express emotions as well as to manage and control them show the ability to better cope with stress and suffer less from adverse health outcomes. It is emphasized by Spector and Goh (2001) that an emotional reaction follows a perceived stressor. Gardner and Stough (2002) extended this theory by suggesting that a person, who can able to effectively manage and control emotions in the workplace will also perceive the stressor but will have a more appropriate emotional reaction title situation than someone who is less able to manage and control emotions at work.

4. Results and Discussions

This study is an attempt to find out the role Emotional Intelligence in managing the stress among the middle level executives at workplace. This paper exhibits the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Occupational

stress through the selected dimensions. The feedback was collected from 42 Middle Level Executive in Coimbatore among various sectors.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

S No	Demographic Characteristics	Item	No. of Respondents (42)	Percentage
1.	Gender	Male	23	54.76%
		Female	19	45.24%
2.	Age	Below 30years	14	33.33%
		31 - 40years	6	14.29%
		41 - 50years	10	23.81%
		Above 50years	12	28.57%
3.	Marital Status	Single	7	16.67%
		Married	35	83.33%
4.	No. of dependents	None	7	16.67%
		up to 2 members	23	54.76%
		3 to 4 members	12	28.57%
5.	Monthly income	Up to Rs.20000	16	38.10%
		Rs.20001 - 30000	10	23.81%
		Rs.30001 - 40000	4	9.52%
		Above Rs.40000	12	28.57%
		Diploma	6	14.29%
6.	Educational Qualification	Under Graduate	19	45.24%
		Post Graduate	17	40.48%

Table 1 reveals the demographic profile of the respondents. It is observed from the table that 54.76% of the respondents were male, 33.33% of them were below 30 years age group, 83.33% of the respondents were married. 54.76% of the respondents were having up to 2 dependents, 38.10% of the respondents were earning monthly income up to Rs.20000 and 45.24% of the respondents were possessing under graduate level educational qualification.

The objective of this study is to evaluate the role of emotional intelligence in managing the occupational stress. In this context, thirteen dimensions have considered to measure the overall emotional intelligence. Correlations analysis is performed between the selected dimensions of emotional intelligence to assess its interrelationship. The result states that emotional self-awareness has found significant relationship with accurate self-assessment, self-confidence, conscientiousness, and adaptability, achievement, commitment, empathy and team capabilities. Similarly, accurate self-assessment has found significant relationship with self-confidence, emotional self-control, conscientiousness, adaptability, achievement, commitment, empathy and team capabilities.

The self-confidence dimension has found significant relationship with emotional self-control, conscientiousness, adaptability, achievement, commitment, empathy and team capabilities. In the similar fashion, the emotional self-control has found significant relationship with adaptability, commitment and empathy. Trustworthiness has found significant relationship with achievement, empathy, communication and team capabilities. Conscientiousness has found significant relationship with adaptability, achievement, commitment, empathy, communication and team capabilities.

Adaptability has found significant relationship with achievement, commitment, empathy and team capabilities. Similarly, the achievement has found significant relationship with commitment, empathy, communication, leadership and team capabilities. The commitment has found significant relationship

with empathy and team capabilities, whereas the empathy has found significant relationship with communication and team capabilities. The communication has found significant relationship with leadership and the leadership has found significant relationship with team capabilities. The result reveals that majority of the dimensional factors considered under the emotional intelligence has found significant relationship with other factors. Therefore, each dimension seems important when estimating the overall emotional intelligence.

Predictors: Emotional Self Awareness, Accurate Self-Assessment, Self-Confidence
Emotional Self-Control, Trustworthiness, Conscientiousness, Adaptability,
Achievement, Commitment, Empathy, Communication, Leadership, Team Capabilities.

	Correlations			Importance	Tolerance	
	Zero-Order	Partial	Part		After Trans.	Before Trans.
Emotional Self Awareness	.336	.700	.301	.200	.310	.292
Accurate Self-Assessment	.234	.723	.321	.115	.515	.344
Self Confidence	.186	-.660	-.270	-.088	.396	.390
Emotional Self-Control	.231	-.801	-.411	-.209	.252	.454
Trustworthiness	.071	.440	.150	.014	.671	.533
Conscientiousness	.045	-.119	-.037	-.002	.711	.661
Adaptability	.665	.882	.574	.566	.556	.410
Achievement	.386	.356	.117	.079	.395	.304
Commitment	.441	.770	.370	.307	.344	.366
Empathy	.227	-.423	-.143	-.050	.520	.355
Communication	.050	-.528	-.191	-.012	.815	.615
Leadership	.453	.843	.481	.384	.394	.651
Team Capabilities	.266	-.831	-.458	-.307	.193	.355

Dependent Variable: Occupational Stress

Correlations	Standardized Coefficients		df	F-value	p-value
	Beta	Std. Error			
Emotional Self Awareness	.540	.138	2	15.367	.000
Accurate Self-Assessment	.447	.107	1	17.495	.001
Self Confidence	-.428	.122	2	12.347	.001
Emotional Self-Control	-.819	.153	3	28.742	.000
Trustworthiness	.184	.094	3	3.843	.030
Conscientiousness	-.044	.091	1	.231	.637
Adaptability	.770	.103	3	56.041	.000
Achievement	.186	.122	1	2.317	.147
Commitment	.630	.131	2	23.245	.000
Empathy	-.198	.106	2	3.479	.056
Communication	-.211	.085	1	6.185	.024
Leadership	.766	.122	1	39.348	.000
Team Capabilities	-1.042	.174	3	35.694	.000

Dependent Variable: Occupational Stress

The above table 2 states multiple regression analysis between occupational stress (dependent variable) and dimensions of emotional intelligence (independent variables). The result exhibit the R² value as 0.906, which means emotional intelligence has 90.6% relationship with occupational stress. Further, the optimal scaling analysis reveals the importance of selected dimensions as follows; emotional self-awareness (20%), accurate self-assessment (11.5%), self-confidence (-8.8%), emotional self-control (-20.9%), trustworthiness (1.4%), conscientiousness (-0.2%), adaptability (56.6%), achievement (7.9%), commitment (30.7%), empathy (-5.0%), communication (-1.2%), leadership (38.4%) and team capabilities (-30.7%). The key finding states that adaptability, leadership quality and job commitment factors have found a greater chance of reducing occupational stress among middle level executives.

5. Conclusion

The results of the study show that emotional intelligence can be used as a potential moderating variable in the stress process and improving the performance of the executives. The key finding states that adaptability, leadership quality and job commitment factors have found a greater chance

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis between OS and EI Dimensions Model Summary

Multiple R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
.952	.906	.759

Dependent Variable: Occupational Stress

of reducing occupational stress among middle level executives. Executives should develop and use the skills and behaviors required for flexible and adaptive leadership. Finally, to be flexible and adaptive in a world full of change and uncertainty is difficult and stressful and leaders need to have a high level of commitment to do what is necessary and ethical. Hence, it can be concluded that the ability to effectively deal with emotions and emotional information in the workplace assists executives in managing occupational stress and maintaining psychological well-being.

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