IMPERATIVENESS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE FOR HR PROFESSIONALS—AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

Professor A. Suryanarayana
Department of Business Management
Osmania University
HYDERABAD, INDIA
e-mail: professorsuryanarayana@yahoo.com

Dr. A. Ravi
Associate Professor of Management & HoD
TKR Institute of Management & Science
Meerpet, HYDERABAD, INDIA
e-mail: aravi13371@yahoo.co.in

Abstract: Every professional demonstrates an elaborate structure of technical skills that he has built through the inputs received from the professional course he pursued earlier. But, rarely do these courses address the all important issue of human skills to be able to eventually practice them in their careers. This calls for a special role for HR professionals in every organization. Their Emotional Intelligence (EI) becomes crucial for building individual and organizational competencies through their employees. The principal objectives of this study are to (1) discuss the current scenario of application of EI by HR professionals in Hyderabad, India, (2) examine the challenges facing HR managers in Small and Medium Companies in the area of Change Management through application of EI, and (3) identify the factors that make study and application of EI as an emerging discipline in professional management studies offered by business schools. In this study, it is conclusively proved that emotions such as productive anger, inspiration, and ability to shake them off are independent of specializations in HR professions and that EI factors studied are common across all HR Professionals. Large majority of respondents felt that they would have been better equipped in this area had there been inclusion of and inputs on EI factors in their professional curriculum.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence; Technical Skills; Soft skills; and Emotionally Intelligent Organization.

I. INTRODUCTION

Every profession ordains that its members practice a *code of conduct* in delivering their technical and human skills. Every professional receives an elaborate structure of technical skills to serve his or her clientele through the professional course he pursues. But, rarely do we come across the same professional courses addressing the issue of imparting them the all-important human skills to be able to eventually practice them in their careers. Every profession ordains that its members practice a code of conduct in the application of their technical and human skills. Professionals learn the *soft skills* mostly through experience to complement the technical aspects of organizational life. A few extraordinary professionals may attain success despite their arrogant interpersonal behavior. But an average professional's success comes through a blend of human skills alongside the nitty-gritty of other techniques acquired in a Professional Institution. On the contrary, there are also instances of professionals, who are technically below-average, being able to achieve a high level of success solely because of their human skills. This calls for a special role for HR professionals in every organization and it is here, their EI becomes crucial for building the organizational competencies, of course, through their employees. For instance, technical knowledge may be adequate to conduct operations through formal communication in a profession. But one needs to possess a degree of EI as well to conduct effectively with one's significant internal and external publics as they involve emotions in large measure. Members of Faculties in various professional courses are in a better position to impart and inculcate the required intricacies among their students by honing their human skills involving emotional factors. The emergence of a 'knowledge employee force' with flat hierarchies has heightened the need for application of EI for effective learning. This study is an attempt to survey the usage of EI by HR professionals in various organizations. It also suggests that a package of inputs should go into formal education of HR Professionals, which in turn would equip them to select and groom better candidates for their organizations. Real skill in working with others should become a part of the individual's system on a continuous basis as human skills are required in almost every activity a HR manager undertakes.

II. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE—A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

EI is the ability to (i) perceive accurately, (ii) appraise and express emotions, (iii) assess and/or generate feelings, and (iv) to understand and regulate emotions. EI operates at personal and social levels. An attempt is made to identify the crucial skill indicators for various emotional states that affect the relationships in a work environment. The study focuses not on the desirability but on the *feasibility* for better productivity in organizational settings through control of emotions of team members. It also examines whether machinery for assessing their various emotional states can be set up, and if so, to what extent it can monitor and contribute to the success of the team building. EI implies the following:

1. **Self-awareness:** Knowing one's internal states, preferences, resources, and intuitions.
2. **Managing self-emotions:** Managing one's internal states, impulses, and resources.
3. **Motivation:** Emotional tendencies that guide or facilitate reaching the goals.
   (Social Competencies):

4. **Empathy:** Awareness of others' feelings, needs, and concerns.
5. **Social skills:** Adeptness at inducing desirable responses in others

III. EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT FIRMS

The emotionally intelligent work group or organization has a culture that exhibits: (i) Organizational self-Awareness of its internal and external needs; (ii) Management of organizational emotions through leadership, Celebration and environment; (iii) Organizational Motivation through meaningful work and the delivery of incentives; (iv) Organizational Empathy by maintaining effective and meaningful relationships with consumers and employees; (v) Mentoring of Organizational Social Skills through training, productive personnel selection practices, and performance appraisal, and lastly (vi) movement towards perfection with regard to an "emotionally intelligent organization".

IV. SURVEY OF LITERATURE

Stephen Covey in his book "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" makes an indirect reference to EI through discussion on the very first effective habit and has observed the following responses coming from some typical personal cases:

1. "I achieved tremendous professional success, but it cost me my family life and personal freedom. Is it worth it?"
2. "I attended several Training Programs along with other employees but there seems to be no change. Employees continue to remain dependent and irresponsible."
3. "I see my friends and relatives achieve a great degree of success. I smile and congratulate but inside, I feel jealous."

Stephen Covey's second effective habit speaks of human behavior involving various emotions. They result in several behaviors centered around (i) Money (ii) Work (iii) Pleasure (iv) Friend (v) Enemy (vi) Religion (vii) Self (viii) Spouse, and (viii) Family. All these are various sets of emotions, which when used intelligently can contribute to effective professional management. He even discusses about 'Emotional Bank Account' comprising of six major deposits. They are:

- Understanding individuals
- Attending to little things
- Keeping commitments
- Clarifying expectations
- Showing integrity
- Apologizing on mistakes

Stephen covey's fifth effective habit asks everyone to *understand oneself* first before being understood by the others. This also has reference to EI concepts such as 'empathetic listening' and 'diagnosis' before prescription. In his book, "The art of winning", Jack Welch, the former CEO of General Electric, makes only a subtle reference to EI. His concept of *differentiation* is crucial. Darwin also refers to EI

Management. Companies transform from 'mediocre' to 'outstanding' state when they cultivate the strong performers and cull out the weak links. Companies suffer when they treat every one as equal. Winning leaders invest where the payback is the highest and they cut their losses everywhere else. Every company has strong and weak product lines. *Differentiation* is a way to manage people and businesses and requires managers to know 'which is which' and invest accordingly. Not every soccer player can be a great football player. This is true of doctors, programmers, musicians, or poets. What is true in sports is true in business as well. If you want best people in your team you must face up differentiation because it means more transparency, fairness, and speed.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.3.1 Objectives

The principal objectives of this study are:
- To discuss the current scenario of application of EI by HR professionals in Hyderabad.
- To examine the challenges and issues facing the HR managers in Small and Medium Companies in the area of Change Management through application of EI.
- To identify the factors that make study and use of EI an emerging discipline in study of professional management.

1.3.3 Hypotheses

Hypotheses of the study are formulated based on the objectives of the study and are stated below:
- There is a significant relationship between designation of HR Professional and degree of EI.
- There is a significant relationship between income of the HR professional and the degree of EI.

1.3.4 Research Instrument

A structured questionnaire was administered to 100 respondents, through convenient sampling, having equal representation from HR Executives, Assistant HR Managers, Senior HR Managers, besides AGM (HR) and VP (HR). Unstructured interviews were also held with professionals with considerable experience and exposure. The data collected was analyzed through SPSS package. Chi Square tests were conducted and results tabulated to draw conclusions. Many emotional factors, which are common at workplaces, are deliberately set aside in the first half of the questionnaire. Several "sensitive" emotional factors such as arrogance, sincerity, honesty, patience, total work experience, dependency on repeated instructions to do the simple task, interacting with lady bosses, lady colleagues etc., were deliberately excluded along with some other common factors to make the study manageable. Only a few important

emotions relevant to HR professionals are included. The second half of the questionnaire is focused more on *emotions at workplace*. The Survey covered HR professionals working in the range of 8 hours to 16 hours per day. The organizations covered in the survey had an employee strength ranging from 30 employees to over 3500 employees. The turnover of organizations was in the range of Rs 3 lakhs to over $900 million.

VI. MAJOR FINDINGS

Self-awareness

In response to the question, *"What upsets you?"* the respondents across the disciplines have shown marked preference for criticism (32%), followed by frustration (30%) and anger (22%). Only 16% of the respondents have given 'none of the above disturbs them' as their response. In response to the question, *"What changes your moods?"* 44% of the respondents blamed the work environment, 22% of the respondents felt that it was the company itself. Only 6% felt it was time of the day or week, and 2% opted for place as the reasons for the changes in their moods. In response to the question, *"When do you become defensive?"* 40 % of the respondents felt that it was 'Offensive Language' that makes them defensive and 60% of the respondents believed that it was others' actions that make them defensive against others. 70% of the respondents preferred to ignore others' perception and only 15% preferred to listen and another 15% preferred to react violently.

Managing Emotions

In response to the question, *"How do you shake off anxiety, gloom, despair, or irritability?"* 60% professionals said that they share with others while 40% do so through inner strength. While a quarter of the respondents use anger productively 'always', half of them use so 'often', and the remaining quarter do so 'not often". Under "self-motivation", 'achievement' (for 54% respondents), 'ideals' and 'work' (18% each), and money (10%) are the principal sources of inspiration. In response to question about Communication with superiors 10% of the respondents have chosen harsh option and 70% have chosen soft option and 20% have chosen mixed mode. This shows that softer communication is effective while dealing with superiors. In relation to subordinates, 40% of the respondents preferred soft way of communication. 30 % preferred mixed mode and 30% preferred 'Harsh' mode of communication. With regard to communication with colleagues 55% preferred soft mode and 45% mixed mode. With regard to communication with clients 70% have chosen Soft mode and 30 % mixed mode indicating that they were some times harsh and some times soft in dealing with clients. Nearly 70% have a tendency to react faster in their official communication with regard to advice form of communication and 30% preferred to go slow even if it was advice mode of communication. If it were order form of communication 30% of the respondents tended to be slow to react and 70 % were fast to react to order form

of communication. 80% of respondents were fast to react to request form of communication indicating their sensitive nature to emotions. There are variations in relation to speed of communication depending on whether it is in the form of advice or order or request.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

Emotional intelligence is a product of two worlds. One is the popular culture world of best-selling books, daily newspapers and magazines. The other is the world of scientific journals, book chapters and peer review. The emergence of EI as a key factor in corporate recruitment has led HR professionals, psychologists, researchers and educationalists to reevaluate their traditional views of intelligence and to explore ways of testing and measuring EI dimensions. This Paper aims to consider the areas and dimensions that comprise the EI concept and presents a strong case for the imperativeness of EI among HR professionals through an empirical study. Emotionally intelligent HR professional leaders monitor their feelings continuously, regulate them to fit the situation, and make effective decisions about how to lead their employees. Emotions vary with age, experience, designations, specialization of HR professionals, size of organizations, number of employees, timing of communication, number of working hours, freshness or tiredness of the employees, and tone of communication. Emotional fatigue arising from different factors was also blocking effective communication in organizations. Another observation that came to light through discussions with senior executives was that the five senses were the blocking factors for effective communication. Closed mindedness (eyes), thick skin nature, deaf ears, abusive tongue, and trouble smelling nature (nose) were contributing to the emotional disturbances and thereby to ineffective communication and learning in organizations. Most Professionals are upset by criticism than by anger. This study has once again proved that with age and experience, irrespective of their background, professionals have learnt to mask their emotional injuries in order to ease the process of interpersonal communication and effective learning. Respondents also stated that they undergo a change of mood in large measure due to conditions in the work environment. It may vary on account of the time constraints or the client pressure, or the lack of receptive ability on the part of the recipients of communication.

Moreover, a large number of respondents emphatically revealed that it was the offensive language, more than anything else that makes them defensive in interpersonal relationships. Seventy percent of the respondents preferred to ignore others' perceptions and only 15% preferred to react violently. Results from the Chi-square Test conclusively prove the hypothesis that emotions such as productive anger, inspiration, and ability to shake of emotions are independent of specializations within HR profession. The study also draws the conclusion that EI factors examined in the study are common to all HR professionals across the board and they use them, in large measure, in their interpersonal communication more due to learning by experience than formal training and instruction they had received. Large

majority of respondents felt that they would have been better equipped to handle better equipped to handle their communication with people in organizational settings had there been inclusion of EI related aspects in their professional curriculum. Knowing how to deal with people who are rigid, aggressive, self-centered or exhibit other types of dysfunctional behavior can improve any professional's own health and that of others in the workplace, more so if they know the mechanisms for coping. For this reason, EI is the strongest indicator of human success. Those who possess high EI truly succeed in work as well as play, building flourishing careers and lasting, meaningful relationships.

TABLE I.   SHOWING EMOTIONAL FACTORS AND THEIR FREQUENCY

SL. No	Emotional Factors	Never 0/10	Rarely 1-2/10	Some times 3-4/10	Mostly 5-6/10	Always 7-9/10
1	Helpfulness				20	80
2	Selfishness	70	30	20		
3	Frankness				30	70
4	Tolerance of Indiscipline	30	10	30	20	10
5	Tolerance of Inefficiency	12	64		12	12
6	Team Focus				20	80
7	Task Focus				20	80
8	Details oriented				25	75
9	Summary Oriented				30	70
10	Humor at office			20	20	60
11	Gossip at office	35	45			20
12	Blame others	48	30		10	12
13	Praise others				75	25
14	Frequency of seeking Your advice			10	50	40
15	Security at Office	12	12		24	52
16	Technology at office			25	25	50
17	Competition at office	10	12		24	54
18	Patience	40	30		20	10

How do HR professionals make a group of people a team that wants to do its best work together? In decision-making, HR professionals first have an emotion and then seek a rationale and as such they need to work with EI competences to strengthen their teams. When the emotional environment is rich and transparent, teams can trust enough to take risks. Desired characteristics of successful teams—trusting, risk taking, communicating, respectful and productive—are the result of intentionally understanding these domains and developing the environment that elicits the motivation to fully participate. HR professionals now urgently need a highly effective EI assessment for their own professional and personal development that provides a clear and practical assessment of eight key EQ skills besides making extensive recommendations for learning and improvement. When sound processes and analytical brilliance are coupled with EI, breakthrough achievements can be gained. As a HR professional, one's role is significant for integrating EI skills into the workplace at all levels of the organization—especially in those who have any type of leadership, supervisory, sales or customer service role.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

[1] Boyatzis, R., Goleman, D and Hay/Mcber, Emotional Competence Inventory Feedback Report, Hay Group (1999).

[2] Cary Cherniss, Mitcel Adler, Mitchel Adler, *Promoting Emotional Intelligence in Organizations*

[3] Cooper, R.K., and Sawaf, A., 1997. *Executive EQ: Emotional Intelligence in Leadership and Organizations.* Grosset/Putnam, New York.

[4] Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: Why it matters more than IQ* (10th Annual Edition)

[5] Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence, Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002.

[6] Daniel Goleman, *The Emotionally Intelligent Work Place* (2001)

[7] Gardner, H. Frames of Mind, Second Edition, Fontana (1993).

[8] Goleman, D.1998. *Working with Emotional Intelligence.* Bantam Books, New York (1998)

[9] Goleman, D. Emotional Intelligence, Bloomsbury (1996), p.34

[10] Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves, *The Emotional Intelligence Quick Book*

[11] Terri Egan, Ann E. Feyerherm, *Emotional Dynamism: Playing the music of Leadership- A new framework for leveraging power of emotions*

[12] Weisinger, H., 1998. *Emotional Intelligence at work: The Untapped Edge for success.* Josey-Bass, San Francisco.