

Emotional Intelligence, Social Freedom and Women's Personal Space

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With a view to investigate into the impact of working and non-working status of women on emotional intelligence (EI) as well as on desire for social freedom as also to examine the differential impact of emotional intelligence, social freedom and working -non-working status on women's personal space, data was collected from 100 working and 100 non-working women using Mangal's Emotional Intelligence Inventory (EII) and Bhushan's Women's Social Freedom (WSF) scale together with experimental measures of personal space. The obtained results revealed that i) Working women excelled over non-working women in terms of emotional intelligence (EI) and desire for social freedom, and ii) the respondents belonging to high EI group, high desire for social freedom group and working group preferred smaller personal space (PS). Findings have been discussed in the light of related literature.

Keywords : Emotional Intelligence (EI), Social Freedom (SF) , Personal Space (PS), Working / Non-working women, Unobtrusive Measure.

Personal space (PS) refers to the area individuals actively maintain around themselves into which others can not intrude without arousing discomfort. Myers (1983) has defined personal space as the buffer zone we like to maintain around our bodies. As the term suggests, personal space is a subjective factor and thus a wide range of individual differences can be observed in preference of personal space. Some like to maintain wider personal space both in personal and social life, others like to maintain a minimum space with others.

Wide personal differences have been observed in preference of personal space. Various personal factors like age, sex, education, familiarity / unfamiliarity etc. have deep impact on the preference of PS. Aiello (1976) found that crowded children demonstrated rise in skin conductance (indicating stress), and reported feelings of annoyance and discomfort. Older people prefer less personal space. Aiello and Aiello

(1974) reported that elderly people prefer smaller PS as teenagers do. Men prefer more PS than women (Willis, 1966; Edwards, 1972). People of both sexes place themselves closer to women than a man (Altman, 1975). Willis (1966) found preference of less personal space with friends. Bell, Kline and Barnard (1988) found that friends maintained closer distances than strangers influencing PS. Cook (1970) reported that introverts preferred large PS whereas Myers (1983) found that extroverts preferred less PS. There is, however, a clear deficit as regards the role of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence (EI) is concerned with the feelings of others emotions, comfort-discomfort and the like. Naturally, a person having more EI is more likely to be attracted toward other person's problems as well as needs. As such, more the EI, lesser the PS. EI and women's desire for social freedom, likewise, seem to be related to a significant extent. EI, as the ability to monitor one's own as well as others

emotions, to discriminate among them and to use these information plays a major role in guiding one's thinking and action. On the other hand, women's social freedom refers to women's desire to be free from social taboos, conventions, rituals and the roles which provide them with lower status as compared to men especially in Indian society. It would, thus, appear that women high on desire for social freedom would also be high on the ability to monitor and utilize their own emotions and that of their fellow women. In view of the above, the present study was undertaken:

Objectives:

(i) to examine the impact of working and non-working women on EI and desire for social freedom.

(ii) to examine the differential impact of emotional intelligence, desire for social freedom and working non-working status on women's personal space.

Method

Sample:

The sample of the study comprised of 100 working and 100 non-working women belonging to Patna. They were selected using incidental cum-purposive sampling technique. Working women belonged to governmental and private organizations. All non-working women were house wives. In other respect they were matched so far as practicable.

Tools:

Mangal's Emotional Intelligence Inventory (Mangal & Mangal, 2004): It was used to measure emotional intelligence of the respondents. It consisted of 100 items in four areas : (a) intra-personal awareness (own emotions), (b) inter-personal awareness (others emotions), (c) intra-personal management (own emotions) and (d) inter-personal management (others emotions), each consisting of twenty five items. Each item has two alternatives—yes or no. Scoring

process is simple. One score is given for yes and zero score is given for no alternative.

Bhushan's Women's Social Freedom Scale (1987): It was administered to the respondents for measuring their social freedom. This scale consisted of 24 items (16 positive and 8 negative) with two alternative answers-agree or disagree. The maximum possible score is 24 and minimum score is zero. The scale is highly reliable and valid.

Measurement of Personal Space: Five basic procedures have been used to measure the personal space. They are unobtrusive observation, stop distance, chair placement or selection, felt board and paper pencil technique. In the present investigation, unobtrusive observation was used to measure PS of the respondents.

Procedure:

The respondents from different sub-groups were called to sit as per their convenience, on the carpet. The subjects were asked to take a comfortable seat. The choice of seat and the distance maintained were recorded. The distance maintained by each respondent from investigators was measured. Besides, observations were also made during the assemblage in the assigned place and the way the respondents sat with each other. This enabled the investigators to measure PS in each case. Precautions were taken to keep the measurement process strictly secret. The next respondent met the investigator(s) only when she was called in. In this way quantitative measure of PS was made possible.

Results

The results displayed by table 1 clearly indicated the significant effect of working non-working dimensions on EI and women's desire for social freedom. Working women excelled over non-working women counterparts in respect of EI. The difference between the means was found significant beyond 0.01 level of confidence. Further, working women

excelled in respect of desire for social freedom. Here also, the difference between the means was found significant beyond 0.01 level.

Table 01. Mean, SD and t-value showing the differential impact of Working (N=100) and non-working (N=100) status on EI and women’s desire for social freedom.

Variable	Working		Non-working		t-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
EI	82.72	11.24	68.29	10.07	9.50 **
WSF	18.89	6.24	13.56	5.12	6.66 **

(df = 198) **p <.01

Table 02. Mean, SD and t-value showing the impact of EI, desire for social freedom and working non-working status on women’s personal space.

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value
EI	High	30	15.84	5.74	4.58 **
	Low	30	22.35	5.32	
WSF	High	30	16.29	5.27	4.92 **
	Low	30	23.08	5.45	
Work Status	Working	30	15.58	5.79	4.28 **
	Non-working	30	22.14	6.05	

(df = 58) **p<.01

The results displayed by table 2 clearly indicated the significant impact of EI women’s desire of social freedom and working non-working status on women’s PS. It is clear that high EI group of respondents maintained smaller PS as compared to their counterparts belonging to low EI group. The difference between the two means was found significant.

Further, women having high desire for social freedom preferred smaller PS than women having low desire for social freedom. The difference between the means was also found significant. Further, inspection of the lower part of table - 02 clearly indicated that working non-working status of the women has significant differential impact on preference of PS. Women belonging to working status

maintained smaller personal space than women belonging to non-working status. The difference between the means was found significant.

Discussion

The findings relating to the results shown in table 01 clearly indicate that working women excelled over non-working women in terms of emotional intelligence. This finding is interpreted on the ground that working condition privileged the working women. It is a hard fact that emotions influence the process of perception and reactions towards life which in turn determine how content and successful a person may be considered. Any one can achieve emotional intelligence by attaining one’s goals and managing negative emotions. If un-managed, negative emotions hamper life. Goleman (1995) suggests that EI helps us in understanding why people with high IQ’S do not always do as well in life as those with more modest intellectual ability. Deficit in EI creates serious problems in our relationship and influence our cognition. Working women are found with high EI and thereby they excelled over non-working women due to various inter as well as intra-societal conditions. EI is conducive to maintaining satisfactory interpersonal relation on the part of working women as compared to non-working women. This finding is in agreement with many previous studies (Rice, 1999; Fitness, 2001; Sinha & Jain , 2004; Thingujam, 2007; Smith, Heaven & Ciarrochi, 2008).

Further, working women excelled over the non-working women in respect of desire for social freedom. This finding is interpreted on the ground of more field independence, higher degree of self confidence, high ego-strength in working women due to greater external exposure and more frequent opportunity to meet with stressful situations leading to higher degree of desire for social freedom than in non-working women. Non-working women are orthodox, rigid and field

dependent leading to inferior desire for social freedom. This finding is consistent with various previous Indian studies (Kumar, 2003, Kumar & Singh, 2009; Kumari, 2009; Kumari & Kumar, 2007; Lal, 2008)

The dominance of high EI group of respondents in terms of preferring smaller PS than their counterparts belonging to low EI group might be interpreted on the ground of stronger ego-strength, self-concept as well as associative motivation. Persons belonging to high EI group do not feel shy to interact. They possess higher degree of self-confidence and association with humanity thus they interact with others with least discomfort. Endowed with social self they are more participative. The respondents of high EI group are characterized by life success (Baron, 2001), life satisfaction and well being (Palmer, Donaldson, & Stough, 2002), interpersonal relationship (Fitness, 2001), occupational stress (Nikalaou & Tsaopu Sis, 2002; Slaski & Cartwright, 2002), leadership (Palmer, Walls, Bergess, & Stough, 2000), cognitive and emotional differentiation (Mathews & Zeidner, 2000), successful emotional management (Salovey, 2001), moderating role of EI in the relationship of stress with other correlated variables (Ciarroch, et al 2002), expected to cope effectively with environmental demands (Nikollou et. al, 2002). Contrary to it women with low EI possess poor confidence, low ego-strength and lower level of associative motives and so such women often avoid interaction as they do not feel comfortable in close proximity. The results on the part of low EI group might also be interpreted on the ground of poor cognition (Salovey & Mayer 1990), poor optimism (Goleman, 1995, 1998), mood control, happiness, teamwork and co-operation (Mayer & Salovey, 1997), pro-social behaviour, parental warmth, and positive family and peer relations (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000, Solovey, Mayer, Caruso & Lopes, 2001), incorporate ability (Thingujam,

2004), life satisfaction (Wing et al, 2006), relationship quality (Bralkelt, 2005) marital dis-satisfaction (Bricker, 2005), cognitive differentiation (Taylor, 2001), work success and performance (Vaucala, Tsaousis & Nikalaou, 2004).

Further the findings relating to the dominance of high desire for social freedom in terms of preferring smaller PS might be interpreted on the ground of more field independence of the respondents belonging to high groups than low groups (Khatri, 1975). The respondents belonging to high groups are characterized by high level of self confidence, ego-strength as well as associative motivation leading to smaller PS (Jain, 1976). Contrary to it women respondents having low desire of social freedom are found to be closed mindedness, rigid, conservative and characterized by poor EI (Bricker, 2005).

The dominance of working women over non-working women in terms of personal space seems justified on the ground that working women avail the opportunities of exposed environment due to their working conditions. The demands of working conditions enhance their self-confidence, socio-economic condition leading to a more comfortable position in interaction. Such women hardly shy while making any interaction with the people at any condition. On the other hand, non-working women are deprived of such benefits. It can, thus, be concluded that i) Working status of women is conducive to high emotional intelligence (EI) and high desire for social freedom; and ii) High EI, high desire for social freedom and working status of women are conducive to maintenance of smaller personal space. It can only be generalized with increased confidence only after further researches are conducted in this area on larger, heterogeneous sample using advanced statistical techniques for analysis and treatment of the obtained data.

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