Role of Emotional Intelligence in Managing Interpersonal Relations at Workplace in the IT Sector

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present article is to investigate the role of emotional intelligence in managing interpersonal relations at workplace in the IT sector of India. Based on the facts obtained from the literature review, the article aims to establish a relationship between the variables of emotional intelligence and their corresponding effect on interpersonal relations which consists of parameters namely the need for inclusion, control and affection. The article initially explores emotional intelligence and interpersonal relations and thereafter specifically finds out the relationship between the variables involved. Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation-Behaviour (FIRO-B) instrument and Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test have been used to explore the relationship. The article uses the sample of 81 employees that covered most of the major IT companies with the same size, structure, practises and environment in order to get a uniform respondent set. The age of the respondents varied from 21 to 29 years of age and the work experience varied from 6 months to as high as 5 years. From the analysis done in the study it can be suggested that emotional intelligence plays a significant role in managing and maintaining the healthy relations at workplace in the IT sector.

KEYWORDS

Emotional intelligence, FIRO-B, Interpersonal relations, IT sector, Schutte scale

INTRODUCTION

“Without the guidance of emotions, reasoning has neither principles nor power.” - Robert C. Solomon

Over the years an individual’s smartness or success has always been attributed to his or her Intelligence Quotient (IQ). It is almost immediately assumed that experts and professionals who have a high IQ succeed in their lives. However, IQ serves only as an index of numerical or analytical ability. “Studies have shown that people who are intellectually the brightest are not often most successful, either in business or in their personal lives” Daniel Goleman (1997). Steven Covey said that when we consider the typical IQ approach; we tend to explore only a very small spectrum of human intelligence (The competitive paradox, 1996).

Hence there has to be something more to success than just having a high IQ. It has been suggested by experts like Goleman that it is not IQ but Emotional Intelligence (EI) that makes these individuals pioneer in their respective fields. Emotional intelligence is measured as Emotional Quotient or EQ. Goleman (1997) and Cooper & Sawaf (1997) suggest that emotional intelligence improves our ability to understand our own emotions and that of others, and also enhances our social radar.

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Every employee shares a variety of social relations in his or her organization. Co-workers, supervisors, subordinates, suppliers, customers, clients and other stakeholders constitute the social relation spectrum of an organization. Hence it calls upon the employees to increase their emotional self-awareness, emotional expression, increase tolerance, increase trust and integrity, improve relations within and across the organization and thereby increase the performance of each employee and the organization as a whole.

**Theoretical relation Between FIRO Theory and Emotional intelligence-(Maddocks, 2005)**

The premise to Schutz’s FIRO theory was that people orient themselves toward others along three dimensions: Inclusion (I), Control (C) and Openness (O). These three dimensions can be linked to many aspects of emotional intelligence. For example, a person who has difficulty in situation that require high levels of inclusion may wish to develop their EI in areas such as regard for others, awareness of others and interdependence. A person who wants to be less Controlling of others may develop their flexibility and assertiveness (to be less aggressive). And a person who tends to be overly open may want to develop their Emotional control and Goal directedness. Figure 1 shows the FIRO theory.

Each of these three dimensions (I,C,O) can be explored at different levels of depth from Behaviour (B), to Feelings (F), to the Self-concept (S). These parallel the framework for Ei as proposed by JCA. The Self-concept (S) is reflected by our ‘Core Attitudes’. Feelings (F) are identified through bodily ‘Awareness of Self and Others’ and Behaviours (B) are demonstrated through our ‘Actions’ i.e., how our thoughts and feelings manifest in what we do. In both models behaviour and performance is underpinned by feelings towards the self (Maddocks, 2005).

Researchers today are interested in finding the effects of emotional intelligence on employees and thereby, organizations, and analyzing the various other facets of EQ. Corporate interest appears to be strongly related to the continuing search for a way of securing sustainable competitive advantage which can be developed through attention to “people issues” (Higgs, 1997; Kay, 1993; Senge, 1990; Ulrich and Lake, 1990). At a microcosmic level, EI will produce an employee who will know his capabilities, his job, has an outlook in the future, and is confident of a well-thought action. This will be more valuable than the action of an employee with high IQ and good knowledge, but low EI.

The purpose of this paper is to explore how emotional intelligence contributes to employees and employers ability to manage interpersonal relations at workplace specifically in the case of IT sector companies where the work pressures are high. Emotions are key issues in people’s behaviour. Taking into account that software engineering is a human capital-intensive activity; the importance of emotions management in software profession is obvious. (Colomo-Palacios et al., 2011).

Overall the paper aims to reaffirm the benefits of following the path of Emotional intelligence. Research has shown that individuals can be trained to increase their EQ, unlike IQ that becomes stunted after a particular age. EQ can be strengthened and strengthened throughout adulthood- with immediate benefits to our life, health, relationships, and our work. In the present study the following research questions are attempted to answer through an empirical investigation.

**Figure 1. FIRO Theory**

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<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Inclusion</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Openness</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feelings</td>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>Likability</td>
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<td>Self-Concept</td>
<td>Aliveness</td>
<td>Self-Determination</td>
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