

# Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace

<sup>1</sup>Matthew N. O. Sadiku, <sup>2</sup>Olaniyi D. Olaleye and <sup>3</sup>Sarhan M. Musa,

<sup>1,3</sup>Roy G. Perry College of Engineering, Prairie View A&M University, Prairie View, TX, USA

<sup>2</sup>Barbara Jordan-Mickey Leland School of Public Affairs, Texas Southern University, Houston, TX, USA

**Abstract:** Emotional intelligence (EI) can be beneficial in many areas of life including the workplace in today's increasingly competitive world. Research indicates the importance of emotional intelligence to workplace job performance, job satisfaction, psychological well-being, and success. EI is correlated with desirable workplace characteristics like motivation, perseverance in the face of frustration, self-control, and performance under pressure. Employees with high emotional intelligence have a greater sense of control over their work, are better able to cooperate with others, manage work-related stress, and solve conflicts within workplace. This paper briefly considers how emotional intelligence can actually be applied in the workplace.

**Keywords:** Emotion, Emotional Intelligence, Workplace

## I. INTRODUCTION

While money and position/status are of great value, people who are highly successful in the workplace are usually motivated by something more than these. Today's working environment has undergone major changes. The skills necessary to succeed in today's world and workplace are different from those required in the previous generations. Today's forward-looking organizations actively look for employees that are passionate about what they do and highly committed to their work.

Every workplace consists of individuals with different strengths, personalities, and emotions which can greatly affect the way they work. People sometimes need to express their emotions. Emotions in the workplace play a large role in how an entire organization communicates within itself and with the rest of the world. Darwin posited that emotional expression is essential for survival. Dale Carnegie once said, "When dealing with people, remember you are not dealing with creatures of logic, but with creatures of emotion." Emotions affect managerial decision, relationships, and job performance in the workplace.

## II. CONCEPT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Emotional intelligence (EI), also known as emotional quotient (EQ), refers to a person's ability to recognize, understand, manage, and reason with emotions. It has become a popular topic that is widely studied and applied in various fields such as psychology, psychiatry, business, education, engineering, healthcare, and computer science. Emotional intelligence influences how well employees interact with their colleagues at work.

The five elements that characterize emotional intelligence were suggested by Daniel Goleman, an American psychologist who helped to popularize emotional intelligence [1,2].

1. *Self-Awareness:* Emotional intelligence in the workplace begins with the individual and becoming self-aware.

2. *Self-Regulation:* This means not allowing emotions to get the best of you. Good self-regulation means that you can adapt effectively to situations as they change.
3. *Motivation:* This is an ability to pursue goals with energy and persistence. Here is intrinsic energy to continue improving oneself and the business.
4. *Empathy:* It refers to our ability to understand the emotions of those around us. Empathy has specific applications in workplace. These include sensitivity to diversity and helping people develop professionally.
5. *Social Skills:* Social skills are necessary to guide people effectively in a specific direction and influence them. They are highly valued in the workplace because they lead to better communication and job performance.

Thus, emotional intelligence is a combination of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, as shown in Figure 1 [3]. Based on these five elements, it is evident that a person with high emotional intelligence is the ideal person to work with. Emotional intelligence can be cultivated through dedicated effort and study. To succeed in the workplace and move up the career ladder, work on improving your emotional intelligence. EI is in no way replaces IQ. Rather emotional and cognitive intelligence are complimentary.

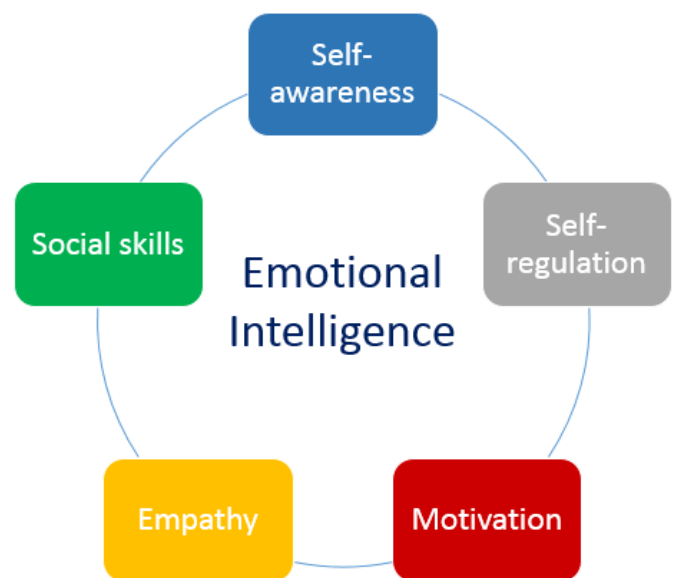


Figure 1: Five components of emotional intelligence [3].

## III. WHY EI IN WORKPLACE?

Emotional Intelligence refers to a set of non-cognitive abilities that influence human ability to succeed in life and workplace. There are four main reasons the workplace would be an appropriate setting for evaluating and improving emotional intelligence competencies [4]:

1. Emotional intelligence competencies are critical for success in most jobs. EI is linked to higher job satisfaction for those with high EI/EQ.
2. Many adults enter the workforce without the competencies necessary to succeed or excel at their job.
3. Employers already have the established means and motivation for providing emotional intelligence training.
4. Most adults spend the majority of their waking hours at work.

Figure 2 illustrates a typical example of emotional intelligence in the workplace [5]. Training in emotional intelligence in the workplace can occur at any level.



Figure 2: Importance of emotional intelligence at workplace [5].

#### IV. APPLICATIONS OF EI IN WORKPLACE

Since emotional intelligence grows with practice, organizations should create a culture and environment where employers and employees can practice their emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is a valuable skill that helps improve communication, management, leadership, job performance, problem-solving, social support, and relationships within the workplace. This applies to any type of workplace like schools, healthcare, business, government, organization, factory, construction, church, military, etc.

- **Leadership:** This is a fundamental workplace quality. Although EI may not be necessary for every job, it is important for those in leadership positions. EI is evidently important for leaders and managers. Leading others and influencing them are vital for those in business. Leaders with low EI criticize other people when they mistakes, refuse to accept constructive feedback, and is not open to others' opinions. An emotionally intelligent manager or supervision welcomes suggestions and interacts with others despite their discomfort. He can operate under pressure, analyze problems accurately, generate creative solutions, and make effective decisions.
- **Management:** Emotional Intelligence is a leading attribute of management. Managers and leaders learn EI through training. They are required to possess leadership skills. They should manage emotion to be able to control difficult situations rather than to fear unfamiliar situations. Managers and supervisors often ask the following questions [6]: Why do certain employees violate company ethics and policies? Why do they ignore the rules of the organization? Why do some people cause conflict while others are so gifted at resolving it? Why do they put self-interest ahead of

the organizational values? A great deal of time is spent in meetings in the workplace. To be effective and productive, these meetings must be carefully planned and skillfully led by managers with the understanding that the emotional intelligence of the participants can affect the outcome.

- **Human Resources:** This is one of the most effective places to use and enhance emotional intelligence. The most proactive time to apply EI at work is when hiring a new employee. HR should interview for emotional intelligence. There are tons of several questions one can ask to assess emotional intelligence. What motivates you to do your work? What is one of your weaknesses? How do you get along with others?
- **Job Performance:** Emotional intelligence is an important factor that determines the quality of life and job performance. It is a predictor of better job performance. There are three basic skills people need to perform their job [7]: (1) Technical skills which include technical expertise such as accountancy, (2) Intellectual skill, commonly known as IQ or cognitive abilities, (3) Emotional skills or emotional intelligence.
- **Social Support:** Workplace social support is a resource that enables individuals to cope with stress in the workplace. Individuals with friends, spouses, and family members who provide psychological resources (e.g. affective support, confirmation and direct help) have better mental health. Workplace social support mediates the relationship between EI and worker burnout [8]. Colleagues can provide support with work-related problems and supervisors can provide assistance and advice on job-related tasks.
- **Power and Control:** Social power in the workplace is a measure of influence an individual can assert over others. A sense of control is the authority an individual has over his or her own work tasks. Individuals who have sense of control in their workplace are often more focused and committed to their work [9].
- **Workplace Spirituality:** Spirituality survives in the hearts and minds of individuals everywhere, including workplace. Studies indicate that there exists a positive relation among employees' psychological capital and workplace spirituality. Professionals perceive themselves as emotionally tuned spiritual being striving for integrating their spiritual values in their job roles [10]. The relationship between employees' emotional and spiritual intelligence is a significant factor for job performance.
- **Worker Stress and Burnout:** Burnout may be regarded as an extreme case of chronic and prolonged occupational stress. There are many stressors in the work environment, from normal daily hassles to bullying or harassment. Workplace bullying is prevalent and can have detrimental effects on psychological well-being of the employees. As shown in Figure 3, emotional intelligence as a moderator of the relationship between workplace bullying and flourishing is commonly used to describe high levels of well-being [11]. There are acts of aggression in the workplace and they come in many different forms, ranging from verbal harassment to murder. Workplace harassment, such as physical violence, verbal abuse, bullying, sexual harassment, and racial harassment, has increased in recent years. We

sometimes get moody at work. Job stress can produce discernible effects on their performance. Employees tend to hide their deviant workplace behaviors (such as sabotage and theft) which they display when they are stressed, frustrated, or angry.

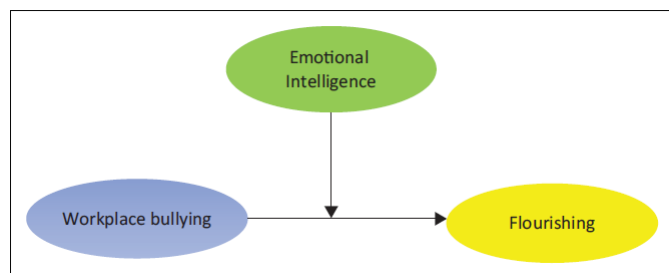


Figure 3: Emotional intelligence as a moderator of the relationship between workplace bullying and flourishing [11].

### FUTURE WORK SKILLS

The Institute for the Future for the University of Phoenix came up with the following ten skills for the future workforce are presented [12,13]:

1. *Sense-making*: Ability to determine the deeper meaning or significance of what is being expressed.
2. *Social intelligence*: Ability to connect to others in a deep and direct way, to sense and stimulate reactions and desired interactions.
3. *Novel and adaptive thinking*: Proficiency at thinking and coming up with solutions and responses beyond that which is rote or rule-based.
4. *Cross-cultural competency*: Ability to operate in different cultural settings.
5. *Computational Thinking*: Ability to translate vast amounts of data into abstract concepts and to understand databased reasoning.
6. *New-media literacy*: Ability to critically assess and develop content that uses new media forms, and to leverage these media for persuasive communication.
7. *Transdisciplinary*: Literacy in and ability to understand concepts across multiple disciplines.
8. *Design mindset*: Ability to represent and develop tasks and work processes for desired outcomes.
9. *Cognitive load management*: Ability to discriminate and filter information for importance, and to understand how to maximize cognitive functioning using a variety of tools and technique.
10. *Virtual collaboration*: Ability to work productively, drive engagement, and demonstrate presence as a member of a virtual team.

### BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

The benefits of emotional intelligence at work are many. There is economic gain in hiring employees based on their emotional intelligence. A lack of EI causes less effective communication, lower productivity, and efficiency in the workplace. Emotional intelligence offers the following benefits in the modern workplace [14]:

- It helps leaders motivate and inspire good work by understanding others' motivations.
- It brings more individuals to the table and helps avoid the many pitfalls of groupthink.
- It empowers the leader to recognize and act on opportunities others may be unaware of.

- It assists in the recognition and resolution of conflict in a fair and even-handed way.
- It can produce higher morale and assist others in tapping their professional potential.
- It helps to make decisions, solve problems, communicate more effectively, enhance better social relationships, and work together with more solidarity.
- It can also help in conflict management in the workplace.

EI has been described variably by scholars. Studies in gender differences in EI are inconclusive. Not everyone can be a master of emotional intelligence. EI should not be considered as a quick-fix solution to workplace problems. It is a gradual learning experience which can lead to improved communication and job satisfaction in the work [15].

### CONCLUSION

Emotional intelligence is regarded as competencies that help one understand how to influence others. It describes the ability to handle oneself and our relationships in any given situation. It is a relatively new and growing area of behavioral studies, drawing the attention of the general public, the business world, and the academic community. The significance of emotional intelligence in the workforce cannot be over emphasized. It is easier and pleasant to work with in the team of employees with high emotional intelligence. Emotionally competent employees tend to be more satisfied with their work.

Emotional intelligence is a skill or set of skills that can be taught and learned. Several colleges and universities now educate students using a broad, holistic approach that combines "hard" job-related knowledge and skills with "soft" social skills. They are concerned about the skill gaps in students who are looking for job after graduation [16]. The workplace environment is also a good place to develop emotional abilities.

To learn more about how to apply emotional intelligence in the workplace, consult the books in [17-24] and journals related to it: *International Journal of Work Organisation and Emotion* and *Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*

### References

- [1] D. Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: The 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition*. New York: Bantam Dell, 2006.
- [2] S. K. Gliebe, "Emotional intelligence in Christian higher education," *Christian Higher Education*, vol. 11, no. 3, 2012, pp. 192-204.
- [3] "The importance of emotional intelligence in global communications," February 2018, <https://sites.psu.edu/global/2018/02/02/the-importance-of-emotional-intelligence-in-global-communications/>
- [4] J. Patti et al., "Leading with emotional intelligence," *Fighting Educator Burnout*, vol. 75, June 2018, pp. 46-51.
- [5] T. Walter, "Emotional intelligence and the workplace," <https://thriveglobal.com/stories/emotional-intelligence-and-the-workplace/>
- [6] M. Poskey, "The importance of emotional intelligence in the workplace: Why it matters more than personality," <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/24ec/a4f990f7dd2c4d>

- 1ce7c1d67e0560fe8e5a42.pdf?\_ga=2.71329939.1689497804.1581967171-1189398247.1572982241
- [7] A. Chitral and M. Malham, "Importance of emotional intelligence at workplace," *IEEE International Engineering Management Conference*, 2017.
- [8] C. Ju et al., "The mediating role of workplace social support on the relationship between trait emotional intelligence and teacher burnout," *Teaching and Teacher Education*, vol. 51, October 2015, pp. 58-67.
- [9] N. S. Schutte and N. M. Loi, "Connections between emotional intelligence and workplace flourishing," *Personality and Individual Differences*, vol. 66, August 2014, pp. 134-139.
- [10] L. K. Jena, "Psychological capital and workplace spirituality: Role of emotional intelligence," *International Journal of Work Organisation and Emotion*, vol. 7, no. 1, March 2015.
- [11] E. C. Nel, "The impact of workplace bullying on flourishing: The moderating role of emotional intelligence," *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 2019.
- [12] A. Davies, D. Fidler and M. Gorbis, "Future Work Skills 2020," Institute for the Future for the University of Phoenix Research Institute, CA, 2011.
- [13] M. C. Romero-Ternero, "Can cooperative learning promote emotional intelligence in our students? Academic and professional achievement," *Proceedings of the 7th IEEE International Conference on e-Learning in Industrial Electronics*, November. 2013.
- [14] "Emotional intelligence in the workplace," <https://appliedpsychologydegree.usc.edu/blog/emotional-intelligence-in-the-workplace/>
- [15] L. L. Rosenstein, "Emotional intelligence in the workplace," *Library Collections, Acquisitions, and Technical Services*, vol. 24, no. 4, 2000, pp. 502-503.
- [16] John J. Liptak, "Using emotional intelligence to help college students succeed in the workplace," *Journal of Employment Counseling*, vol. 42, December 2005, pp. 171-178.
- [17] N. Mohla, "Human Drama Inc.: Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace." Sage, 2105.
- [18] T. M. Owens and C. A. Daul-Elhindi, *The 360 Librarian: A Framework for Integrating Mindfulness, Emotional Intelligence, and Critical Reflection in the Workplace*. Association of College & Research Libraries, 2020.
- [19] N. Kite and F. Kay, *Understanding Emotional Intelligence; Strategies For Boosting Your EQ And Using It In The Workplace*. Kogan Page, 2012.
- [20] D. Singh, *Emotional Intelligence at Work: A Professional Guide*. Sage, 4th edition, 2015.
- [21] J. Ciarrochi, J. P. Forgas, and J. D. Mayer, *Emotional Intelligence in Everyday Life*. New York: Psychology Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2006.
- [22] C. Cherniss and D. Goleman, *The Emotionally Intelligent Workplace: How to Select for, Measure, and Improve Emotional Intelligence in Individuals, Groups, and organizations*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2001
- [23] H. Weisinger, *Emotional Intelligence at Work: The Untapped Edge for Success*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000.
- [24] S. K. Hayashi, *How to Improve Your Emotional Intelligence at Work & in Relationships*. Create Space Independent Publishing Platform, 2016.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Matthew N.O. Sadiku** is a professor in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Prairie View A&M University, Prairie View, Texas. He is the author of several books and papers. His areas of research interests include computational electromagnetics and computer networks. He is a fellow of IEEE.

**Olaniyi D. Olaleye** is a project management professional. He is currently working towards a Ph.D. in Urban Planning and Environmental Policy at Texas Southern University with emphasis on urbanization and infrastructural sustainability.

**Sarhan M. Musa** is a professor in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Prairie View A&M University, Texas. He has been the director of Prairie View Networking Academy, Texas, since 2004. He is an LTD Sprint and Boeing Welliver Fellow. His research interests include computer networks and computational electromagnetics.