

## **Emotional Intelligence as a Mediator of Work-Family Role Conflict, Quality of Work Life and Happiness among IT Professionals**

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Emotional Intelligence is considered to be a very powerful tool to an employee to manage relationships and achieve success at workplace. The study explored its relationship to some of the important psychosocial variables in order to assess what exactly makes this component so useful indeed. The study included 120 IT professionals of Kolkata employed in public as well as private Private sectors. The sampling was purposive in nature and included only those who were interested to participate. It followed a correlational design to achieve its aim. The findings indicated that Emotional intelligence promotes Happiness, especially in case of female employees, and it also relates positively to Quality of Work Life of employees. Emotional Intelligence bears a negative relationship with Work-Family Role Conflict, indicating that Emotional Intelligence tunes down the perception of Role conflict and thereby reduces the stress produced by it.

**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence, Work Life, Family Conflict, Information Technology (IT)

Emotional Intelligence has become a very controversial topic for the last few years. Innumerable claims have been made regarding the power of this construct to make someone successful or unsuccessful, especially at workplace. It is often considered to be a cure-all solution by Business Firms. These unaccountable expectations and claims attenuate the scientific value of this construct and scholars have often raised their voices against the existence of such a construct. A rather wise path to establish the utility of EI would be to relate it to some of the basic, related and much relevant variables, which are known to contribute to a large extent to make someone successful or unsuccessful at work and relationships. Some of these variables are Work-Family Role Conflict Quality of Work Life and Happiness.

In the last three decades, Work-family Role Conflict and its far reaching

consequences to the individual as well as to the organization have consistently remained in the focus of attention of the researchers (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Carlson & Perrew, 1999; Zedeck, 1992). Studies suggest that conflict between work and family responsibilities are associated with adverse psychological and physiological outcomes for employees and thus have a profound effect on the performance of employees and their relationships with significant others (Frone, Russel, & Cooper, 1992; Bedian, Burke & Moffet, 1988). It also predicts absenteeism (Barling, MacEwen, Kelloway & Higginbottom, 1994; Goff, Mount & Jamison, 1990), burnout, turnover (Frone et al. 1992; Bacharach, Bamberger & Conley, 1991) and decreased job, family and life satisfaction (Boles, Madupalli, Rutherford, & Wood, 2007; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). Given these findings, the justification of inclusion of this variable may

be easily demonstrated. Furthermore, it is also reasonable to expect that the Work-family Role Conflict would have a significant relationship with Emotional Intelligence, since Emotional Intelligence has been found to moderate the effect of Work-family Role Conflict on subjective Well-being (Lenaghan, Buda & Eisner, 2007).

Perceived Quality of Work Life (QWL) is another variable of interest in the present research, since it has emerged as a very powerful construct that affects all most all facets of an employee's life. A higher QWL enhances organizational identification, job satisfaction, job involvement, job effort and job performance and also promotes well-being of employees (Dockery, 2003). In fact, the importance of QWL today is so well recognized that companies spend quite a good amount of money toward QWL interventions. Thus, if a significant positive link between Emotional Intelligence and QWL is obtained, we may find a basis for some of the claims made regarding the role of Emotional Intelligence in workplace.

Happiness is a very powerful tool to an employee that not only contributes toward the sense of internal contentment to the employee, but also to those who surround him. Thus, happy people tend to have better relationships with greater number of people. It is also believed that they themselves are more productive as employees and when working in a group, they enhances the group's morale and lessens the negative forces existing within the group, thus making the group more work-oriented and committed to the organization. In all kinds of jobs, Happiness or the 'fun' part must be present there within the employee psyche as it makes up half of total success in a job, competence being the other half.

IT professionals of Kolkata were chosen as the population of the present study. IT professionals are involved in acquisition, processing, storage of vocal, pictorial, textual

and numerical information which demand extensive use of IT skills (Rethinam & Ismail, 2008). The nature of job exposes the IT professionals to high task complexity that possibly leads them to high strain, uncertainty and lack of proper personal development opportunities as well as a greater imbalance of work with non-work activities. (Rethinam & Ismail, 2008). Researchers coined technostress concept while discussing stress that is related to IT (Bradley, 2001). Technostress includes the pressure of mastering the IT revolution, the daily frustrations and sudden interruptions of software bugs or system crashes, resulting in work intensification and workplace stress. The symptoms of technostress are related to physical and psychological conditions such as backache, uncertain tempers, ulcers, acne, insomnia, low morale and job-hopping. Robbins (2001) argued that such work scenarios will lead the IT professionals to experience poor QWL. Thus, IT sector employees may be said to experience poorer QWL on one hand and Higher Work-Family Role Conflict on the other. So, the effect of Emotional Intelligence will be all the more prominent, if it is found to mediate the two aforesaid variables among these high-stress professionals. Another reason is that it is one of the fastest growing workforces in the present work environment. Bureau of Labour Statistics (BLS, 2007) estimated that one out of every four new jobs will be IT related. Thus it is essential to initiate studies to identify variables that would contribute to mediate the poorer QWL and higher Work-Family Role Conflict of this group of professionals.

In the context of the above theoretical premise, the researchers opted to set up the following objectives of the study.

**Objectives:**

The present study aims to find out whether and to what extent Emotional Intelligence is related to: (1)Work-Family Role Conflict, (2)Quality of Work Life and (3)

perceived Happiness of male and female IT professionals in both Government and Private Sectors.

**Hypotheses:**

**H1:** Higher the Emotional Intelligence, Lesser will be the WIF Role Conflict of male and female employees in both Government and Private Sector.

**H2:** Higher the Emotional Intelligence, Lesser will be the FIW Role Conflict of male and female employees in both Government and Private Sector.

**H3:** Higher the emotional intelligence, better will be QWL for male and female employees in both Government and Private Sector.

**H4:** Higher the emotional intelligence of male and female employees, greater will be their happiness, and this will be applicable for employees in both the Government and the Private Sector.

**Method**

**Sample:**

Purposive sampling was chosen to carry out this correlational study. The study included 60 males and 60 females Information Technology [IT] professionals from private and public sector. Among the Private companies IBM, TCS, CTS, Wipro and Netguru were included in the present sample and Webel, CDAC, RailTel, CRIS and NIC formed the sample for public companies. All the subjects belonged to the middle or upper middle strata of the middle class section of the society at Kolkata. Their age ranged between 25 to 35 years and they were all married for at least one year. They all had at least 2 years of experience in IT sector.

**Tools:**

*A measure of Emotional Intelligence* (Schutte, Malouff, Hall, Haggerty, Cooper, Golden & Dornheim, 1997): It is a self-report inventory, with good internal consistency. The scale consists of 33 items, of which 3 are

negative and rest are positive. High score indicate high level of Emotional Intelligence.

*Quality of Work Life Scale:* This scale was developed by Dasgupta and Saheli Pal. It is a self-report inventory and utilises a five-point Likert scale. It consists of 48 items, of which 13 are negative and rest are positive. High score indicates high Quality of Work Life.

*Work-Family Role Conflict scale:* Work-family Role Conflict was measured by two subscales, Work-to-Family scale and Family-to-Work scale, both developed by Netemeyer and others in the year 1996. Each scale consists of 5 items and uses 7-point Likert scale for responding. Both the scale had high level of internal consistency and satisfactory level of construct validity. High score indicate high level of Role Conflict.

*Subjective Happiness Scale:* This scale was developed by Lyubomirsky and Leeper in the year 1997. It is a self-report inventory, consisting of only 4 global items of Happiness. The scale is high on both internal consistency and test-retest reliability. It also demonstrated satisfactory convergent and discriminant validity.

**Data Collection:**

Data were collected after establishing proper rapport with the employees of each company. Only those participants who had expressed willingness to participate were included in the sample. Each of the participants was interviewed by the researcher, which not only ensured that each item of the questionnaire was answered by the participants but also helped the investigator to have deeper insight into the problem.

**Results and Discussion**

The results are summarized in the following table. Data were treated in the four distinct subcategories: Male professionals belonging to Public sector, male professionals working for Private sector, Female professionals engaged in Public

**Table 1. Emotional Intelligence in relation to other variables**

Correlation Between	Obtained Correlation for employees of different categories			
	Male-Public (N=30)	Male-Private (N=30)	Female-Public (N=30)	Female-Private (N=30)
Emotional Intelligence and WIF Conflict	-0.17	-0.09	-0.46*	0.12
Emotional Intelligence and FIW Conflict	-0.29	-0.04	-0.46*	-0.25
Emotional Intelligence and QWL	0.14	0.01	0.54**	0.26
Emotional Intelligence and Happiness	0.01	0.02	0.53**	0.43*

\*p&lt;0.05 \*\* p&lt;0.01

sector and female professionals employed in private sector.

From the table two general trends of findings may be noted: (i) All the hypotheses have been partially supported in the study, (ii) The direction of most of the hypotheses (all except one) are in line with the directions suggested by the research hypotheses. Now, a deeper analysis of the obtained relationship/s may be considered. First, the focus may be directed towards the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Work-Interfering-Family Hypotheses. The relationship was found significant in case of female professionals of Public sector and insignificant for other three cases. The directions of the relationships are found negative for three cases, including the one significant, but positive for the case of female professionals belonging to Private sector. Negative correlation indicates that Emotional Intelligence actually play a role in dealing with the role demands of individuals and thus people with Higher Emotional Intelligence tend to perceive lower WIF Role Conflict. For the male employees in both the sectors, the meagre amount of correlation might have been due to the fact that the huge amount of work pressure in IT sector make the employees experience the WIF conflict no

matter how much emotionally intelligent they are. In case of FIW Role Conflict, the direction of the hypothesis was supported by all the four categories, however, only in one case, the relationship was found statistically significant.

QWL was also found to be positively related to Emotional Intelligence, as was suggested by the hypothesis. However, statistically the hypothesis could be retained with 0.01 level of confidence in case of only female IT professionals in govt sector. This is so, because, since Emotional Intelligence involves skills like People development, effective communication, customer service orientation, leadership qualities, conflict resolution and cooperative attitude and so on, it is very likely that people with these skills would be treated as an asset to any organization and would enjoy a better Quality of Life at Work. This is especially so for IT sector employees, since, they are required to perform in teams.

Happiness and Emotional Intelligence is also positively related for all the subgroups of population, but it was more so in case of the female employees, since, statistically significant relationship was obtained in case of females professionals of both the sectors. The result is highly expected since; Emotional

Intelligence enables individuals to have effective regulation of affect within themselves and in others, thereby, contributing to happiness. Thus emotionally intelligent person is often a pleasure to be around and leaves others feeling better, by means of the impact of "contact happy". It reflects a focus on positive psychological and social functioning; personal strength and mental health (Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Keyes & Lopez, 2002). Studies reveal four inner traits that mark happy people: self-esteem, a sense of personal control, optimism, and extraversion and all the four are directly or indirectly linked to Emotional Intelligence (Myers & Diener, 1995). Besides, happy individuals tend to have several intimate relationships, which make them healthier, less likely to die prematurely, and happier than people who have few or no such friends (Burt, 1986; Cohen, 1988; House, Landis, & Umberson, 1988; Pavot, Diener & Fujita, 1990), and emotionally intelligent people know how to build and preserve intimate relationships. Thus EI accounts for all those skills that foster happiness. Naturally therefore, a positive correlation between these two variables had been found. Thus, it may be stated, with confidence, that, female IT professionals, possessing higher EI, appear to be happier and serene.

### Conclusion

The impact of Emotional Intelligence has been realistically assessed from various perspectives in the present article. It was found that Emotional Intelligence do lessen the perception of Work-Family Role Conflict and thereby its impact on the individual's well-being. It also promotes higher Quality of Work Life and feelings of Happiness in the individual. Thus, Individuals with high Emotional Intelligence remain more contented and are probably more successful in domains of Work and relationships. However, further research with larger sample size is strongly suggested, since the research hypotheses

were all partially supported, thus indicating the relationships, but not confirming them.

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