

# *Assessing the Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Employee Performance: Toward an Integrated Emotional Intelligence Framework*

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Emotional intelligence has garnered significant attention in the field of business management. It encompasses a range of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills that profoundly impact multiple aspects of human behaviour, relationships, and general well-being. Emotional intelligence has been demonstrated to be a pivotal element in shaping workplace dynamics, maintaining the well-being of employees, and improving organisational performance. Therefore, this paper aims to investigate and analyse the impact of emotional intelligence on employee performance. A survey was conducted in the business process outsourcing sector in Mauritius. Results demonstrated that factors including years of experience, educational level, age group, motivation and job roles positively influence emotional intelligence and employee performance. In addition, an emotional intelligence framework was proposed to mediate conflicts between higher management and employees. Finally, relevant recommendations have been put forward on how to improve performance and also how to reduce conflicts.

*Keywords:* emotional intelligence, employee performance, employee motivation, conflict management

*JEL Classification:* M12, M14, M50, M52

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## **Introduction**

Emotional intelligence (EI) has garnered significant attention in the fields of psychology, education and business management (Jawaheer 2022).

EI involves the ability to recognise, understand, manage, and effectively use one's own and others' emotions in shaping workplace dynamics and outcomes (Goleman 1995). It encompasses a range of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills that profoundly impact multiple aspects of human behaviour, relationships, and general well-being. The concept of EI emerged as an answer to the realisation that cognitive intelligence did not fully record the complexities of human interactions and success. EI embraces components such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, social skills, social awareness and relationship management (Dessler 2020). All these are crucial for decision-making. EI has a deep impact on multiple facets of life, varying from personal relationships to professional success (Khalid et al. 2018).

Different people come with different emotions and behaviours. Managers and leaders make decisions based on their feelings and emotions without assessing the impact on the feelings and emotions of other employees in the organisations. This has an impact on employee performance reducing the effectiveness and efficiency with which an employee fulfils job responsibilities and commits to organisational goals (Dhungana and Kautish 2020).

The implementation of EI in an organisation is also influenced by factors like age groups, mentalities, opinions and different backgrounds. Not everyone will have the same reactions to a decision taken by the firm. To some, it may seem favourable and suitable, but to others, it can have an adverse impact which eventually leads to disagreements between colleagues. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the effect of emotional intelligence on employee performance in a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) such as Mauritius. The influence of demographic factors, such as education level, years of experience, age group and job roles on EI will also be investigated, as well as practical recommendations for BPO (Business Process Outsourcing) organisations to optimise their workforce's EI and enhance performance outcomes.

This paper is organised into 7 parts. The first section outlines the background, aim and objectives of the research work. The second section summarises the main literature on emotional intelligence, while the third section develops a framework connecting emotional intelligence and employee performance. The fourth section explains the data collection phase as well as the methodology used. The fifth section presents the results of the study, followed by a general discussion in the sixth section. The seventh section concludes with some areas for future research.

## **Theoretical Background**

### **EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**

EI is the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions (Salovey and Mayer 1990). Goleman (1995) defined EI as an individual's ability to understand and manage their feelings so that they are expressed appropriately and effectively. Mayer and Salovey (1997) argued that EI is an ability that someone can have instead of a trait since it can be mastered with age and experience.

EI consists of four components, namely self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (Noorafshan and Jowkar 2013). Self-awareness refers to understanding our own emotions and the way that they can affect our behaviours, thoughts, and performance. It is defined as a skill that needs to be worked on with repetitive reflection on one's continuous actions, to question one's behaviour and think about the answer without a prior judgment of being perfect (London et al. 2023). Individuals with high EI are skilled at managing stress. They can recognise when stress levels are rising and apply coping strategies to maintain their well-being (Sharma 2008). Emotionally intelligent individuals excel at managing their own emotions, especially in high-pressure situations. It prevents emotional outbursts that could negatively impact their work. Employees can remain composed, make rational decisions, and maintain focus on tasks, resulting in consistent and productive performance. Employees who possess EI not only perform well but also commit to the job (Biza and Irbo 2020; Sujatha et al. 2013).

Furthermore, EI contributes enormously to conflict management. Wall and Callister (1995) defined conflict as a proceeding in which one party discerns that its interest is different and contradicted by another individual. Conflict occurs due to different goals, expectations, principles, and outlooks on handling a situation. Different interests cause a divergence in opinions, leading to conflict (Chen et al. 2019). Thus, individuals with high levels of EI would have higher abilities to deal with these situations. Goleman (1995) stated that conflict resolution relies on an individual's level of EI. If an individual has mastered EI, he will be able to have better conflict management skills. Navigating conflicts with empathy and understanding contributes to a harmonious work environment. This, in turn, reinforces commitment, as employees perceive the

organisation as a place where differences are resolved with respect (Oy-oru and Ambali 2022).

#### EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE MODELS

While Salovey and Mayer (1990) explain EI as the ability to study one's own and others' emotions, Petrides and Furnham (2001) defined EI as a quality and a set of emotional insights that are located at the bottom of the personality ladder. These definitions have resulted in the culmination of three different models, namely, the ability model, the trait model, and the mixed model.

The ability model of EI was developed by Mayer and Salovey (1997). It is categorised into four dimensions of emotion-processing mental abilities, starting from the bottom line to the higher-level ability. The dimensions include (1) Perception, appraisal and expression of emotions, (2) Emotional facilitation of feelings, (3) Comprehension and analysis of emotions, (4) Reflection synchronisation of emotions.

The trait model as shown in figure 1 was explained by Petrides and Furnham (2001), wherein they defined EI as the ability to be self-aware and prone to behave well. According to these theorists, the personality dimension should be used to evaluate EI and, eventually, come up with the trait model of EI. This has been categorised into fifteen emotional aspects that have been assimilated under four main components, namely well-being, self-control, emotions, and sociability.

The mixed model of EI by Bar-On (1997) integrates emotional and social competencies to predict personal well-being and performance. It encompasses five key areas: intrapersonal skills (self-awareness and self-expression), interpersonal skills (social awareness and interpersonal relationships), adaptability (managing change and solving problems), stress management (emotional regulation and stress tolerance), and general mood (optimism and happiness). The Bar-On model assesses these competencies to help individuals improve emotional and social functioning to enhance mental health and life success. A summary of the model is found in figure 2.

#### **Development of an Integrated Emotional Intelligence Framework**

One contribution of this research work is to develop an Emotional Intelligence Model (EIM) compatible with Mauritius as a SIDS country. The literature fails to connect the existing framework to the test case

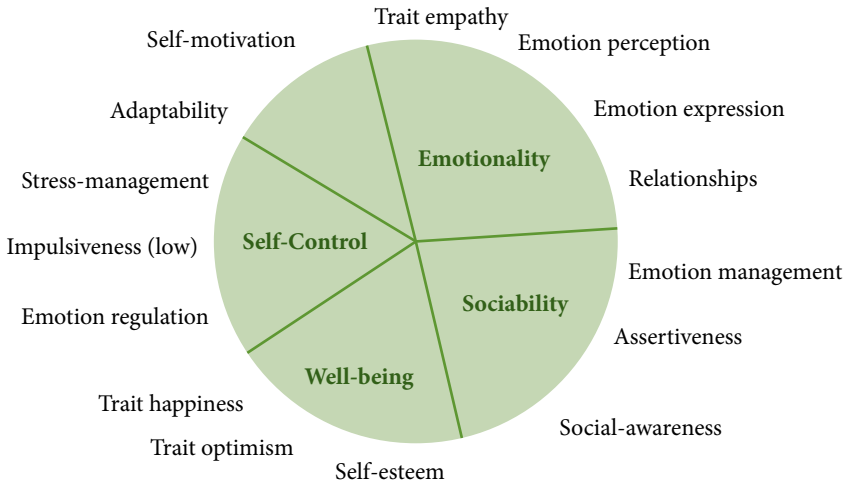


FIGURE 1 Trait Model of Emotional Intelligence Source Adapted from Petrides and Furnham (2001)

|  |                                   |   |  |
|--|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Intrapersonal</b>   |                                   | <b>Interpersonal</b>  |  |
| Self-regard, emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, self-actualisation, independence |                                   | Empathy, social responsibility, interpersonal relationships |  |
| <b>Adaptability</b>  | <b>Stress Management</b>          | <b>General Mood</b>   |  |
| Problem-solving, flexibility, reality testing  | Stress tolerance, impulse control | Happiness, optimism   |  |

FIGURE 2 Mixed Model of Emotional Intelligence SOURCE Bar-On (1997)

country. Though popular amongst researchers, the trait model does not always concur with real-world empirics. Employees with high EI may find it difficult to sort conflicts effectively due to external factors, power dynamics, and the nature of the conflict itself. The ability model on the other hand does not address the behavioural aspects of conflict management. It provides insight into an individual’s ability to understand emotions but does not directly explain how these abilities change into effective conflict resolution strategies and behaviours. The complexity of the mixed model makes it less practical for organisations to use in assessing employees for conflict management skills. The latter model may not cover specific conflict resolution styles such as collaboration,

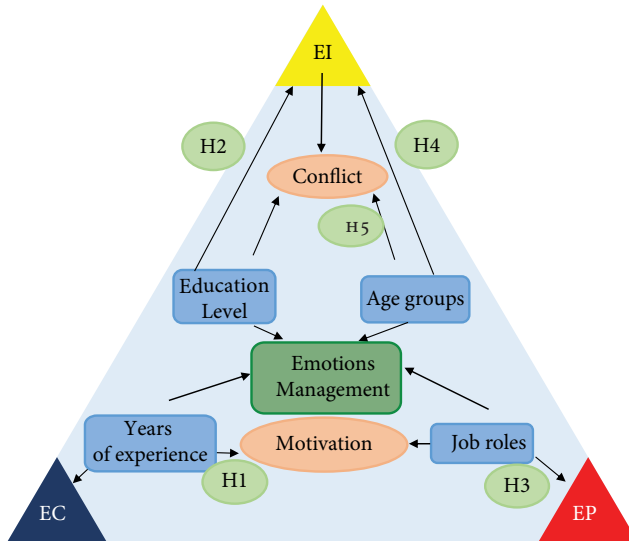


FIGURE 3 Proposed Emotional Intelligence Framework

compromise, or avoidance (Kanesan and Fauzan 2019). As a result, a conceptual framework was developed to cater for the above-mentioned weakness, which includes variables such as Employee Performance (EP) and Employee Commitment (EC). The model integrates internal factors such as conflict, emotional management and motivation, as well as external factors such as education level, age groups, years of experience and job status, as illustrated in figure 3.

#### INTERNAL FACTORS

Conflict in workplaces is still a concern for any organisation. It has serious impacts, disrupts peace at work, and leads to disagreements between employees and management. In certain instances, some employees go out of their way to make their colleagues' lives hell. It generates a toxic work environment where everyone is working just for the sake of getting a salary, and no sense of commitment can be seen in their work. This eventually affects productivity, both in terms of quality and quantity (Vashisht et al. 2018).

Motivation in many organisations is another important aspect that is needed to keep employees' performance at a high level (Munir and Azam 2017). When employees are less motivated to work, they tend to neglect work, which can lead to an increase in the rate of absenteeism. Different employees have different mindsets; however, with more work experi-

ence, employees tend to know better how to manipulate their emotions and eventually better commit to the organisation. Repeating the same work daily with poor management, where employees do not feel valued and heard, leads to a lack of motivation to work. Thus, managers should be made aware of their managing styles to avoid miscommunication and act upon any difficulty that employees are facing. Self and team motivation is equally important for EI to work. Otherwise, not only employees but the organisation will suffer. In an organisation, there are various job roles – senior positions, recruits, caretakers, etc. Neither does everyone have the same performance, it differs for everyone (Shooshtarian et al. 2013). It could be due to a lack of motivation to work or because they are unable to manage their emotions. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 will test the relationship between job roles and the level of performance.

#### EXTERNAL FACTORS

EI can be related to the education level of employees (Abebe and Singh 2023). Those who have a higher academic qualification tend to understand EI better. In an organisation, there are different age groups with different opinions and different ways of perceiving things (Saulick et al. 2024). EI is considered to increase with age: between an employee aged 18 and one aged 40, there will be a huge difference in their ability to manage their emotions and to reflect on their decisions. Not every employee will be ready to agree to implement EI as a factor to drive job performance (Igbinovia and Popoola 2016). Implementing the performance appraisal is usually done by the HRM team. There is a misconception about performance appraisal that it is mainly for increasing the salary of an employee, but through a strategic Human Resource Management perspective, it helps to drive EP and to provide feedback. Their performance throughout the year is discussed and based on that, they are remunerated. Therefore, employees who possess EI not only perform well but also commit to the job. Eventually, the performance of an employee is no longer related to the job level.

#### EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND MANAGING CONFLICT

In an organisation, people manage their emotions differently and therefore also handle conflicts differently. Some people are impulsive and people who react abruptly, whereas others are more composed and analyse things first before reacting. EI is important for any organisation to succeed in the long run; indeed, numerous factors bring about a healthy

work environment and good relationships among employees. The following hypotheses are used to test the validity of the proposed EIM:

- HYPOTHESIS 1: Years of experience impact the level of employee motivation.
- HYPOTHESIS 2: The level of employee education affects the level of EI.
- HYPOTHESIS 3: Job roles impact employee performance throughout the fiscal year.
- HYPOTHESIS 4: Different age groups will have different levels of EI.
- HYPOTHESIS 5: Different age groups will manage conflict according to their level of EI.

### **Methodology**

To test the proposed hypotheses, a quantitative survey approach was adopted using a self-administered questionnaire. The survey contains seven sections (A to G), as shown in table 1. The detailed components of each section are illustrated in the Appendix.

Section A comprises demographic parameters (summary of questions in table 2), while Sections B to Section G comprise Likert 5-scale questions on EI and EP. The target population for this study comprises employees working within the BPO sector in Mauritius. Respondents were selected using a nonprobability sampling strategy, more specifically, a convenience sampling approach.

A pilot study was conducted to examine the feasibility, design and methodology of the survey instrument. It served as a trial to locate potential issues, refine research methods, and make necessary adjustments before moving forward with the full-scale survey. Five employees were selected for the pilot tests and the questionnaire was sent to them through email. Once the questionnaire was deemed as meeting the research objective, 400 copies were distributed to various actors in the BPO sectors. A total of 350 valid responses were collected, resulting in a response rate of 87.5%. The participants were reminded of the confidentiality of their responses. The demographic profile of respondents is shown in table 2.

Cronbach's alpha is a statistic used to assess the reliability, or internal consistency, of a set of scale or test items. It measures how well a group of items collectively measures a single, unidimensional latent construct. The values of Cronbach's alpha range from 0 to 1, with higher values indi-



**TABLE 1** Survey Questionnaire Breakdown

| Sections | Description   |
|----------|---|
| A        | It includes the demographic information of each participant, such as gender, age groups, years of experience in the BPO industry, highest academic qualifications and job role. |
| B        | This will measure how employees view the importance of EI in their organisation.  |
| C        | This will explain how EI contributes to EC and whether the EI training will help in increasing EC.  |
| D        | This will address EP in the BPO sector and the factors that can influence it.   |
| E        | This will show how conflict is dealt with and whether the respondents think that EI can help in managing conflict.  |
| F        | This will show the regulations that ameliorate the implementation of EI in BPO sectors.   |
| G        | This section will demonstrate whether motivation is a key factor in an organisation and if respondents think motivation drives EC and EP.                                       |

**TABLE 2** Demographic Characteristics of the Study Population

| Characteristics      | Frequency                 |             |                |      |
|----------------------|---------------------------|-------------|----------------|------|
|                      | Male                      | Female      | Percentage (%) |      |
| Gender               | 163 (46.6%)               | 187 (53.4%) | 100            |      |
| Age group            | 18 - 25                   | 85          | 96             | 51.7 |
|                      | 26 - 40                   | 65          | 68             | 38.0 |
|                      | 41 - 65                   | 13          | 23             | 10.3 |
|                      | Total                     | 163         | 187            | 100  |
| Academic performance | School Certificate        | 20          | 18             | 10.9 |
|                      | Higher school certificate | 65          | 78             | 40.9 |
|                      | Bachelor's degree         | 70          | 73             | 40.8 |
|                      | Master's degree           | 8           | 18             | 7.4  |
|                      | Total                     | 163         | 187            | 100  |
| Years of experience  | 0 - 5 years               | 85          | 96             | 51.7 |
|                      | 6 - 10 years              | 36          | 40             | 21.7 |
|                      | 11 - 15 years             | 23          | 34             | 16.3 |
|                      | Above 15 years            | 19          | 17             | 10.3 |
|                      | Total                     | 163         | 187            | 100  |
| Job Roles            | Associate                 | 82          | 100            | 52.0 |
|                      | Analyst                   | 45          | 47             | 26.3 |
|                      | Manager                   | 15          | 13             | 8.0  |
|                      | Others                    | 21          | 27             | 13.7 |
|                      | Total                     | 163         | 187            | 100  |

TABLE 3 Reliability Analysis

| Sections |                         | Cronbach's alpha | Cronbach's alpha based on standardised items | No. of items |
|----------|-------------------------|------------------|--|--------------|
| B        | Emotional Intelligence  | 0.782            | 0.752  | 8            |
| C        | Employee Commitment     | 0.761            | 0.769  | 6            |
| D        | Employee Performance    | 0.850            | 0.861  | 7            |
| E        | Conflict Management     | 0.796            | 0.716  | 7            |
| F        | Raising Awareness of EI | 0.970            | 0.971  | 2            |
| G        | Motivation              | 0.587            | 0.635  | 9            |

TABLE 4 KMO and Bartlett's Test Results

| Components              | Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy | Bartlett's Test of Sphericity |    |      |
|-------------------------|---|-------------------------------|----|------|
|                         |   | Approx. Chi-square            | Df | Sig  |
| Emotional Intelligence  | 0.525   | 42.395                        | 15 | 0    |
| Employee Performance    | 0.715   | 2200.902                      | 21 | 0    |
| Conflict Management     | 0.627   | 3153.37                       | 21 | 0    |
| Raising Awareness of EI | 0.500   | 3.062                         | 1  | 0.08 |
| Motivation              | 0.668   | 3207.12                       | 36 | 0    |

cating greater internal consistency (typically, a value of 0.70 or higher is considered acceptable). It is calculated by analysing the average interim correlations and the number of items in the scale. Despite its widespread use, it has limitations, such as assuming unidimensionality and being sensitive to the number of items. Table 3 summarises the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of all the constructs used in the study. They are all above the internal consistency threshold of 0.70.

## Results and Discussion

### EXPLANATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS

Explanatory factor analysis is used to identify the factor structure of a measure and to calculate its internal reliability. In other words, it is used to simplify the variables and to group them for hypothesis testing. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin ( $\kappa$ MO) and Bartlett test evaluates all gathered data together. A  $\kappa$ MO greater than 0.5 and a significance level for Bartlett's test below 0.05 show that there is a substantial correlation in the data. The following diagram comprises the analysis of the  $\kappa$ MO and Bartlett's test. Each component comprises factors grouped for further analysis. Table 4 depicts the results of the  $\kappa$ MO and Bartlett's tests. The  $\kappa$ MO Measure of

TABLE 5 Influence of Years of Experience and Motivation

| Descriptive Statistics |                     |                |                     |
|------------------------|---------------------|----------------|---------------------|
|                        | Mean                | Std. Deviation | N                   |
| Motivation             | 4.2675              | 0.35087        | 350                 |
| Years of experience    | 1.91                | 1.068          | 350                 |
| Correlations           |                     |                |                     |
|                        |                     | Motivation     | Years of experience |
| Motivation             | Pearson Correlation | 1              | -0.023              |
|                        | Sig. (2-tailed)     |                | 0.667               |
|                        | N                   | 350            | 350                 |
| Years of experience    | Pearson Correlation | -0.023         | 1                   |
|                        | Sig. (2-tailed)     | 0.667          |                     |
|                        | N                   | 350            | 350                 |

Sample Adequateness for Emotional Intelligence has a value of 0.525. It is recommended to have a value that is greater than 0.5, thus the sample is moderate and acceptable. The Bartlett test of sphericity should be below 0.05, and as a result, the significance is 0.000; therefore, this means that there is a relationship among the variables.

Moreover, the KMO value for ‘Employee Performance’ is 0.715 indicating that the sample is relatively adequate. Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity has a significance of less than 0.05, which shows a relationship between the variables.

For the case of conflict management, the KMO value is 0.627 which is acceptable, as it is above 0.5. Bartlett’s coefficient test of sphericity has a significance of less than 0.05, which means that there is a relationship between the variables. For raising awareness of EI, the KMO value is 0.5, which is an acceptable figure to conduct the factor analysis. The significance is 0.000, which means that there is a relationship between the variables. Lastly, for the variable ‘Motivation’, the KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy is 0.668. Therefore, it is acceptable since it is above 0.5 and the significance is 0.000, which means that there is a relationship between the variables.

**INFERENCEAL ANALYSIS**

This section presents the inferential analysis of the study. The researcher aims to have the results from factor analysis in a simple structure with the majority of the items having a large loading on one variable and

small loadings on other variables. Hypotheses 2, 3 and 4 are analysed using Chi-square tests and Cramer's V, while hypotheses 1 and 5 are analysed through Pearson's Correlation coefficient.

#### *Influence of Years of Experience and Motivation (Hypothesis 1)*

Hypothesis 1 was tested using Pearson's correlation. Table 5 illustrates the results. Pearson's correlation coefficient was  $-0.023$ , which indicates that both variables move in opposite directions. The level of significance is  $0.667$ , which is above  $0.05$ , showing that motivation and years of experience do not have a significant association.

Findings showed that years of experience do not impact the motivation level of employees. An employee can have more than 20 years of experience in the BPO industry. However, their motivation level does not need to be high. The same goes for someone who just joined a firm and can be demotivated to work, considering the work environment, the values and beliefs of the organisation, and the relationships that higher management maintains with their employees. All of these are factors that generate no relationship between the variables. Another reason why years of experience have no relationship with motivation is that when employees are not remunerated as they should, this leads to a lack of motivation at work. So eventually, years of experience influence employee motivation less when it comes to being remunerated or even being recognised for the quality of work. Thus, managers will need to consider other factors apart from experience to motivate employees and increase efficiency. An effective motivation system helps eliminate alienation, disgust, anger, and sulky and aggressive behaviours (Teker 2016).

#### *Influence of Education Level and Emotional Intelligence (Hypothesis 2)*

Hypothesis 2 focuses on finding the association between EI and level of education. Results are illustrated in table 6. The Chi-Square test results in an asymptotic significance of  $0.120$ , indicating a p-value less than 5%. Therefore, there is an association between the level of EI and education level. Cramer's V value yielded a value of  $0.185$ , showing that the resulting association is relatively weak.

Results show that education level does have an impact on an individual's EI. As the education level increases, the level of EI also increases. An employee who has only a secondary education can be seen to have a low

TABLE 6 Influence of Education Level and Emotional Intelligence

| Chi-Square Tests             |                     |       |                       |
|------------------------------|---------------------|-------|-----------------------|
|                              | Value               | df    | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square           | 35.766 <sup>a</sup> | 27    | 0.120                 |
| Likelihood Ratio             | 41.945              | 27    | 0.033                 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 0.016               | 1     | 0.901                 |
| N of Valid Cases             | 350                 |       |                       |
|                              |                     | Value | Approx. Sig.          |
| Nominal by Nominal           | Phi                 | 0.320 | 0.120                 |
|                              | Cramer's V          | 0.185 | 0.120                 |

NOTE <sup>a</sup> 23 cells (57.5%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 0.07.

TABLE 7 Influence of Job Roles and Employee Performance

| Chi-Square Tests             |                     |    |                       |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------|
|                              | Value               | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square           | 19.892 <sup>a</sup> | 24 | 0.703                 |
| Likelihood Ratio             | 21.239              | 24 | 0.625                 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 0.106               | 1  | 0.745                 |
| N of Valid Cases             | 350                 |    |                       |

NOTE <sup>a</sup> 16 cells (44.4%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 0.40.

EI. Those who have a bachelor’s degree display a higher level of EI. As learners progress in their education, they are faced with different social situations and challenges. These help them to develop their EI. Furthermore, during their educational journey, learners are exposed to different activities that promote self-awareness, improve their interpersonal skills and develop their sense of empathy (Peeraullee et al. 2020). However, results also showed that employees having a master’s degree display low levels of EI. This result can be neglected because, among the 350 respondents, only 8 had a master’s degree.

The results of this study do not corroborate with that of Kashani et al. (2012) who found no association between university students and EI scores. They argued that EI and its factors do not have a significant relationship with the level of education and they think EI can be regarded as a mediating factor that eases the compatibility of intelligence. They also argued that success depends on numerous intelligences, not only EI. Hence, this leaves scope for further analysis.

*Influence of Job Roles and Employee Performance (Hypothesis 3)*

Table 7 shows the results for Hypothesis 3 – the influence of job roles and employee performance. The asymptotic significance was 0.703. Therefore the p-value is more than 5%, showing no relationship between EP and job roles in the BPO sector.

From table 7, it can be observed that employees can be outperforming in their jobs while a manager can be working relatively poorly. Therefore, job roles do not contribute to EP; thus it does not matter whether an employee is an associate or an analyst. This analysis can be supported by the study of Shahhosseini et al. (2012). They argued that EP does not relate to job position, and the implementation of EI skills for managers is crucial for the increase in efficiency and better job performance. Moreover, studies like this relate directly to human resource professionals who can implement ‘mentoring’ amongst employees. Another contributing factor can be the employee’s reward system. This can lead to decreased performance if employees are not remunerated well. A workplace culture is equally important if an organisation wishes to achieve high productivity. Productivity and EP are equally affected by work-life balance. For instance, if an employee cannot manage their work and personal life separately, at some point, work suffers. This can be resolved through EI (Shahhosseini et al. 2012). Indeed, emotionally intelligent individuals are optimistic, which is a trait that allows the individual to focus on the resolution of the problem rather than the reasoning of this issue. Hence, EI will contribute positively to productivity and EP (Carmeli 2013).

*Influence of Age Group on Emotional Intelligence (Hypothesis 4)*

Previous studies show that there is a relationship between EI and age groups. It was reported that EI increased with age and that it demonstrates an amalgamation of early childhood experiences and genetics. As such, Hypothesis 4 has been developed to assess whether age groups have an impact on the level of EI in the BPO sector. The Chi-Square test yields an asymptotic significance of 0.079, indicating a p-value less than 0.5. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between the level of EI and different age groups. However, the strength of the relationship is 0.196, which means the association is weak. Table 8 illustrates the findings.

The results of this study corroborate with that of Extremera et al. (2006). The same findings were interpreted where the scores were pos-

TABLE 8 Influence of Age Group on Emotional Intelligence

| Chi-Square Tests             |                     |    |                               |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|-------------------------------|
|                              | Value               | df | Asymptotic. Sig.<br>(2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square           | 26.997 <sup>a</sup> | 18 | 0.079                         |
| Likelihood Ratio             | 27.856              | 18 | 0.064                         |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 0.870               | 1  | 0.351                         |
| N of Valid Cases             | 350                 |    |                               |

|                    |            | Value | Approx. Sig. |
|--------------------|------------|-------|--------------|
| Nominal by Nominal | Phi        | 0.278 | 0.079        |
|                    | Cramer's V | 0.196 | 0.079        |

NOTE <sup>a</sup> 16 cells (53.3%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 0.06.

itively correlated with the age factor. However, it was done mainly for college students. They recommended that further studies should be conducted for various age groups. This was eventually done in this study, where age groups of 18–25, 26–40, and 41–65 years were considered for the Mauritian BPO sector. It could be that employees in the age group 18–25 years have a higher EI and can manage their emotions effectively because nowadays in school there are subjects like social sciences and life skills. The concept of EI could be ambiguous to older people aged between 40–65 years, as this is a stage in a person’s life where they already have a career and thus, learning a new thing can make them apprehensive. Therefore, it is a barrier to implementing EI. The same findings were found in the study of Fariselli et al. (2008), where the researchers argued that the relationship between EI and age groups is weak but significant, and the analysis was done through the Six Seconds Emotional Intelligence Assessment. However, it was concluded that EI tends to increase with age, that is, people over 60 years might have a better level of EI.

*Influence of Age Group on Conflict Management (Hypothesis 5)*

Hypothesis 5 was tested using the Pearson correlation test. Pearson’s correlation test shows a value of 0.099 and a significance of 0.064, which does not define a relationship between conflict management and different age groups. These results are presented in table 9.

The literature shows that conflict is managed differently among different individuals. While some think effective communication will resolve a dispute, others might believe that walking out of a situation is a

TABLE 9 Influence of Age Group on Conflict Management

| Descriptive Statistics |                     |                     |           |
|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------|
|                        | Mean                | Std. Deviation      | N         |
| Conflict management    | 3.9441              | 0.22625             | 350       |
| Age group              | 1.54                | 0.613               | 350       |
| Correlations           |                     |                     |           |
|                        |                     | Conflict management | Age group |
| Conflict management    | Pearson Correlation | 1                   | 0.099     |
|                        | Sig. (2-tailed)     |                     | 0.064     |
|                        | N                   | 350                 | 350       |
| Age group              | Pearson Correlation | 0.099               | 1         |
|                        | Sig. (2-tailed)     | 0.064               |           |
|                        | N                   | 350                 | 350       |

better solution to avoid conflicts. There are people, no matter the age, be they 18 years old or 40 years old, who tend to be impulsive, and this characteristic causes issues not only in workplaces but also in personal life. A group of employees with different age groups can manage conflict either through competing, accommodating, or even compromising. This shows that age groups are not relevant in managing conflicts. However, the study by Beitler et al. (2016) indicates that there is a positive relationship between the two variables, as they argue that an individual's conflict management skills develop over time, and, with increasing age, people tend to improve their social interactions. Therefore, managing conflict does not need to be easy for everyone. Moreover, as per Goleman (1995), when an individual can regulate their emotions and is socially aware, eventually managing conflict becomes easier. This theory was applied in practice, and most of the results were favourable. The values and beliefs are a turning point in the management of conflict. The implementation of EI in organisations will help in managing conflict better since different age groups have no significant relevance to conflict management.

### General Discussion

This research aims to investigate the effect of EI on employees in the Mauritian BPO sector. The influence of demographic factors such as years of experience, education level, job roles and age group have been investigated on variables such as employee motivation, employee performance, conflict management and emotional intelligence.



Taking cognisance of the weaknesses of different EI models in the literature, an attempt has been made to develop an Emotional Intelligence Model (EIM) more specifically for the Mauritian context. The model was developed using the above-mentioned demographic factors and variables. Five hypotheses were formulated as illustrated in figure 3.

Hypothesis 1 was about determining the impact of years of experience on employee motivation. Findings showed that years of experience do not impact employee motivation. Reasons put forward were that there are more important factors that need to be considered for motivating employees in the BPO sectors and some of the factors are remuneration; working conditions; values and beliefs of the organisation; and relationship with higher management.

Hypothesis 2 was concerned with education level and emotional intelligence. Results showed that the level of education does affect the emotional intelligence of employees in the BPO sector. The higher the education level, the higher the level of EI. Employees having a tertiary education have a higher level of EI because they are exposed to more self-awareness activities. Their maturity helps them enormously in handling their emotions in different situations.

Hypothesis 3 investigates the impact of job roles on employee performance. It was observed that job roles do not have a significant association with employee performance. Literature also showed similar findings (Shahhosseini et al. 2012; Carmeli 2013). Reasons put forward are that other factors such as the reward system; employee training and workplace culture are aspects which have a higher impact on employee performance.

Hypothesis 4 is concerned with the demographic factor 'age group' and level of EI. Findings showed that there is a significant relationship between age group and level of EI. As age increases, the level of EI increases. This may be because employees become more mature with age. They accumulate a wealth of experiences and face many situations which help them understand and control their emotions and feelings. As people grow, they develop deeper emotional insights and develop more interpersonal dynamics and management skills.

Lastly, hypothesis 5 was about finding the relationship between age group and conflict management. Results showed there is no relationship between the two variables. This is because the management of conflict is not affected by age group in the BPO sector. Each individual has his/her way of dealing with or getting out of conflicting situations. Thus, the

implementation of EI in organisations can help in managing conflict better since different age groups have no significant relevance to conflict management.

### Conclusion and Future Research

The purpose of this study was to assess the relationship between EI and EP, and how external factors affected this relationship. However, psychological theories and emotions management of different individuals are far more complex, hence this limits this study to only the BPO sector, although EI exists in almost every field, even at a school or a kindergarten. A proposed EIM was developed to assess the prevalent issues that exist in large organisations nowadays, that is, conflict management. Previous models like Goleman's theory were tested and a new one was derived and analysed through hypothesis testing.

All the objectives of this study were achieved. This study will help managers and team leaders to understand and adapt to the different mindsets of employees, and team managers will have better-suggested strategies to implement in their daily tasks to achieve their monthly and yearly goals. Employees, on the other hand, will understand how to identify their emotions and manage their relationships with their colleagues. This will eventually lead to a healthier work environment.

However, there is still scope for future research. It can be noted that not all dimensions of the conceptual framework have been tested due to the narrow scope of the study. Endogenous relationships between variables such as 'conflict', 'emotional intelligence', and 'motivation' open the door for future work. Other avenues also include the necessity to cater for potential cultural differences between organisations as well as differences in business etiquette.

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**Appendix**

| Section | Code | Statements  |
|---------|------|---|
| B       | EI 1 | I am aware of my own emotions.  |
|         | EI 2 | I understand and empathise with the emotions of others.   |
|         | EI 3 | I can easily build positive relationships with colleagues and clients.  |
|         | EI 4 | Do you believe if you can manage your emotions, then stress management at work will be easier?  |
|         | EI 5 | Do you believe you can resolve conflicts through effective communication?   |
|         | EI 6 | How would you rate your own level of EI when it comes to managing conflicts in the workplace?   |
|         | EI 7 | Do you think employees with more than 20 years of working experience are more aligned with their emotions and decision-making skills? |
|         | EI 8 | Do you think someone with high EI in the age group 18-25 will fit a leading job position?   |
| C       | EC1  | How far do you think emotional intelligence will contribute to a stronger emotional attachment to an organisation?                    |
|         | EC2  | How firmly do you believe emotional intelligence will help employees in believing in the values and goals of their organisation?      |
|         | EC3  | How likely are you to be willing to work overtime when the business is struggling to meet the required expectations?                  |
|         | EC4  | How likely are you to be willing to work in the same organisation for the next five years?  |
|         | EC5  | How proud do you feel when talking about the company that you work for?   |
|         | EC6  | Do you think implementing emotional intelligence can help in reducing the rate of absenteeism at work?                                |
| D       | EP1  | Do you think being emotionally attached to your organisation will improve your performance at work?                                   |
|         | EP2  | Do you always seek opportunities for improvement and growth?  |
|         | EP3  | Are you open to feedback from your team leads and use them to improve your performance?   |
|         | EP4  | Do you think that you contribute positively to the overall success of your team?  |
|         | EP5  | Is your work output meeting the team's expectations?  |
|         | EP6  | Do you think there is a relationship between emotional intelligence and career advancement within the organisation?                   |

| Section | Code  | Statements  |
|---------|-------|---|
|         | EP7   | Which of the possible factors can impact employee performance other than motivation?  |
| E       | CM1   | Do you believe impulsiveness leads to conflict amongst employees?   |
|         | CM2   | According to you, is an employee who is too shy to express his opinions, more prone to be submissive to wrong decisions by the management?    |
|         | CM3   | Is a lack of expression of opinions at work an obstacle to getting a promotion?   |
|         | CM4   | Can you manage your emotions effectively during challenging situations?   |
|         | CM5   | How do you handle disagreements with team members or colleagues who have different emotional responses to the conflict?                       |
|         | CM6   | Do you think work environments would be a better place if everyone knew how to align their emotions with their decision-making skills?        |
|         | CM7   | Do you think different age groups lead to divergence in opinions?   |
| F       | TAEI1 | Do you think training employees in managing their emotions will lead to a healthy work environment?   |
|         | TAEI2 | Have you participated in any emotional intelligence training or workshops provided by your organisation?                                      |
| G       | M1    | Does motivation influence your commitment to your organisation?   |
|         | M2    | Do you think managers should motivate their employees regularly?  |
|         | M3    | Does motivation bring about a healthier workplace?  |
|         | M4    | Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: "I feel highly motivated in my current role."                           |
|         | M5    | How important is a sense of purpose and alignment with the organisation's mission and values in motivating you and fostering your commitment? |
|         | M6    | Do words of motivation from your managers improve your performance at work?   |
|         | M7    | Do you believe that setting personal goals and milestones at work contributes to your motivation and job performance?                         |
|         | M8    | How often does a lack of motivation lead to decreased job performance for you?  |
|         | M9    | Please rate your level of motivation in your current role.  |

#### List of Acronyms

- EI – Emotional Intelligence  
 EC – Employee Commitment  
 EP – Employee Performance  
 CM – Conflict Management  
 TAE – Training and Work environment  
 M - Motivation