

Does Experience Matter in Emotional Intelligence: A Study with Indian Managers

Smarty Mukundan

Asst Professor, Dheen Dhayal Upadhyay Kaushal Kendra (DDUKK), Cochin University of Science and Technology (CUSAT), Kerala, India

smaremin@gmail.com

Abstract: *Emotional intelligence is considered to be a vital competence for managers at workplace to create and nourish positive relationships. It is asserted that EI is largely learned and therefore this competence increases with experience. The study was done to confirm this association with a sample of managers working in the service sector. It was found that EI increase with experience and also across the managerial levels.*

Keywords: *Emotional Intelligence, Experience, Managers, Service Sector.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence is a concept that gained popularity in behavioural psychology in the last three decades and has been acclaimed as the best predictor for work and life success in the context of a workplace. Mayer and Salovey (1997) defines emotional Intelligence as the ability to accurately perceive, evaluate, express emotions; to understand emotions and emotional knowledge and the ability to manage emotions by promoting emotional and intellectual growth.

Today organisations are characterised by a lot of uncertainties, complexity and intense competition especially in the service sector. At the same time businesses are highly customer oriented and employees within the firm needs to put in great efforts to make their customers satisfied (Bhasharat & Raja, 2013). Therefore employees and leaders must give due attention to emotional intelligence as the right usage of emotions and emotional skills are vital to create and nourish positive relationships in a workplace (Gardenswartz, Cherbosque & Rowe, 2010). According to Bar-On (2010) EI assists an individual in adjusting and adapting to the emotions present in their environment and to effectively solve problems in a productive manner to survive. EI is not about recognising and responding to emotions at a personal level, but to the emotions of others, as well. Therefore the traditional stereo type role of a rational manager needs to be replaced by one of an emotional manager (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2003) in the present context.

There has been innumerable research evidence over the years to prove that emotional intelligence at workplace is necessary for better job performance, team orientation, to develop interpersonal skills, for effective leadership etc (Krishnaveni & Deepa, 2010; O'Boyle, Humphrey, Pollack, Hawver, and Story, 2011; Chen, Bian & Hou, 2015). It is said that very few psychological investigations seem to have appeared in so vast areas of human endeavour so quickly and expansively as has the concept of emotional intelligence (Mathews, Roberts & Zeidner, 2003)

2. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND EXPERIENCE

Goleman in his popular book 'Working with Emotional Intelligence' asserts that unlike IQ, emotional intelligence is largely learned over a period of time. With years of working, people get better and better in this competence and grow more adept at handling their emotions and impulses, at motivating themselves, and at honing their empathy and social adroitness (Goleman 1998) which he simply terms as 'Maturity'. Mayer & Salovey, (1997) asserts that EI unlike other intelligences is one that increases with age and experience. Several empirical studies were later done to confirm it empirically (Day & Carroll 2004; Kafetsios, 2004; Extremera et al., 2006; Shipley, Jackson, & Segrest, 2010). Despite these findings, there is a limited amount of research that has examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and work

experience. Though we may conclude that emotional intelligence will increase as work experience increases much more empirical research is needed to test this hypothesis, which prompted the researcher to explore into this aspect.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objective of the study was to verify whether EI increases with experience. Therefore we set the hypothesis for the study as follows-

1. There is significant association between work experience and emotional intelligence
2. There is a significant difference in emotional intelligence across different managerial levels

4. METHODOLOGY

The service sector is characterised by high volatility and intense competition and hence demands EI based skills in their day to day interactions with customers and among employees. Considering these aspects, the researcher made an attempt to do the study in this sector particularly in the state of Kerala, which is making advances in the service sector relatively at a faster pace than many other states (Economic Review – Kerala 2016). Data was collected from 140 managers employed in the service sector from Kerala which included financial services, IT, ITES, Hospitality and health care sectors. BEIS (Bhattacharya Emotional Intelligence) Scale a valid and reliable tool prepared by Bhattacharya, Dutta and Mandal (2004) was used to measure Emotional intelligence. It has 40 items can be scored in two levels- a total score reflecting the general EI Score and second is assessing the branch scores of EI namely-Appraisal of negative emotions & positive emotions, Interpersonal conflict and difficulty, Interpersonal skill and flexibility, Emotional facilitation and goal orientation. This instrument has been used widely amongst studies conducted amongst managers in an Indian context.

The data was analysed using SPSS version 21. The sample consisted of 87 males and 53 females and average age of employees was 36 years. 35.71% of the total sample belonged to the junior managerial level and 45% and 19.29% each in the middle and senior levels. In order to determine if emotional intelligence was positively associated with work experience, bivariate correlations were done. To further analyse, whether EI varies across different managerial levels a one-way ANOVA was performed.

5. RESULTS

A Pearson product moment correlation was run to see the association between experience and emotional intelligence and shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Correlation between Experience and emotional intelligence

Experience and emotional intelligence	
Pearson Correlation	.385**
Sig. Value	.001
N	140

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

From Table No: 1, the Pearson value is found to be significant with a value of 0.385, with $p < .001$, indicating a significantly moderate relationship between experience and emotional intelligence.

To verify the second objective a one way ANOVA was performed. The descriptive statistics of this is presented in Table No:2 and the results of the one-way ANOVA are as shown in Table 3.

Table No: 2 -Mean Scores of EI across different management levels

Managerial Level	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Junior management	50	133.94	14.80	102	174
Middle management	63	142.10	18.81	111	188
Senior management	27	150.18	17.66	122.00	186

The mean values of EI scores for junior, middle, senior management were found to be 133.94, 142.10 & 150.18 respectively suggesting that the EI scores are increasing from the junior levels to the senior level.

Table 3 -Summary table of one way ANOVA between managerial levels and emotional intelligence

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4626.92	3	2418.21	8.120	.000
Within Groups	45634.74	140	297.80		

Table3.1 - Post Hoc test results showing differences in Emotional intelligence across managerial levels

Managerial level		Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Junior management	Middle management	-8.15524*	3.26847	.014	-14.6184	-1.6921
	Senior management	-16.24519*	4.12135	.000	-24.3949	-8.0955
Middle management	Junior management	8.15524*	3.26847	.014	1.6921	14.6184
	Senior management	-8.08995*	3.96945	.043	-15.9393	-.2406
Senior management	Junior management	16.24519*	4.12135	.000	8.0955	24.3949
	Middle management	8.08995*	3.96945	.043	.2406	15.9393

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The mean scores of EI were the highest at the senior level as seen from Table No: 2. The output of the ANOVA analysis (See Table No: 3) to ascertain whether we have statistically significant difference between the group means. We can see that the p value = .000, which is below 0.05, and therefore, there is a statistically significant difference in EI scores amongst the different levels of management. Post-hoc test reveals that there are significant differences between the groups as a whole. A significant difference in EI scores between the junior management and middle management levels ($p = 0.014$), as well as between middle management levels and senior management ($p = 0.043$) and also between the junior management and senior management groups ($p = 0.000$) is found from the table 3.2. As we look at the mean EI values across the different managerial levels we see that there is an increase in the EI scores from the junior to the senior levels.

6. DISCUSSION

Our results show that emotional intelligence has a significant association with experience as we found a significant positive correlation from the study. It was also found that EI tends to increase as one move from the junior to senior managerial levels. This proves that with experience

emotional intelligence increases. The finding therefore confirms the contention put forward by Goleman, that EI is a competence that is largely learned and there exists a 'maturity effect'. If concerted efforts are made in each of the EI domains this can be increased with experience. Several studies done further also says that experience was positively correlated with three of the four emotional intelligence scales, as measured by the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (Day & Carroll, 2004). Van Rooy, Alonso, and Viswesvaran 2005, Fariselli, Ghini & Freedman, 2008) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and age and a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and age was found. Studies of Shipley et al., 2010 and Roy & Choudary (2011) also found that EI and experience has a significant association. The result of the present study also confirms the same.

7. LIMITATIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND FURTHER SCOPE

The findings have its implications for managers as we see that as one traverse from a junior position to senior levels EI increases. It is said that mere experience is not the predictor of high EI, but a concerted effort from the individual is also necessary. With appropriate training interventions at

workplace manager can be groomed to be competent in EI while taking up higher positions.

The study however has its own limitations as the sample size here was very small. Further studies may be done with large sample sizes to make a generalisation possible. Also future studies may conduct longitudinal studies and verify whether EI can be increased with training and the results studied over a period of years with managers.

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