

A Unique Intelligence to Motivate Employees during Pandemic Crisis – A Review Article

^[1]Laxmi Suresh Babu, ^[2]Dr M Janarthanan Pillai

^[1]Research Scholar, Department of Management Studies, Noorul Islam Centre for Higher Education, Noorul Islam University, TamilNadu, India

^[2]Professor & HOD, Department of Management Studies, Noorul Islam Centre for Higher Education, Noorul Islam University, TamilNadu, India

Abstract: - Emotional intelligence is a unique intelligence that every employee should possess at each and every phase of their career. Self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills are the five essential building blocks of emotional intelligence. Significance of having high emotional quotient is often highlighted in many of the studies to an extent that it is often rated even above IQ. It is identified as one of the top ten essential job skills required for workers. Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) has affected both personal life and professional life of people. During this uncertain period, most of the employees are adapting to new ways of work, with less social interactions. This further emphasizes the need for practicing emotional intelligence. Understanding and regulating one's own and others' emotional wellbeing are very essential during this challenging time.

Keywords: COVID-19, Emotional intelligence, Emotional quotient, Interpersonal relations

I. INTRODUCTION

Emotion is a complex state of human mind resulting from various internal or external stimuli. Basic emotions in a person include happiness, sorrow, disgust, fear, anger and so on, which are caused by a situation that the person is in. Witnessing, encountering and expressing emotions are always part of a person's personal life as well as professional life. The way we act on our emotions and the way we respond to other person's emotions are equally important. If not handled properly, it may affect inter personal relationships and even the body functions of the affected person which can lead to serious health issues. Intelligence on the other hand, generally means the capability of a person to learn from experience(Bhattacharya & Sengupta, 2007) or to respond successfully and solve problems in new situations. It is not a single ability but a collection of many abilities such as reasoning, numerical ability, logic, problem solving and so on. Thus Intelligence Quotient of an individual is determined by such large number of factors.

'Emotional Intelligence' or 'Emotional Quotient' refers to 'the capability of a person to manage and control his or her emotions in a positive way to relieve stress, communicate effectively, empathize with others, overcome challenges and defuse conflict'. It is the capacity of a person to understand and exhibit their emotions intelligently. At the same time, it is also the ability of a person to understand other person's emotions and react accordingly. Emotional intelligence is a

desirable quality for creating and nurturing healthy bonds and facing challenging situations in various phases of our personal and professional life. Every individual is born with some level of emotional intelligence, but only some of them are aware of it and utilize it properly.

The five key sets of personal and interpersonal skills that collectively establish the emotional intelligence level in an individual includes Self-awareness, Self-regulation, Motivation, Empathy and Social skills.

Self-awareness is considered as the basic skill required by a person to exhibit some level of emotional intelligence. It can be defined as the ability to understand one's own emotions and identify their own strengths and areas to improve(Gill, 2017). People with high levels of self-awareness will be aware of their own abilities and also tries to identify their mistakes by obtaining feedback from others. Only when a person understands where he lacks or what he lacks, he can dedicate himself for self-improvement(Connelly, 2019a).

Self-regulation is the ability to manage one's own emotions to take wise and timely decisions and actions. It is the ability to control your impulsive emotions and thereby your reactions so that you are able to adapt and work with different people in different situations(Connelly, 2019b). Individuals with strong self-regulation remain calm under any stressful conditions and easily adapt to new situations. Such persons always show the courage to take responsibilities for their own actions and have a propensity to

see good in others. One of the studies indicates the importance of self-regulation of employees in thereby managing their performance at work, when they are ostracized at work.(Steinbauer et al., 2018)

Persons with high level of motivation will show perseverance to achieve the goals of their lives. Therefore, motivation is also considered as a very important component of emotional intelligence. Being optimistic and sharing our optimism with others helps us to be strong motivators to others as well. At workplace, it urges the employees to use emotional intelligence to achieve success on their jobs(Othman et al., 2009).

Empathy means understanding others' problems from their point of view. A person who is empathetic will always be able to visualize himself / herself in the other person's place and will try to understand what they must be feeling(S, 2019). Empathy is an important element of emotional intelligence as it helps in understanding other people's emotions. This will make a person tolerant to other people.

Social skills in general, mean the proficiency of an individual to interact and build relationship with others. In emotional intelligence, it refers to the ability of a person to understand, influence and manage other people's emotions effectively and efficiently. Such persons are always ready to listen to problems of others and convey their own thoughts. Therefore, they will make a strong network of interpersonal connections. Higher the emotional intelligence scores, stronger will be the interpersonal relationships(Schutte et al., 2013).

II. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AT WORK

Emotional intelligence plays a primary role in improving the performance of an employee. It also contributes towards an individual's career success. Employees with high emotional quotient will be more capable of identifying organisational requirements and contribute positively to the organisation (Turnipseed, 2018). The World Economic Forum has conducted a survey of chief human resource officers from various international organizations to find their view on top ten job skills required for workers and released a report which states that 'Emotional Intelligence' is the one among the ten job skills suggested for success (Chwantes, 2019). Effective management of emotions at work help employees to overcome many difficult situations and also to deal with different types of people they have to interact with, as part of their work(Weisinger Ph.D, 1998). This is useful especially when employees move up in the organisation. Emotionally intelligent leaders will improve employee engagement and uphold the identity of organization(Shanker & Sayeed, 2015). People in top positions must possess a high level of emotional intelligence as they are required to manage

their co-workers and inspire them to bring out their best to the organization. They must be able to understand the feelings of their employees; handle their problems in the organization and give them constructive feedback(K. Singh et al., 2018).

Employees often find it difficult to logically distribute their available resources between work and family as per the expectations and demands. They are in a constant struggle to balance these two and thus affect their well-being. Both intra personal and interpersonal skills, which are analogous of emotional intelligence helps employees to face work-family conflicts, reduce their stress and ultimately results in their well-being(Weinzimmer et al., 2017). Emotional intelligence also helps to improve both employee potential and organizational stability(Shanker & Sayeed, 2015). It enhances employee's behaviour at work such as employee commitment, social skills needed for team work, coping with environmental demand and pressures and so on. It is always a predictor of job satisfaction. Employees with high emotional intelligence are even able to reduce the effect of job insecurity, if any, on their work commitment(Zeidner et al., 2004).

Moreover, the biggest problem faced by most of the organizations today is to cope with change which has accelerated dramatically during this decade. Leaders of the organization should be able to manage the emotional reactions to such changes and help the employees to cope up with it. Employees should also monitor and control their own and their colleague's emotions in order to adapt to such massive and rapid changes(K. Singh et al., 2018).

III. THE PANDEMIC

The Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic which was declared 'A Global Pandemic' on 11th March 2020 has been affecting the social and working lives of many people since then. This has been a time of great uncertainty and rapid change for employees. Most of the organisations have been striving hard to cope with the economic turbulence caused by COVID-19 and reinvent the workplace in order to ensure continuity of their business (M. Singh, 2020).

Work from home and social distancing due to COVID-19 has limited casual interactions with the colleagues. New policies and procedures have been implemented by many organizations in order to reduce personal contact at work. People working in IT firms, academic institutions etc., who are still working remotely requires lot of adjustments especially to maintain healthy boundaries between personal and professional affairs (Giurge & Bohns, 2020). As day care services and schools still remain closed in most of the places, parental demand for employees and thereby associated stress are comparatively greater than ever before.

Financial issues, fear of catching the virus, and job insecurity are some other major stressors that employees are experiencing during these challenging times.

The outbreak of the disease has thus caused many consequences which affects the mental health and well-being of various employees across the world. A study on the impact of COVID-19 on mental health in general population, shows that there is an unprecedented threat to the mental health of the people (Jiaqi et al., 2020). Occupational exposure with Covid-19 patients results in many physical and mental health associated problems in health care workers (Shaukat et al., 2020).

IV. ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

COVID-19 pandemic still continues to impact the world and create new anxieties. Therefore the employees are not able to work in a safe environment as they used to do before the occurrence of the pandemic. Even after the crisis, the work environment may not be the same. The role of emotional intelligence in alleviating the negative impacts of the pandemic is paramount in such situations.

Adverse emotions during the pandemic are the main sources of stress and burnout in most of the employees today. Negative emotions may offset positive emotions in this situation. Relationship between occurrence of infectious disease outbreaks and negative psychological consequences such as depression, worry, psychological distress, reduced quality of life, functional impairment, anxiety of being infected etc. were found in many of the previous studies (Restubog et al., 2020).

Strategies to manage and control emotions can support and strengthen their abilities to adapt to this stressful environment. This will also help in effective decision making process. A literature review published in 2020, indicates the role of emotional intelligence in reducing COVID-19 associated stress such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (Aida Mehrad, 2020). Ability to regulate emotions will help to resist emotional distractions and concentrate in pursuing their work goals. Intra personal and interpersonal skills, the components of emotional intelligence help employees to overcome stress by reducing the adverse effects of work-family conflicts (Weinzimmer et al., 2017). A person with a high level of emotional intelligence may also be successful in giving emotional support to their spouse and other family members (Ocampo et al., 2018). Effective regulation of emotions will also help employees to prepare and adapt to the new and uncertain career challenges and help them in career decision-making (Nilforooshan & Salimi, 2016).

Many researches have demonstrated the relationships between emotional intelligence and work performance. One of the previous studies conducted in 200 companies from

different parts of the world showed that majority of difference in the work performance is the result of high emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2000). The study also suggested that higher levels of emotional intelligence will contribute towards job satisfaction and commitment. A study on impact of emotional intelligence on work engagement of registered nurses revealed that, higher level of work engagement is exhibited by those with higher level of emotional intelligence (Zhu et al., 2015).

Recent studies in the light of COVID-19 also indicate the positive impact of emotional intelligence on work performance, job satisfaction and commitment. Emotional intelligence is found to be positively correlated to employee productivity performance during COVID-19 in a relatively recent study (Sejati et al., 2021). A study on the effect of emotional intelligence on burnout and job satisfaction of nurses indicate that, emotional intelligence provides a protective effect against the adverse psychological risks they face during the pandemic and thereby affect the job satisfaction (Soto-Rubio et al., 2020). Another study on organizational resilience and employee performance during COVID-19 pandemic confirmed that employees with high emotional intelligence exhibits higher performance levels at work (Management & Resilience, 2020) All these researches are substantiating the fact that emotional intelligence helps in improving the psychological well-being of employees during any crisis situation and thus helps in maintaining and improving their work performance.

CONCLUSION

High levels of emotional intelligence in employees contribute job satisfaction and always motivate them to improve their work performance. Such employees are more likely to lead a successful career. The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic caused many problems that affect the mental health and well-being of employees across the world. The employees are struggling hard to face the new challenges associated with the pandemic and adapt with the new ways of working. Enhancing the emotional intelligence levels in employees will certainly help in overcoming the negative impacts of the pandemic that affects their physical and psychological wellbeing and motivates them to perform better. Further research in this area may help to find more applicability of this unique intelligence during the pandemic.

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