

**Study on the Impact of Emotional  
Intelligence on Perceived Work Overload**

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**Abstract**

Emotional Intelligence is an interesting topic in Organizational Literature today. New studies have stressed upon the relevance of Emotional Intelligence even over the traditionally accepted Intelligence Quotient. This is because Emotional Intelligence is a behavioral component that can affect employee productivity, satisfaction level as well as intent to continue with the organization. Since Emotional Intelligence is such an important behavioral component it becomes additionally important to study its relation and impact on the perceived work overload by employees. Do employees with high Emotional Intelligence have better abilities to handle work pressures? This study tries to study the impact of Emotional Intelligence on perceived Work Overload of employees in the Information Technology sector. For the purpose of this study 60 employees from an IT company were taken as the sample and administered the Questionnaire to understand whether Emotional Intelligence had an impact on their Perceived Work Overload .The study is co relational in nature and the results prove that there is a high relationship between the two variables. Also a regression model to study the impact of Emotional Intelligence on Perceived Work Overload is developed in this study. This study is important because IT Companies recruit employees solely based on their technical skills whereas the job entails long working hours and a lot of teamwork.

Key words: Emotional Intelligence, Intelligence Quotient, perceived Work Overload, Information Technology.

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## **A Study on the Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Perceived Work Overload**

Emotional Intelligence is an interesting topic in Organizational Literature today . new studies have stressed upon the relevance of Emotional Intelligence even over the traditionally accepted Intelligence Quotient. This is because Emotional Intelligence is a behavioral component that can affect employee productivity, satisfaction level as well as intent to continue with the organization. Since Emotional Intelligence is such an important behavioral component it becomes additionally important to study its relation and impact on the perceived work overload by employees. Do employees with high Emotional Intelligence have better abilities to handle work pressures? This study tries to study the impact of Emotional Intelligence on perceived Work Overload of employees in the Information Technology sector. Studies have shown that it is the perceived Work overload of employees that ultimately determine their level of stress.

### **Emotional intelligence**

Emotions and Intelligence have been at the opposite ends of the spectrum throughout history. Even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the philosophers of the Romantic School of thought in Europe stressed upon the importance of Emotions they saw it as an opposing idea to rationalism and intelligence. Prior to early 1990's, the concept of Emotional Intelligence got very little attention and the main focus of researchers was on the significance of cognitive intelligence for obtaining workplace achievement (Carmeli, 2003). Emotional intelligence is an important behavioral component which can enhance human talent and ultimately affect employee productivity. While the earliest psychologist to explore in this arena of "social intelligence"(Thorndike in the 20's and 30's cf Goleman , 1995) offered the idea as a single concept, more recent psychologists have appreciated its complexity and describe it in multiple capabilities.(Bar-On, 1992 , 1997 ; Goleman , 1998 ; Saarni, 1988,). Gardner conceptualized this arena as intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence. Salovey and Mayer (1990) first used the expression "emotional intelligence" and described it in terms of four domains : knowing and handling one's own and others' emotions. Emotions are internal events that coordinate many psychological subsystems including physiological responses , cognitions , and conscious awareness. Emotions typically arise in response to a person's changing relationships.

### **Perceived Work Overload**

The job-demand resources theory posits that employee strain results from excessive job demands with limited job resources (Demerouti et al. 2001). Work overload reflects employees' perceptions that the job places excessive work demands on them (Karasek 1979; Tattersall and Farmer 1996). Because of rising unemployment rates, layoff survivors are more likely to experience larger workloads because they now perform both their former workload and that of those who left (Virick, Lilly, and Casper 2007). Work overload is a significant source of stress in boundary-spanning occupations, where employees are required to meet the ever-increasing needs of customers (e.g., Babakus, Yavas, and Ashill 2009; Singh, Goolsby, and Rhoads 1994). Demerouti et al.'s (2001) meta-analysis demonstrates that workload is a critical predictor of emotional exhaustion. Work overload can also affect jobsatisfaction (e.g., Mulki, Lask, and Jaramillo 2008) as well as turnover intentions and job performance (e.g., Babakus, Yavas, and Ashill 2009). Numerous psycho-emotional demands from clients impose a high degree of stress on the employees. Interestingly, studies have identified role stress (e.g., Babakus et al.1999), work overload perceptions (e.g., Lewin and Sager 2008), and interpersonal conflict (e.g., Mulki, Jaramillo, and Locander 2008) as the major predictors of emotional exhaustion. Research has also shown that emotional exhaustion mediates the effect of role stress on salesperson's job attitude and job behaviors (e.g., Babakus et al. 1999). Narayanan, Menon, and Spector's (1999) qualitative study showed that salespeople are four times more likely to complain about work overload than role conflict or role ambiguity. Workload perceptions are now considered central in stress models tested in boundaryspanning positions (e.g., Babakus, Yavas, and Ashill 2009; Mulki, Lask, and Jaramillo 2008). Research has shown that work overload perceptions have a detrimental effect on employee attitudes and behaviors (Claessens et al. 2004; Houkeset al. 2003).

This study becomes doubly interesting as workload is usually considered to be caused by extrinsic factor with emphasis mostly on the environmental causes. This study tries to relate a behavioral dimension to the understanding of work overload.

## **Information technology industry in India**

A brief preview of the Information Technology in India, where this study has been conducted, will help us understand the importance of this study. The Information technology industry in India has gained a brand identity as a knowledge economy due to its IT and ITES sector. The IT–ITES industry has two major components: IT Services and business process outsourcing (BPO). The growth in the service sector in India has been led by the IT–ITES sector, contributing substantially to increase in GDP, employment, and exports. The sector has increased its contribution to India's GDP from 6.1% in 2009-10 to 6.4% in 2010-11. According to NASSCOM, the IT–BPO sector in India aggregated revenues of US\$88.1 billion in FY2011. Export dominate the IT–ITES industry, and constitute about 77% of the total industry revenue. Though the IT–ITES sector is export driven, the domestic market is also significant with a robust revenue growth.

This sector has also led to employment generation. Direct employment in the IT services and BPO/ITES segment was 2.3 million in 2009-10 and is estimated to reach nearly 2.5 million by the end of financial year 2010-11. Indirect employment of over 8.3 million job opportunities is also expected to be generated due to the growth of this sector in 2010-11.

### **About the Company....**

The data was collected from a small Private limited IT company( with an employee strength of 90 )in the area of software development, Application Support and consultancy. The company provides customized solutions to clients in the BFSI Sector. It also undertakes supporting applications developed by third parties. Supporting or Developing applications can be Business Critical or General Application. The core team of the company also provides consultancy in designing applications for various clients.

Since IT professionals in this company have to work in teams and also move from the confines of their office to the site and do their work in other offices it is not only technical skills that count but also the human skills that they possess. They have to deal with not only their own emotions but also those of their clients. Very often the work they do is a continuation of some other previous projects or related to or an offshoot of other previous work . These workers are mostly working against time .They have rigorous time deadlines too much interventions by client supervisors Sometimes client supervisors are not IT people and hence do not understand the complications of the work and create unnecessary hassles for these IT Professionals. Many situations that call for high emotional management occur before the successful completion of any project.

### **Research Problem**

Does Emotional Intelligence play a major role in the employee perception of Workload in an IT Company? Are Employees with higher Emotional Intelligence able to handle work pressures more? Does Emotional Intelligence have an impact on the perceived Work load ? Is Workload perceived differently by employees with different levels of Emotional Intelligence?

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To study the difference in Emotional Intelligence based on the demographic variables of gender , age ,Experience and income.
2. To study the impact of Emotional Intelligence on Perceived Work Overload.

### **Hypothesis**

Ho: There is no difference in Emotional Intelligence based on differences in the demographic variables of gender , age ,Experience and Income.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a difference in Emotional Intelligence based on differences in the demographic variables of gender , age ,Experience and income .

H<sub>0</sub>: Emotional Intelligence has no impact on Perceived Work Overload.  
H<sub>2</sub>: Emotional Intelligence has an impact on Perceived Work Overload.

## Methodology

### Instruments

i) In Depth Interview

ii) Questionnaire

60 employees from this IT firm were administered the Questionnaire which was in the Likert Scale. There were 24 statements in the Questionnaire 17 for Emotional Intelligence and 7 for Perceived Work Overload. The 5 point Likert Scale were rated by the respondents from strongly disagree – disagree - neutral to agree and strongly agree.

The Cronbach's Alpha test was conducted to test the reliability and the reliability was high with .945 for Emotional Intelligence and .970 for Perceived Work Overload

Table I

#### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.945	17

Table II

#### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.970	7

Therefore the reliability of the Questionnaire is very high.

### Data Analysis

The Data Analysis was done using the SPSS Software.

The Chi square test was used to understand the relation between Emotional Intelligence and the various Demographic variables of Age, Gender marital status and Experience. Anova was conducted to understand the relation between Emotional intelligence ,Perceived Work Overload and income.

Using the Pearson 'r' technique, paired scores were correlated to obtain a correlation coefficient. Correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationship between Emotional Intelligence Perceived Work Overload. Simple linear Regression analysis was used to determine how the predictor variables of Emotional Intelligence were associated with Perceived Work Overload .

## Findings and Interpretation

The first hypothesis was to understand the relationship between the Demographic variables of Age, Gender, Experience, Marital Status and income.

The chi-square test using the SPSS revealed that at 5% level of significance the Chi square value for Age and Emotional Intelligence is .430 hence we can conclude that age and Emotional Intelligence are not related.

The Chi square test for Experience and Emotional Intelligence showed the calculated value to be .430 which is greater than  $\alpha$  value .05. Hence we can conclude that there is no relation between Experience and Emotional Intelligence i.e. Emotional Intelligence does not change with experience.

The Chi square test for Gender and Emotional Intelligence showed the calculated value to be .643 which is more than  $\alpha$  value .05. Hence we can conclude that there is no relation between Gender and Emotional Intelligence i.e. Emotional Intelligence does not change with Gender .

The Chi square test for Marital Status and Emotional Intelligence showed the calculated value to be .914 which is more than  $\alpha$  value .05. Hence we can conclude that there is no relation between Marital Status and Emotional Intelligence i.e. Emotional Intelligence does not change with Marital Status.

Anova was conducted to understand whether there is a difference in EI based on income. The test revealed that there is no significant difference in EI based on Income. The 'p' value is .727 which is greater than  $\alpha=.05$ . The results are displayed in Table III

Table III

### ANOVA

Emotional Intelligence and Perceived Work Overload

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.152	2	.076	.321	.727
Within Groups	13.498	57	.237		
Total	13.650	59			

So we reject the alternate hypothesis and conclude that there is no relation between income and Emotional Intelligence. So Emotional Intelligence does not change with the Income of the person and is independent of it.

Thus the above findings reveal that Emotional Intelligence has no relationship with the demographic variables of Age, income, Gender, Experience or marital status. So we come to the conclusion that there should be different parameters for understanding Emotional Intelligence.

The second hypothesis of this study tries to focus on another important relationship i.e. the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and perceived work overload and the impact of Emotional Intelligence on perceived work overload. Correlation Analysis in Table IV shows that the 'r' value is -.828.

Table IV

**Correlations**

		Emotional Intelligence	Perceived.Wrk. Overld
Emotional Intelligence	Pearson Correlation	1	-.828**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	60	60
PerceivedWork Overload	Pearson Correlation	-.828**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	60	60

\*\**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

The negative ‘r’ value i.e -.828 indicates a very high degree of negative correlation between the two variables i.e with increase in Emotional Intelligence the Perceived work overload decreases and vice versa.

The R<sup>2</sup> value obtained in the study is .686 so we can predict that in 68.6 % of the variance in Perceived Work Overload is dependent on Emotional Intelligence of the Employee. The value of R<sup>2</sup> is significant as indicated by ‘p’ value (.000) of F statistic as given by the Anova calculations.

Table V

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	6.146	.337		18.254	.000
	Emotional Intelligence	-1.122	.100	-.828	-11.255	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Perceived Work Overload

The Regression Model Developed in this Study is shown in Table V and can be interpreted as below:

$$\text{Perceived Work Overload} = 6.146 - 1.122 \times \text{Emotional Intelligence}$$

We accept the Alternative Hypothesis that Emotional Intelligence has an impact on Perceived Work Overload and reject the Null Hypothesis. When Emotional Intelligence increases the perceived work overload decreases The model developed gives the impact that the two variables have on each other.

## Conclusion

The nature of work in the Software Industry with long working hours, rigid time lines for projects, on site execution of projects, interventions and supervisions by client supervisors, calls for certain qualities besides technical skills. Intelligence Quotient is needed no doubt for complex projects but that itself does not suffice this has to be supported with emotional intelligence of the employees. A higher Emotional Intelligence will impact how the employee perceives the work overload because it is in the perception of the workload that determine the stress levels of the employees .

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