

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND EMPLOYEE JOB PERFORMANCE ACROSS DIVERSE WORKPLACE DEMOGRAPHICS

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence refers to an individual's capacity to perceive, understand, regulate, and effectively manage emotions in both oneself and others. In organizational settings, emotional intelligence plays a vital role in fostering positive interpersonal relationships, enhancing teamwork, and creating a productive work environment. The present study investigates the relationship between emotional intelligence and employee job performance in the Indian retail industry. Primary data were collected from 120 retail employees representing diverse age groups, genders, and levels of work experience. Statistical analysis revealed a significant positive association between emotional intelligence and employee job performance, indicating that employees with higher emotional intelligence tend to demonstrate superior workplace performance. The findings further show that emotional intelligence varies significantly across employees with different levels of work experience, whereas no significant differences were observed based on gender or age. Based on these findings, the study suggests that retail organizations should integrate emotional intelligence training and development initiatives into their human resource practices to strengthen employees' interpersonal competencies, enhance workplace effectiveness, and improve overall organizational performance.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Job Performance, Employee Performance, Work Experience, Demographic Factors, Indian Retail Industry.

INTRODUCTION

Emotional Intelligence (EI) refers to an individual's ability to recognize, understand, manage, and effectively use emotions in oneself and others (Peter, 2010). It comprises key competencies such as recognizing emotions, applying emotions to support thinking and decision-making, and regulating emotions to maintain positive interpersonal relationships (Neubauer & Freudenthaler, 2005; Holt & Wood, 2016; Sinha, 2014). In the workplace, emotional intelligence enhances teamwork, communication, and conflict management, thereby contributing to a healthy organizational environment (Donaldson-Feilder & Bond, 2004). Job performance reflects how effectively employees accomplish their assigned responsibilities and contribute to organizational objectives (Jacobs, Hellman, & Markowitz, 2013). It is commonly assessed using Key

Performance Indicators (KPIs), which vary across industries (Parmenter, 2015). In the retail sector, performance is often evaluated through indicators such as sales productivity, customer satisfaction, and service quality (Anand & Grover, 2015). Since retail employees frequently interact with customers, emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in improving service delivery and overall job performance. The Indian retail industry is one of the country's fastest-growing sectors and contributes significantly to economic development and employment. The increasing competition and customer-oriented nature of the industry require employees to possess not only technical skills but also strong emotional competencies. Previous studies have reported a positive association between emotional intelligence and employee performance (Munshi & Hanji, 2015; Shukla & Srivastava, 2016). However, limited research has specifically examined this relationship in the Indian retail context. Therefore, the present study investigates the impact of emotional intelligence on job performance among employees in the Indian retail industry, contributing to the existing body of knowledge.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is defined as the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and effectively use emotions in oneself and others. Salovey and Mayer identified EI as a key competency that supports effective decision-making, problem-solving, communication, and interpersonal relationships (Derksen et al., 2002). According to Salovey and Mayer (1993), emotional intelligence comprises four dimensions: perceiving emotions, using emotions in reasoning, understanding emotions, and managing emotions. Perceiving emotions involves accurately identifying emotional expressions, while reasoning with emotions refers to using emotions to facilitate thinking and decision-making. Understanding emotions enables individuals to interpret emotional changes and responses, whereas managing emotions focuses on regulating emotions appropriately to maintain positive behaviour and relationships (Grewal & Davidson, 2008; Lorini & Schwarzentruher, 2011; Spackman et al., 2006; Morris & Feldman, 1997).

Emotional intelligence is widely recognized as an essential workplace competency that enhances leadership, teamwork, communication, conflict resolution, and employee performance (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001). A survey conducted by Harris Interactive reported that a majority of managers considered Emotional Quotient (EQ) to be as important as, or even more important than, Intelligence Quotient (IQ) when evaluating employees (CB, 2019). Furthermore, emotional intelligence is not an innate ability alone but a skill that can be developed through continuous learning, practice, and organizational training programs (Cherry, 2019). Consequently, organizations with emotionally intelligent employees are more likely to experience improved collaboration, higher productivity, and a healthier work environment.

Table 1 : HIGH EQ Vs LOW EQ WORKPLACE	
High Emotional Intelligence	Low Emotional Intelligence
Solving problems more easily and making better decisions.	Not taking responsibility for actions leading to a poor problem-solving.
Not panicking under pressure.	Letting the pressure get to you and making hasty decisions.
Resolving conflicts with ease.	Having aggressive or passive styles of communication.
Having a great form of empathy.	Refusal to work as a team.
The ability to listen, reflect and respond appropriately to constructive criticism.	Being harsh in the criticism and not being open to the idea of others.

Developing emotional intelligence involves strengthening several personal and interpersonal competencies. The first step is self-awareness, which enables individuals to recognize and understand their own emotions, strengths, and limitations (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001). Once emotions are identified, the next stage is self-regulation, which focuses on managing emotional responses effectively, particularly in stressful or challenging situations. Individuals with strong self-regulation are better able to adapt to change, manage workplace stress, and make thoughtful decisions (Vohs & Baumeister, 2016; Cherry, 2019).

Another important component of emotional intelligence is social skills, which enhance communication, collaboration, and relationship-building within the workplace (Wu, 2008). Empathy, or the ability to understand and appreciate the emotions and perspectives of others, further strengthens interpersonal relationships and teamwork (Grewal & Davidson, 2008). Finally, motivation plays a crucial role in emotional intelligence by encouraging individuals to remain committed to organizational goals while inspiring and motivating others to perform effectively (Christie et al., 2007). Together, these competencies contribute to improved employee performance, workplace harmony, and organizational success.

Emotional Intelligence and Socio-Demographic Variable

Developing Emotional Intelligence (EI) requires continuous learning and the enhancement of personal and interpersonal skills. The first and most important component is self-awareness, which enables individuals to recognize their emotions, strengths, weaknesses, and behavioural patterns (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001). Self-aware employees are better equipped to understand how their emotions influence their decisions and interactions with others. The second component is self-regulation, which involves managing emotions effectively, especially during stressful or challenging

situations. Individuals with strong self-regulation remain calm under pressure, adapt to changing work environments, and make rational decisions rather than reacting impulsively (Vohs & Baumeister, 2016; Cherry, 2019).

Another essential aspect of EI is the development of social skills, which facilitate effective communication, teamwork, conflict resolution, and relationship building within organizations (Wu, 2008). Empathy, the ability to understand and appreciate the emotions and perspectives of others, strengthens collaboration and creates a supportive workplace culture (Grewal & Davidson, 2008). Finally, motivation encourages individuals to remain committed to organizational goals while inspiring colleagues to achieve higher levels of performance (Christie et al., 2007). These five dimensions—self-awareness, self-regulation, social skills, empathy, and motivation—collectively enhance emotional intelligence, leading to improved employee performance, stronger workplace relationships, higher job satisfaction, and greater organizational effectiveness.

Emotional Intelligence impact on Job Performance

The relationship between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and job performance has been widely explored, with most studies indicating that emotionally intelligent employees perform better in the workplace. However, researchers have not reached a consensus regarding which specific dimensions of EI contribute most significantly to employee performance. EI is generally defined as the ability to recognize, understand, regulate, and effectively utilize emotions in oneself and others, enabling individuals to make sound decisions, communicate effectively, and manage workplace relationships (Mayer et al., 1990; Pekaar et al., 2017). Lopes et al. (2006) and Poon (2002) emphasized that EI enhances social intelligence, motivation, and interpersonal effectiveness, which are essential for organizational success.

Job performance is a critical organizational outcome that influences promotion, retention, compensation, and overall productivity (Ones et al., 2015). Several empirical studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between EI and job performance. Boyatzis et al. (2011) reported that emotionally intelligent employees exhibit greater creativity, innovation, and adaptability. Similarly, Rosete and Ciarrochi (2005) found that employees with higher EI maintain stronger relationships with supervisors and colleagues, resulting in improved communication and higher performance. Research conducted by Higgs (2004), Nel and De Villiers (2004), Shamsuddin and Rahman (2014), Mohamad and Jais (2016), and Dhani et al. (2016) consistently reported significant positive associations between EI and employee performance across different organizational settings. Although a few studies, such as Gryn (2010), found no statistically significant relationship, the majority of evidence supports EI as an important predictor of workplace effectiveness. Therefore, the present study examines the influence of emotional intelligence on job performance in the Indian retail industry, contributing further evidence to this growing body of research.

Theoretical Framework

Emotional Intelligence (EI) has been explained through several theoretical models that describe the competencies required to recognize, understand, and manage emotions effectively. Daniel Goleman proposed five core components of EI: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Cherry, 2019). These competencies enable individuals to manage their emotions, build positive relationships, and improve workplace effectiveness. Earlier, Salovey and Mayer (1990)

conceptualized EI as a form of social intelligence that facilitates emotional understanding and guides effective thinking and behaviour.

Among the widely accepted EI frameworks, three models are prominent: Goleman's Performance Model, Bar-On's Competency Model, and the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Ability Model (Faltas, 2017). Goleman's model emphasizes four dimensions—self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management—which include competencies such as emotional self-control, adaptability, empathy, teamwork, conflict management, and leadership (Ololube, 2016; Craig, 2019). Bar-On's model views EI as a combination of emotional and social competencies that influence behaviour and performance through dimensions such as self-perception, interpersonal skills, decision-making, stress management, and self-expression. In contrast, the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Ability Model considers EI as the ability to perceive, understand, use, and regulate emotions to support reasoning and decision-making (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004). Overall, these models suggest that emotional intelligence is a developable competency that can be strengthened through training, coaching, and practical experience. Organizations that promote emotional intelligence among managers and employees can enhance communication, leadership effectiveness, teamwork, conflict resolution, and overall organizational performance.

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach and Design

The present study adopts a quantitative research approach, which is appropriate for examining the relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance using numerical data and statistical techniques. A quantitative approach is based on the positivist research philosophy, enabling the researcher to collect objective data through structured instruments and draw reliable conclusions (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016; Quinlan et al., 2019). Compared to qualitative research, this approach facilitates hypothesis testing and statistical analysis, making it suitable for investigating associations between variables (Bryman, 2017). The study utilizes primary data, collected directly from respondents through a structured questionnaire, ensuring the relevance and accuracy of the information gathered (Neelankavil, 2015). The research follows a descriptive and correlational research design. A descriptive design is employed to systematically describe the characteristics of the respondents and the study variables using survey data (Stangor & Walinga, 2019).

Sampling and Data Collection

A sampling technique is a method for selecting the respondents (Etikan et al., 2016). There are multiple types of sampling techniques such as systematic, convenience and random (Palinkas et al., 2015). The sampling technique used in the present study is convenience. The convenience method involves collecting data with a preference for proximity and accessibility (Etikan et al., 2016). The data collection instrument chosen is a questionnaire survey. Through this method, the researcher is able to obtain first-hand and the latest knowledge regarding the topic. The sample population are staff working in India's retail sector, while the sample size of the study is 120. The sample size could be termed as adequate since previous studies on a similar topic had around the same number of respondents (Grewal & Davidson, 2008; Vohs & Baumeister, 2016).

Findings and Analysis

Demographic Information

Out of 120 respondents of the current study, the frequency results revealed that 66.7% of males took part in the study. Furthermore, in the case of age group, the larger percentage of respondents were seen to lie in less than 30 years of age group while 33.3% indicated to be between 40 – 49 years of age.

Table 2		
GENDER, AGE AND EXPERIENCE		
	Frequency	Percent
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	80	66.7
Female	40	33.3
<u>Age</u>		
Less than 30 years	42	35
30 – 39 years	22	18.3
40 – 49 years	40	33.3
50 – 59 years	11	9.2
More than 59 years	5	4.2
<u>Work Experience</u>		
Less than 1 year	26	21.7
between 1 to 2 years	55	45.8
between 3 to 4 years	27	22.5
between 5 to 6 years	9	7.5
7 years and above	3	2.5
Total	120	100

Moreover, very few were found to be aged among the other age groups. In addition, when asked about the work experience of these employees 45.8% had 1-2 years of experience, 22.5% had 3 to 4 years of experience while 21.7% indicated to have less than 1 year of experience in the organization. Only 10 percent of the respondents had more than 4 years' experience (Table 2).

Emotional Intelligence Measures

Emotional Intelligence is measured using the constructs under Goleman five capabilities model (Cherry, 2019). Each of the five variables was asked to the respondents through a range of items. These responses are then averaged to formulate one item for each construct. For example, five items of self-awareness have been averaged to form one variable. These variables are then assessed on the basis of descriptive analysis. The result from the same shows that on average the employees have strongly agreed (above 4.5 means) that they find themselves emotionally self-aware. While they have also agreed to have self-control over their emotions, self-motivated, have empathy for others and are good at people's skills (Table 3).

Table 3 DATA ANALYSIS					
Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Self-Awareness	120	2.4	5	4.575	0.41692
Self-Regulation	120	2	5	4.225	0.68015
Motivation	120	2.8	5	4.16	0.54053
Empathy	120	3	5	4.245	0.50374
People skills	120	2.4	5	4.4167	0.58931

Work Performance Measures

In the case of Work Performance, the overall construct has been measured using three constructs of workload, work stress and salary. The overall descriptive findings from the same indicate that employees from the retail sector of India agree to perform well under workload (4.2), work stress (4.42) and current salary and benefits (4.33) (Table 4).

Table 4					
WORK EXPERIENCE ANALYSIS					
Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Work Load	120	2	5	4.2167	0.8905
Work Stress	120	2.8	5	4.4233	0.57229
Salary	120	3	5	4.3396	0.45926

Emotional Intelligence and Demographic Variables

For assessing the mean difference in emotional intelligence between gender groups, an independent sample t-test has been performed. The results from the same indicate that overall test results are insignificant at 0.05 level and there lies no significant difference in the EI of male and female employees in the retail sector of India. Furthermore, it must be noted that this particular finding contradicts the findings of Gur et al. (2002); Lopes et al. (2003), which reflected that women tend to have more emotional intelligence than their male counterparts (Table 5 & 6).

Table 5 GROUP STATISTICS				
Gender		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Emotional Intelligence	<u>Male</u>	80	4.3028	0.26594
	<u>Female</u>	40	4.3675	0.29667

Table 6 INDEPENDENT SAMPLES TEST							
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Emotional Intelligence	Equal variances assumed	0.59	0.443	-1.209	118	0.229	-0.06475
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.166	70.978	0.248	-0.06475

In the case of age groups, one-way ANOVA has been performed to evaluate the mean difference in emotional intelligence between different ages. The results from the same also indicate an insignificant mean difference between different age groups since the sig value is greater than 0.05 level of significance. Based on this result it can be said that the current findings from the retail sector of India, contradicts the findings of Kumar and Muniandy (2012) which supported a positive link between EI and age (Table 7).

Table 7 ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	0.197	4	0.049	0.634	0.639

Withi n Grou ps	8.935	115	0.078		
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In the case of work experience groups, the ANOVA results indicate that there lies a significant mean difference in the emotional intelligence of different work experience groups. The test results are significant at the 0.05 level of significance. These findings are also supported by Jorfi et al. (2011), Kumar & Muniandy (2012); Kumar & Muniandy (2012) who found that the value of emotional intelligence increases with the rise in experience of the employees within a company (Table 8).

Table 8 ANOVA (2)					
	Sum of Squar es	df	Mea n Squar e	F	Sig.
Between n Group s	0.75	4	0.188	2.574	0.041
Withi n Grou ps	8.381	115	0.073		

Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Job Performance

Table 9 CORRELATIONS			
		Emotional Intelligenc e	Job Performance
Emotional Intelligence	Pearson Correlation	1	.391**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0
	N	120	120
Job Performance	Pearson Correlation	.391**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	

	N	120	120
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

For evaluating the significant relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and job performance (JP), the following correlation analysis has been performed. The five constructs of EI and the three constructs of JP have been averaged to one variable each. These two variables' correlation results revealed that there lies a significant positive relationship between them. The test results are found to be significant at the 0.01 level. Moreover, the findings are aligned with the findings of Boyel et al. (2011); Wong & Law (2002); Dhani et al. (2016); Higgs (2004) (Table 9).

Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Job Performance

In order to determine the influence of emotional intelligence among employees and their overall performance towards their jobs, the linear regression analysis has been performed. The results from the same indicate that the fitted model is significant at 0.01 level and overall explains 15.3% variation in job performances due to changes in EI.

Table 10 MODEL SUMMARY						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.391 ^a	0.153	0.146	0.54415		
ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.311	1	6.311	21.315	.000 ^b
	Residual	34.94	118	0.296		
	Total	41.251	119			
a. Dependent Variable: Job Performance						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Emotional Intelligence						

The beta coefficient of the model reflects that the individual impact of emotional intelligence is significant at 0.01 level and 8.31% variation in performance of the employees is expected with a 10% change in emotional intelligence (Table 11).

Table 11 Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.731	0.78		0.937	0.351
	Emotional Intelligence	0.831	0.18	0.391	4.617	0
a. Dependent Variable: Job Performance						

The findings of this regression model are aligned with the findings from past literature whereby suggesting a positive influence of all constructs of emotional intelligence on work performance (Boyel et al., 2011; Wong & Law, 2002; Dhani et al., 2016; Higgs, 2004).

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study confirm that emotional intelligence has a significant positive influence on employee job performance in the Indian retail industry. Employees with higher emotional intelligence demonstrate better workplace performance through improved communication, teamwork, adaptability, and customer relationship management. The analysis further indicates that emotional intelligence does not significantly differ across age and gender, whereas work experience has a positive impact, with experienced employees exhibiting higher emotional intelligence than less experienced employees. Based on these findings, retail organizations should integrate emotional intelligence assessments into recruitment processes and implement regular training and development programs to enhance employees' emotional competencies, thereby improving overall organizational performance and productivity.

LIMITATIONS

The study is limited to employees in the Indian retail sector and uses a relatively small sample size, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the study relies on self-reported questionnaire data, which may be subject to respondent bias.

FUTURE SCOPE

Future research may include a larger and more diverse sample covering multiple industries and geographical regions. Comparative studies across countries and sectors can provide broader insights into emotional intelligence. Researchers may also examine the individual dimensions of emotional intelligence and investigate their specific impact on employee performance using longitudinal or mixed-method research designs.

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