Emotional Intelligence as a Predictor of Conflict Resolution Style in Public Sector Employees

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ABSTRACT: *In today's dynamic work environment people are more emotionally troubled. They feel lonely depressed, nervous, aggressive and stressful and this results in absenteeism, passivity, less productivity and attrition. This can also lead to conflicts but all conflicts are not destructive. Conflicts can be constructive if a person knows how to manage it well. Emotional intelligence is a personal attribute in employees which can help them to deal with conflicts. This exploratory as well as descriptive study is undertaken in public sector Delhi/NCR to find out and analyze the conflict resolution style adopted by the employees and to study the role emotional intelligence plays in choosing of conflict resolution style. Quantitative data was collected from 85 employees using conflict management style questionnaire by Johnson (1990) and emotional intelligence instrument by Emily A. Sterrett (2000). The data analysis using SPSS and MS Excel showed that employees of public sector have a very high or a high emotional intelligence and they mostly use collaborating style of conflict resolution. Emotional Intelligence (EI) and conflict resolution styles (CRS) are 75% related with each other.*
Keywords: *Conflict Resolution Style, Emotional Intelligence, Emotional Stability*

I. INTRODUCTION

Today's workplace is dynamic in nature and is characterized by time deadlines, cross cultural teams, work pressures, and work –family conflicts, which in turn result in a highly stressed workforce. Earlier, academic qualifications, job related know-how and intellectual abilities were the yardsticks used to assess the employees. Emotions had no place in the organizational context and were considered as counter – productive (Krishnaveni& Deepa, 2008). However many researchers that have concentrated on emotion in the workplaces have asserted that organizations are "emotional places", "incubators of emotions" or "emotional arenas" and it always stimulates doubt and commotion. Since emotions and feelings are at the core of the human experiment, very nature of the "organization" of work pertains to what individuals do with their sensations. Thus organizations seek to have workforce that is more emotionally intelligent (Khalili, 2012).

According to statistics provided by the Centre for Creative Leadership, 27% of the individual working in companies displays poor emotional intelligence, determined many organizations to launch so –called awareness-training programs meant to draw attention that no matter how professionally or technically skilled the employees might be, their ineffective workplace behaviour has a negative impact on organizational performance (Dumbrava, 2011). Excellent organizations are places where feelings are managed, matured or removed (Khalili, 2012). Muchinsky (2000) established that emotions have many differences which cover from pleasurable experiments of our existence which are positive experiences to the negative ones that are most noxious. Individual's job –related behaviour is reflected from affective or emotional experiments in the workplace that generate cognition.

According to result of survey conducted by UNC research team, in which 53% of the respondent said they lost work time worrying about a past or future confrontation with a co-worker, 37% said a hostile confrontation caused them to reduce their commitment to the organization, 28% said they lost work time because they avoided a confrontational co-worker, and 22% said they put less effort into their work because of confrontation. Impulsive reaction fuel conflict and enhance workplace tension (Zimmerman, 2006).

Thus no company can ignore emotions in the workplace because employees make no decision without emotions, emotions guide workplace relationships, emotions are integral to learning at work, emotions are a sign that people care about the workplace and are personally involved in organizational success or failure (Dumbrava, 2011).

Rationale of the Study

The majority of people who work spend a good proportion of their weekday hours interacting with others at their workplace. The average number of hours worked each week has held fairly constant for a wide range of industries. This fact alone seems to make workplace organizations a viable context in which to study conflict. At the same time there has been a burgeoning interest in the capability of individuals to manage emotions during

the course of workplace interactions. Underlying this interest is the assumption that when people are aware of their emotions, they are better able to regulate and use them to affect desired reaction. Emotions may underpin many behaviours and attitudes in connection with conflict, should be treated as more than a by-product of interpersonal interaction. Thus Emotional Intelligence refers to capabilities that would enable individuals to more effectively process conflict-related emotions.

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional Intelligence
Organizations consist of complex network of human relations, built and maintained by bridging the gap between significant behavioural differences. The quality of these relations defines the organizational atmosphere. Thus organizational atmosphere depends upon social skills as communication, flexibility and accommodation, as well as individual's capacity to deal with the perception, view, attitude and response of their co-worker. Ability of an individual to deal with other makes difference between productive and unproductive workplace (Dumbrava, 2011). The skills mentioned above are referred to with the generic term Emotional Intelligence, which is defined as " The ability to monitor one's own and other's feelings, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action" (Salovey& Mayer, 1990).
Emotional Intelligence brings together the fields of emotions and intelligence by viewing emotions as useful sources of information that help one to make sense of and navigate the social environment (Salovey& Grewal, 2005). It is associated with one's ability to identity (such as identification of facial emotional expression), understand (such as understanding the transition of anger into sadness), use (using emotions to facilitate thought), and regulate emotions (management of emotions) (Godse&Thingujam, 2010).
According to Yang &Massholder (2004) Emotionally intelligent individuals can better use emotional regulation, which involves the way individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, how they experience or express these emotions. Emotional regulation strategies occur in response to detected discrepancies between desired and current emotional states. Khalili (2012) stated that individuals who are high in emotional intelligence are seemingly more successful in work-related and non-work aspects of life than low-emotionally intelligent ones. According to a research emotional intelligence is important twice as much as analytic and technical skills for the organizations.

Model of Emotional Intelligence (EI)
Goleman's model of EI is one of the most studied. This model has 5 dimensions of EI under 2 competencies. By personal competency, he means the competency by which one manages himself and by social competency, he means the competency by which one handles the relationships. Personal competency has 3 dimensions- self-awareness, self-regulation and motivation. Social competency has 2 dimensions- empathy and social skills. The meaning of these as described by Goleman is as follows:
1.) Self- awareness: The knowledge of one's internal state, resources, preferences and intuitions is self-awareness. A person is aware of his own self- his strengths, weaknesses etc. Self-awareness has 3 competencies under it- Emotional awareness, Accurate self-assessment, Self-confidence.
2.) Self-regulation: It says that only awareness is not enough, but one should also be able to manage his/her internal states, resources and impulses. It has 5 competencies under it- self-control, trustworthiness, conscientiousness, adaptability, and innovation.
3.) Motivation: That emotional tendency which guides or facilitates a person in reaching his/her goals is motivation. It comes from within a person. Motivation has 4 competencies under it- achievement drive, commitment, initiative, and optimism.
4.) Empathy: As a part of social competence, empathy says that one should be aware of other's feelings, needs and concerns. 'Stepping into the shoes of others' i.e. feeling the same as the other person is feeling in a particular situation is empathy. It has 5 competencies under it-understanding others, developing others, service orientation, leveraging diversity, and political awareness.
5.) Social skills: It means that a person has the adeptness at inducing desirable responses in others. It is a very important skill in social life and for becoming a successful leader. Social skills has 8 competencies under it-influence, communication, conflict management, leadership, change catalyst, building bonds, collaboration and cooperation, and team capabilities.

Conflict in the Workplace – Sources of Conflict
Conflict is a component of interpersonal interactions, neither inevitable nor innately bad, but often commonplace and is an emergent function of people interacting within the workplace. Conflict interactions that occur in the workplace can impact individuals, relationships, and the organization as a whole (Nussbaum, 2009). It is a process that is based on the perception of the conflicting parties. It could begin when one party perceives that another party has negatively affected, or is likely to affect, something that the first party cares about

(Godse&Thingujam, 2010). It could be within the individual (intrapersonal) or between the individuals (interpersonal). Conflict involves strategic and planned interactions, in which participants in the conflict make choices between alternative behaviours (Nussbaum, 2009). Conflicts are found in all organizations but it may be weak, strong, silent, outstanding or indistinctive.

According to a research 20% of the manager's time is spent for resolving organizational conflicts. So managing conflict is necessary and its prerequisite is recognizing conflicts sources such as personality, unsociable value system, unclear job boundaries, competition for assess to limited resources, competition among groups, unhealthy relationships, independent tasks, time complexity, politics, ambiguous standards, organizational constraint, group decision making, educational system, communication, structure, personal variables etc. (Seraj et.al , 2013). The bases of a conflict are generally recognized as an incompatible goal between parties. The bases of any conflict are difficult to predict with certainty (Nussbaum, 2009).

There has been an increased attention to conflict management in the workplace by organizations. Peer and/or management review has been utilized to address interpersonal conflict situations at earlier stages of escalation. There has been a growth in the number companies and agencies creating organizational ombudsmen positions. An organizational or internal ombudsman provides a neutral, independent, and confidential mechanism for employees to deal with conflicts that occur with peers and/or managers (Nussbaum, 2009).

Conflict Resolution Style

Thomas Killman model defines conflict resolution styles on two dimensions. He used two dimensions to study it and 5 conflict resolution styles were identified based on those dimensions- assertiveness: it means concern of people for their own goals, needs and agendas and cooperativeness: it means concern of people towards other's needs and mutual relationships. The conflict resolution styles are-

1. Competing style: When assertiveness is high and cooperativeness is low, people practice competing style. This causes an outcome of win-lose. Here the parties follow a shark-like behaviour in dealing with conflict.
2. Avoiding style: When assertiveness is low and cooperativeness is also low, people practice avoiding style. This causes an outcome of lose-lose. Here the parties follow a turtle-like behaviour in dealing with conflict.
3. Accommodating style: When assertiveness is low and cooperativeness is high, people practice accommodating style. This causes an outcome of lose-win. Here the parties follow a teddy bear-like behaviour in dealing with conflict.
4. Collaborating style: When both assertiveness and cooperativeness is high, people practice collaborating style. This causes an outcome of win-win. Here the parties follow an owl-like behaviour in dealing with conflict.
5. Compromising style: When assertiveness and cooperativeness is neither high nor low, it is medium, people practice accommodating style. This cause an outcome of loses some-win some. Here the parties follow a fox-like behaviour in dealing with conflict.

Emotional Intelligence and Conflict Resolution Style

Emotions in the organization are a communicable phenomenon that impact on other workers' emotions. According to a research emotional contagion which is an automatic, non- conscious psychological process, people experiment shared thrills. It means, interaction in the workplace causes spreading or transferring thrills from an individual to others, thus when the group is more uninterrupted, emotions shared are stronger (Khalili, 2012). Thus emotional intelligence plays a considerable role in the workplace.

Emotional intelligence has formed a hypothesis as impacting a myriad of workplace variables such as performance, job satisfaction, absenteeism, organizational commitment and leadership. It plays an important role in forming the interaction among individuals and their work environment (Khalili, 2012). Emotional intelligence is the advanced ability, to use self –awareness and insight into self and others' emotions to aid in cognitive processes to produce desired outcomes (Chirasha&Mahapa, 2012). People come to know about each other's' states and more enduring dispositions through processes referred to as social cognition. The processes that people use to know themselves and others may be conscious, unconscious, perceptual, cognitive, and behavioural(Nussbaum, 2009).

According to a research Employees who have high emotional intelligence are better performers and less aggressive while those with low emotional intelligence are known to blame others for errors. Those who are emotionally stable are less destructive (Chirasha&Mahapa, 2012). Individuals high in emotional intelligence are adept at appraising various emotions and understand their full meaning, which should allow group members to channel task conflict in constructive ways. Emotionally intelligent individuals can better use emotional regulation, which involves the ways individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, how they experience or express these emotions (Yang &Mossholder, 2004)

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Objectives
1. To study the level of emotional intelligence in public sector employees.
2. To study and analyze the conflict resolution style of employees.
3. To study the impact of emotional intelligence on conflict resolution style.

Research Design

The research is exploratory as well as descriptive. It is exploratory because the aim was to gain insights into the problem i.e. to gain a better understanding of the situation- reasons why most of the conflicts occur and which conflict resolution style is preferable by employees of public sector in dealing with day to day situations. It is also descriptive because the purpose of this study was to describe the characteristics of employees i.e. their conflict handling style, to estimate the percentage of people exhibiting a certain style i.e. maximum employees of public sector adopt which conflict resolution style and to determine the association between their conflict resolution style and employee intelligence..

Sample Size: 85 .The employees of public sector companies in Delhi/NCR participated in this study. The questionnaires were distributed to 100 employees randomly using convenience sampling; out of which 85 replied.

Data Collection

Source used for data collection is-
1. Primary source: Questionnaires were used to gather information from employees about their conflict resolution style and emotional intelligence. Some employees were also interviewed to find out the major reasons of conflict.
For the interviews, different questions were asked to different people, based upon the type of information needed. Interviews were unstructured in nature
2. Secondary source: journals, articles, books, and thesis or research work published by various researchers as mentioned in the literature review.

Instrument Used

Two questionnaires were used to collect information from employees: Conflict management style questionnaire by Johnson (1990). It is a 15 item instrument. EI was determined using the survey questionnaire on EI done by Emily A. Sterrett (2000). It is a 28 item instrument.
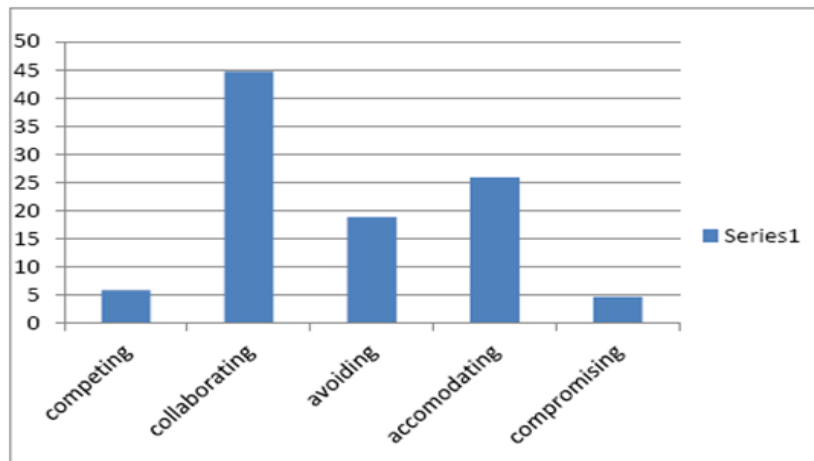
IV. DATA ANALYSIS

Emotional intelligence of employees
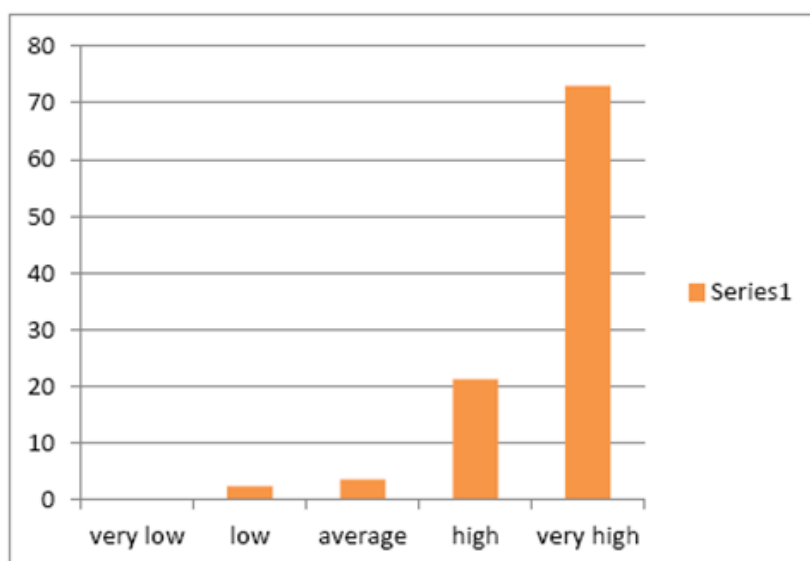
The above chart shows that 72% of respondents have very high EI, 21% have high EI, 3% have an average EI, 2% have low EI and none of the respondents have very low EI. In general, most employees of public sector have a very high EI.

Conflict resolution style of employees

The above chart shows that 5% of employees use competing style of conflict resolution, 44% use collaborating, 18% use avoiding style, 25% use accommodating style of conflict management and only 4% use compromising. Most employees use collaborating style to deal with conflict in company.

Correlations between EI and various conflict resolution styles
The correlation between EI and competing style of conflict resolution was found to be -0.230 which means both the variables are negatively correlated with each other. The strength of this negative relation is 23% and the relation is significant as $p(0.034) < 0.05$. p value is less than 0.05 signifies that there is less than 1 in 20 probability that an outcome occurred by chance and hence the result is statistically significant.
The correlation between EI and collaborating style of conflict resolution was found to be 0.515 which means both the variables are positively correlated with each other. The strength of this positive relation is 51% and the relation is significant as $p(0.000) < 0.01$. p value is less than 0.01 signifies that there is less than 1 in 20 probability that an outcome occurred by chance and hence the result is statistically significant.
The correlation between EI and accommodating style of conflict resolution was found to be -0.115 which means both the variables are negatively correlated with each other. The strength of this negative relation is 11% but the relation is insignificant as $p(0.239) > 0.05$. p value is more than 0.05 signifies that there is more than 1 in 20 probability that an outcome occurred by chance and hence the result is statistically insignificant.
The correlation between EI and avoiding style of conflict resolution was found to be -0.242 which means both the variables are negatively correlated with each other. The strength of this negative relation is 24% and the relation is significant as $p(0.026) < 0.05$. p value is less than 0.05 signifies that there is less than 1 in 20 probability that an outcome occurred by chance and hence the result is statistically significant.
The correlation between EI and compromising style of conflict resolution was found to be -0.461 which means both the variables are negatively correlated with each other. The strength of this negative relation is 46% and the relation is significant as $p(0.000) < 0.01$. p value is less than 0.01 signifies that there is less than 1 in 20 probability that an outcome occurred by chance and hence the result is statistically significant.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.759[a]	.575	.549	13.056

a. Predictors: (Constant), accomodating, avoiding, compromising, competing, collaborating

The above model summary of regression analysis shows that R=0.759 which means the correlation between EI and conflict resolution styles is 75%. R square is 0.575 which means that 57% of EI can be explained by different styles of conflict management. R square basically shows the portion of variance accounted for by independent variables. Adjusted R square is considered as a better population estimate than R square as R square is considered to be an optimistic estimate. But in our case there is not much difference between both the values. Standard error of estimate is the standard deviation of expected value from the mean

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	18250.923	5	3650.185	21.413	.000[b]
	Residual	13466.889	79	170.467		
	Total	31717.812	84			

a. Dependent Variable: EI

b. Predictors: (Constant), accommodating, avoiding, compromising, competing, collaborating

The ANOVA table shows that significance=0.000 which is less than 0.05 hence our overall model is significant. Degree of freedom for regression is the number of independent variables entered i.e. 5, for residual it is N-number of independent variables-1 i.e. 85-5-1= 79. Mean square= sum of squares/df. F= mean square regression/mean square residual.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	106.929	10.638		10.052	.000
	competing	-2.373	.702	-.263	-3.381	.001
	collaborating	4.290	.595	.624	7.208	.000
	avoiding	-1.841	.484	-.295	-3.806	.000
	compromising	-2.913	.654	-.347	-4.456	.000
	accommodating	1.729	.467	.325	3.704	.000

a. Dependent Variable: EI

In the above table the values for our interest are standardised coefficients beta. They indicate the relative influence of entered variables. Collaborating style has 62% influences on EI, compromising 34%, avoiding 29%, competing 26% and accommodating has an insignificant relation with EI hence it is not of our interest.

V. DISCUSSION &CONCLUSION

Discussion

The public sector employees have a very high or a high emotional intelligence and hence they mostly use collaborating/problem solving style of conflict resolution. Other than this they use accommodating and avoiding style and rarely use compromising and competing style of conflict management.

The negative correlation between emotional intelligence and competing style of conflict management shows that when the level of EI of employees is high, they use less of competing style while handling conflicts. This means there is high awareness among employees about their emotions and of emotions of others in organisation; they exhibit less of shark type behaviour.

The positive correlation between emotional intelligence and collaborating style of conflict management shows that when the level of EI of employees is high, they use more of collaborating style while handling conflicts. This means that as people of company are more aware of their emotions and of emotions of others in organisation, they exhibit more of collaboration behaviour and focus on solving problems with each other.

The negative correlation between emotional intelligence and accommodating style of conflict management shows that when the level of EI of employees is high, they use less of accommodating style while handling conflicts. This means that as people of company are more aware of their emotions and of emotions of others in organisation, they exhibit less of accommodating type behaviour. But this relation was found to be insignificant in our study.

The negative correlation between emotional intelligence and avoiding style of conflict management shows that when the level of EI of employees is high, they use less of avoiding style while handling conflicts. This means

that as people of company are more aware of their emotions and of emotions of others in organisation, they exhibit less of avoiding type behaviour.

The negative correlation between emotional intelligence and compromising style of conflict management shows that when the level of EI of employees is high, they use less of compromising style while handling conflicts. This means that as people of company are more aware of their emotions and of emotions of others in organisation, they exhibit less of compromising type behaviour.

Also, the multiple regressions showed that there is 75% relation between emotional intelligence of employees and their conflict resolution styles which is a very strong relation. The overall model is significant too.

Conclusion

The research results suggest that public sector employees are emotionally intelligent. They exhibit collaborating style of conflict management in day to day handling of conflicts. They are aware of the feelings of people around them and of their own feelings too, they are experts in monitoring, managing and controlling emotions. There are less possibilities of destructive conflict due to high emotional intelligence of its employees. The reason could be that since these employees belong to public sector, people have security of job. They are not insecure about their performance in relation to other employees and competition between colleagues is less so the employees see each other as friends. Another reason of this positive behaviour of employees could be that the policies of companies do not change frequently so people do not have to adjust themselves to the changes again and again. The stress is therefore less and employees understand different perspectives of co-employees.

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