

Emotional Quotient at Workplace: A Study of Corporate Employees

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ABSTRACT:

Emotional intelligence (EI) plays a crucial role in personal effectiveness and workplace productivity. This study examines EI among employees in the Indian corporate sector, focusing on gender differences, job profiles, work experience, and age. Drawing on Singh's (2003) indigenous framework, EI data were collected from 52 employees. Results showed that overall EI levels are high, with emotional competency being the strongest attribute. Emotional sensitivity and emotional maturity were found to be the least developed. HR employees exhibited the highest EI, while IT employees scored moderately. Findings suggest that competency develops rapidly through training, whereas maturity and sensitivity evolve through experience and cultural conditioning. The research suggests role-specific EI development programs to enhance empathy, emotion regulation, and interpersonal effectiveness in Indian corporate settings.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Emotional Competency, Emotional Sensitivity, Emotional Maturity

INTRODUCTION

Traditional management theories developed by Taylor (1947), Fayol (1949), and Weber (1947) concentrated only on managing jobs and not humans. Management principles, scientific management, and bureaucracy did not have a place for humans. It was Mayo (1933) and the behavioral approach to management that, for the first time, brought the human factor into the confines of management. McGregor (1960), Maslow (1954), and Herzberg (1966) all talked about soft skills but never explicitly about emotional skills. Emotions came into the work scenario in 1920 when Thorndike (1920) talked about social intelligence. Fineman (2003) explains that organizational procedures and processes are shaped, negotiated, rejected, reformed, fought over, or celebrated because of feelings. Careers blossom or crash through feelings. Office departments grow, compete, and change around the feelings that frame preferences, politics, and ambitions. Those who work hard seem not to care or rarely take initiative based on emotion. Organizations change or stagnate because of emotions that energize or freeze people. All organizations are emotional arenas where feelings shape events and events shape feelings. Singh and Chhabra (2002) demonstrate that the "Whole Person" concept is the foundation of organizational behavior, as the behavior of the person at work cannot be studied in isolation. When we enter an organization, along with our physical self and intellect, we also carry feelings and emotions of love, hate, anxiety, ego, and pride. Other people coming to work bring along their emotions, and it becomes crucial that these should be managed intelligently. Emotions and emotional intelligence play an important part in organizational concepts like team building and management by succession (Sfetcu, 2020). Today, for promotion in the workplace, executives and managers are required not only to meet work targets but also human targets. Important questions are asked, such as: How many people have you developed? Is your team happy? Are you popular on the floor? What is the attrition rate in your team? The answers to all these questions find their roots in emotions and how well you manage them. Hence, it becomes important to study employees' level of EQ in today's work environment. The study also finds how the levels of EQ varied along different profile variables.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Emotional intelligence (EI), rooted in psychology, has evolved from early ideas of social and non-intellectual abilities (Thorndike, 1920; Wechsler, 1940) to more comprehensive frameworks by theorists such as Gardner

(1993), Salovey and Mayer (1997), Goleman (1995, 1998), and Singh (2003). While definitions vary, they converge on the idea that emotionally intelligent individuals are aware of their own and others' emotions and use this awareness to guide thought and behavior. Goleman (1998) outlined five components, namely "self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills", while emphasizing that identifying, using, understanding, and managing emotions were the components of EI in Salovey and Mayer's (1997) model. Singh (2003) expanded the framework into emotional sensitivity, maturity, and competency, highlighting the importance of self-control, adaptability, empathy, optimism, and interpersonal harmony. Although the terminology differs, all models underline the critical role of EI in personal effectiveness and workplace success. This makes it essential to examine EI within the Indian context to understand its unique cultural and organizational implications (Singh, 2006).

Extensive research has been conducted on emotional intelligence across various fields. Rajkhowa (2002) examined the emotional makeup of IAS officers, while Rajendran, Downey, and Stough (2007) carried out a cross-sectional study of politicians, senior and middle-level executives, experts/professionals, academics, and self-employed individuals. Cavallo (2001) studied Johnson & Johnson, Singh (2003) explored whether different professionals require different levels of EQ, and Punia (2005) examined executives working in the National Capital Region (NCR) and Delhi. Yate (1977) attempted to examine whether different levels of EQ are required for different jobs. He concluded that jobs requiring high levels of interaction with other people demand higher levels of emotional intelligence. Similarly, bosses and leaders dealing with large teams should possess high EQ. He also emphasized that different jobs require different types of emotional intelligence. For instance, a sales professional requires greater empathetic ability, while a professional tennis player requires more self-discipline and motivation. Yate (1977) developed a list of professions, ranking them according to EQ requirements: biochemists, requiring the lowest EQ, were placed at the top, while psychiatrists, requiring the highest EQ, were placed at the bottom. Building on this, Singh (2003) hypothesized that dissimilar professions demand different degrees of emotional intelligence. His study aimed to empirically prove this hypothesis and to rank various professions in descending order of EQ. Cluster I, representing extremely high EQ, included professions such as artists, insurance professionals, and those in advertising. Cluster II, representing high EQ, included professions like teaching, law enforcement, and tourism. Cluster III, representing average EQ, included professions such as accountancy, banking, engineering, and IT. These jobs involve structured frameworks and limited interaction with people, explaining their lower EQ requirements. Rajkhowa (2002) specifically studied IAS officers to assess EQ levels and compare two age groups: 30–45 years and 46–60 years. Results indicated that approximately 77% of officers scored average on EQ. Punia (2005) examined the relationship between EI and leadership behaviors, finding a positive correlation between leaders' EI and their performance. Similarly, Chabungbam (2005) proposed that EI bridges the gap between stress and performance. According to him, dimensions of EQ such as empathy, optimism, and self-awareness contribute to stress management and, consequently, higher performance. Malekar (2005) studied the role of EQ components in job design, emphasizing that placing the right person in the right position enhances organizational effectiveness. She highlighted three important components from Goleman's (1995) model of EI—social interaction, empathy, and motivation. Her study positioned EI as a critical tool for HR departments to ensure effective placement, avoiding the assignment of employees to roles for which they are inherently unsuited. Mansi (2002) studied the impact of EI on decision-making among managers. The hypothesis was that EI might influence decision-making styles, and the study sought to establish whether a relationship existed between the two. It concluded that the job profiles of managers and assistant managers in this context did not demand high levels of EQ. Cavallo (2001) conducted research at Johnson & Johnson Consumer & Personal Care Group, where 183 managers participated in a multi-rater survey. The findings showed that high-performing managers scored significantly higher on self-awareness, self-management, and social skills, all components of EI, compared to low-performing managers. It was further revealed that while technical (intellectual) skills can be learned relatively easily, EI skills require focused training and more time, as they are developed early in life and become part of one's self-image. In another example, American Express introduced emotional competency training for financial advisors. Advisors who received training reported business growth of 18.1%, compared to 16.2% for those without training. Nearly 90% of trained advisors reported significant improvements in sales performance. As a result, emotional competence training has become a standard part of onboarding for all incoming advisors (Schwartz, 2000). Further, EI helps in enhancing engagement levels, stress management, and maintaining good work-life balance (Rangreji, 2010; Vijayakumar, Navas, & Sulthan, 2022).

EI and Modern Indian Perspective

India and Indians differ from the rest of the world not only based on culture, customs, background, and social setup, but also on emotions, behaviors, and temperaments. Compared to the West, India has always been a hub of emotions and emotional display; in Bollywood or cricket, emotions play a vital role in behavior and performance, as well as in decision-making and other organizational processes. This kind of emotional zeal blinded people from understanding the frauds and scams that were constructed in the same organisation. As Subroto Roy emotionally connected with the employees, calling them their *pariwar*. As he once said, “This belief in emotional integration forms the very basis of the existence of our *Pariwar*, where more importance is given to E.Q. (Emotional Quotient) than I.Q. (Intelligence Quotient)” (Source: <http://saharanext.com/aboutUs/swapnaRoy.asp>). A landmark example of emotion-driven decision-making was the case of Tata Motors, where Chairman Ratan Tata decided to produce a small-segment car after witnessing a four-member family wobbling on a scooter during a monsoon night amid heavy rains in Mumbai. He described this as an emotionally driven decision to manufacture a car that such two-wheeler-owning families could buy (Source: <http://www.easydriveforum.com/showthread.php?t=2245>).

Thus, Indian executives follow a different managerial approach that is more empathetic, straightforward (non-calculative), spontaneous, and understanding compared to executives in the US, UK, and Europe (Schragle-Law & Capelli, 2010; Bath, 2024; Aponte-Moreno, 2024). Although non-cognitive aspects are gaining importance in the West, differences remain in how people behave, think, react, and act, especially between India and the US.

Indian executives value lifelong association and stability more than their global counterparts, and organizational mission and vision statements in India are often designed to develop emotional attachment among employees. Therefore, it is essential to examine EI from an Indian perspective. Relationship focus is critical in both personal and professional relationships (InspireOne, 2022).

For this study, we consider the EI definition developed by Singh (2003). At a national interactive workshop organized by the PHD CCI in Delhi on August 16, 2002, more than 100 chief executives, researchers, and psychologists, along with students, contributed responses to identify the core components of EI. From 322 participants, 1,610 responses (322×5) were collected and analyzed. After expert validation, the responses were categorized into three main dimensions—emotional competency, emotional maturity, and emotional sensitivity—which explained 85% of the variance. This led to the following indigenous definition of EI. For this study, EI will be assessed based on this definition, as it is considered suitable for Indian employees.

Research Objectives and Hypotheses

The fundamental ideology behind the research study is to evaluate the level of EQ among BPO employees and to explore gender differences concerning their respective EQ levels. It also aims to assess whether differences exist across various job profiles, such as Finance, Travel, HR, and IT, in relation to their EQ levels. Further, the study examines the relationship between length of service (work experience) and EQ, as well as the relationship between age and EQ among BPO employees.

Based on these objectives, the following hypotheses were formulated. First, the study tests whether there is a significant variance between male and female employees in relation to their EQ levels. Second, it examines whether EQ levels vary across different job profiles. Third, it explores whether EQ levels differ depending on the respondents' total work experience, and fourth, whether EQ levels differ across groups formed based on biological age.

Analysis

The present study collected data from 52 corporate sector employees, including demographic variables such as age, gender, and qualification, which were further categorized into groups for analysis as shown in the table below.

Table 1: Profile Variables and Groups

Qualification	Graduate	19
	Postgraduate Diploma	20
	Postgraduate Degree	13
Job Profile	Travel	17
	IT	9
	HR	10
	Finance	16
Gender	Male	29
	Female	23
Age	21-26 yrs	21
	27-31 yrs	24
	32-36 yrs	7
Work Experience	1-5 yrs	25
	6-10 yrs	19
	11-15 rs	8

*Total counts for a sample size of 52 (n) each

The following table shows the mean score and standard deviations of the total sample size of 52 respondents. All the employees in the BPO sector are highly emotionally intelligent. The strongest component of EQ in the sample is competency, followed by emotional sensitivity, while the least developed attribute of emotional intelligence is emotional maturity.

Table 2: Total EQ and Interpretation

	Mean	S.D	Interpretation	Rank
Total ES score	84.88	11.78	Moderate	2
Total EM score	108.98	16.31	Moderate	3
Total EC score	167.02	17.61	High	1
Total EQ Score	360.88	39.67	High	

All the employees in the BPO sector are highly emotionally intelligent. The strongest component of EQ in the sample is competency, followed by emotional sensitivity, while the least developed attribute of emotional intelligence is emotional maturity.

The mean scores of both categories indicate that both male and female employees have “High EQ.” However, these differences are statistically insignificant. Further, the components of EQ also show variations across different job profiles. ES scores are high in Travel, HR, and Finance employees, but moderate in IT employees. EM is high in Travel and HR, moderate in Finance, and low in IT employees, whereas EC is extremely high in Travel and HR employees and high in Finance and IT employees. Overall, employees across all job profiles are strongest in emotional competency, followed by emotional sensitivity, and relatively weakest in emotional maturity within the BPO sector. The p-values in all cases are less than the alpha level (0.05), so we accept the alternative hypothesis that there is a significant variation among different job profiles in relation to their EQ levels.

Table 3: Comparison of EQ levels Between Different Test Groups

EQ Components	Male	Female	t-value	Significance
ES	84.17	85.78	0.486*	0.629
EM	109.76	108.00	-0.383*	0.703
EC	165.00	169.57	0.927*	0.358
Total EQ	358.93	363.35	0.395*	0.694

EQ components	21-26 Years	27-31 Years		32-36 Years	F-Value	Significance
ES	79.71	88.13		89.29	3.79	0.03
EM	103.67	111.25		117.14	2.34	0.11
EC	163.10	169.58		170.00	0.87	0.43
Total EQ	346.48	368.96		376.43	2.57	0.09
EQ components	Travel	IT	HR	Finance	F-Value	Significance
ES	88.82	72.67	88.50	85.31	5.22	0.000
EM	117.35	86.89	116.50	107.81	13.35	0.003
EC	170.29	143.89	181.50	167.50	13.30	0.000
Total EQ	85.31	107.81	167.50	360.63	16.21	0.000
EQ Components	1-5 years	6- 10 years		11-15 years	t-value	Significance
ES	82.36	86.58		88.75	1.211	0.307
EM	104.68	111.05		117.50	2.214	0.120
EC	163.8	170.0		170.0	0.798	0.456
Total EQ	350.84	367.63		376.25	1.724	0.189

The above Table exhibits no significant variation in the total EQ levels across all three groups. The interpretation of the mean scores shows that EQ levels are high in all three groups. But the variance is also statistically insignificant, as shown in Table 3. Therefore, we accept the null hypothesis (H03) that EQ levels do not differ across groups formed based on work experience.

The above table shows the relationship between EQ and age across three age groups. The scores of EM, EC, and overall EQ are greater than alpha (0.05), but the observed significance of ES is lower than the threshold, indicating a significant relationship between age groups and ES. As evident from the table, ES increases with the age of BPO employees. However, for EM, EC, and overall EQ, this does not hold, as the mean scores increase but are not statistically significant, with p-values greater than the significance level. For ES, we reject the null hypothesis (H04) that EQ levels do not differ across groups formed based on respondents' biological age.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the current investigation, the employees at the workplace exhibited high emotional competence compared to emotional maturity and emotional sensitivity. It can be attributed to the fact that competencies can be acquired fast, but maturity and sensitivity are developed over time through experience, self-introspection, and cultural conditioning (Cherniss and Goleman, 2001). Singh 2006 also states that both maturity and sensitivity are undervalued and hence they may be underdeveloped (Singh, 2006). As in general, the corporate sector employees are well trained on competency-related skills, they exhibited higher competency than maturity and sensitivity (Ghosh, 2021).

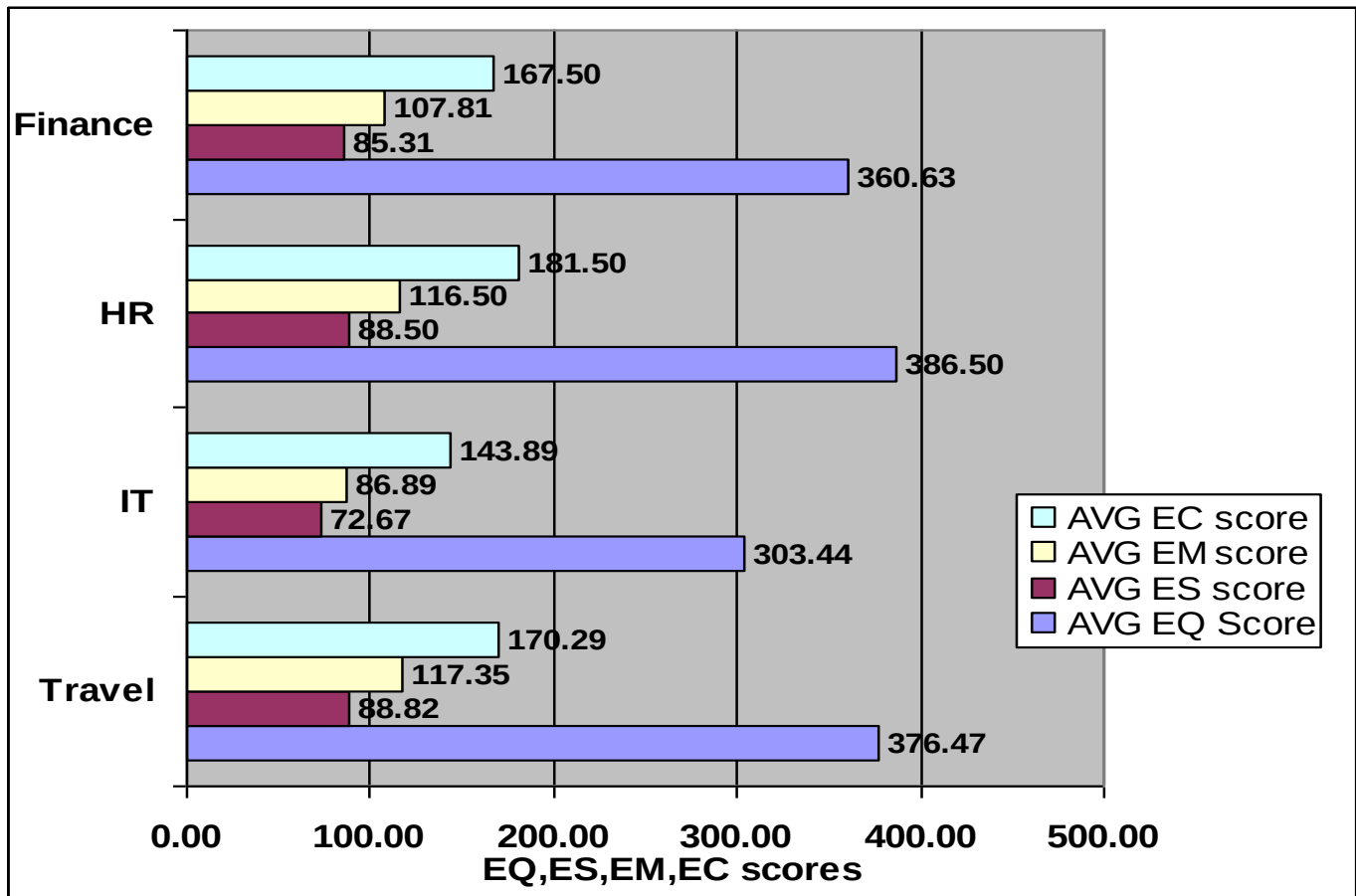
Further, it was found that HR employees are extremely emotionally intelligent, while IT employees are moderately intelligent in terms of EQ. Based on the above scores, the four job profiles can be categorized into extremely high, high, and moderate EI:

- **Extremely high:** Human Resources – managing people, training and development, handling grievances and complaints, recruitment, and selection.
- **High:** Travel and Finance – data processing, ticketing, processing customer refunds, working on exchanges, bookkeeping, accounting, reconciliation, etc.
- **Moderate:** Information Technology – providing technical support, helpdesk, and handling product usage queries.

Human resource executives were found to be extremely emotionally intelligent, which is evident from the fact that their roles involve dealing with people and maintaining the dignity and reputation of the company(Cuéllar-

Molina, García-Cabrera, and Déniz-Déniz, 2019). These executives are also highly mature in handling emotions. They are efficient in recognizing their own feelings, concerned with the development of others, aware of which emotions to apply in which situation, and skilled in people management (Nagar, 2017). These employees also scored high on emotional competency, indicating that they know the art of channeling emotions positively.

Figure 1: EI Across Job Profiles.



It was evident from the chart that travel executives are highly emotionally intelligent, with scores on EC, EM, and ES similar to those of HR executives. The travel profile also involves extensive customer interaction. Their roles demand constant interpersonal interaction, empathy, and emotion regulation while managing diverse customer needs (Grandey, 2000; Goleman, 1998), hence they exhibit higher EI. Finance employees in the corporate sector were also highly emotionally intelligent, unlike finance and accounting professionals in other sectors, who have scored average EQ (Singh, 2003). In the corporate sector, finance is not purely skill-based, where desk instructions can provide solutions to all problems; it involves interacting with superiors, overseas accounting teams, and understanding their viewpoints and suggestions. Accounting work in corporates requires understanding processes across different locations, which involves interaction and communication. Standard skill-set training is often insufficient due to job variability. Therefore, in the corporate sector, accounting is not only about applying accounting concepts but also about understanding the wider business impact of their work. Human and, importantly, emotional skills are essential, as they help employees develop rapport with clients and gain insights into critical nuances of their work, which are not included in training manuals. This may explain why finance employees score high on EI in the corporate sector. IT professionals typically score moderately on emotional intelligence (EI), as their roles are largely technical and skill-based, involving limited interpersonal interaction (Carmeli, 2003). Helpdesk and technical support roles, however, require a moderate degree of EI, particularly for understanding and addressing customer queries effectively (Sy & O'Hara, 2006; Lopes et al., 2006).

Lastly, the research showed that EQ levels do not differ across the three groups, but emotional sensitivity varies across age groups, and it can be concluded that emotional sensitivity increases as corporate employees grow older. Age-related socialization and workplace exposure may explain this trend, as older employees often

encounter more diverse interpersonal situations, which enhance emotional sensitivity (Kafetsios, 2004). They become slightly more empathetic and also improve their interpersonal skills with age.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Emotional intelligence varies across job profiles, with HR executives showing the highest EI, followed by travel and finance, while IT employees score moderately. Emotional competency develops faster through training, whereas emotional maturity and sensitivity grow with experience and age. Organizations should implement role-specific EI development programs, emphasizing empathy, emotion regulation, and mentoring to strengthen interpersonal skills and enhance overall workplace effectiveness.

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