

The Influence of Emotional Intelligence on Workplace Relationships and Performance

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ABSTRACT

In contemporary organizational environments, emotional intelligence (EI) has emerged as a critical psychological resource influencing employees' interpersonal effectiveness and job performance. The present study aimed to explore the influence of emotional intelligence on workplace relationships and perceived job performance among working professionals. Adopting a qualitative descriptive research design, the study collected data from five employees representing diverse sectors—defence, education, medical, banking, and corporate—located in Bangalore, Karnataka. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, and data were gathered through a researcher-developed semi-structured interview. Thematic analysis was employed to examine participants' verbatim responses. Five major themes emerged: emotional self-awareness in workplace interactions, personal emotion regulation strategies, empathy and interpersonal sensitivity, emotional regulation in conflict resolution, and emotional intelligence as a driver of performance and resilience. The findings indicate that employees who demonstrate higher emotional awareness and regulation tend to maintain healthier workplace relationships, manage conflicts more constructively, and sustain productivity under pressure. However, organizational stressors and hierarchical dynamics were found to influence the extent to which emotional intelligence could be effectively applied. The study highlights the practical importance of integrating emotional intelligence development into organizational training, leadership practices, and employee well-being initiatives. Despite limitations related to small sample size and qualitative scope, the research contributes context-rich insights into how emotional intelligence operates in real workplace settings. Future research may adopt larger and mixed-method approaches to further validate and extend these findings.

Keywords: *Emotional intelligence, workplace relationships, job performance, thematic analysis, employees*

In today's rapidly evolving organizational landscape, technical competence alone is no longer sufficient for sustained workplace success. Modern work environments demand employees who can effectively navigate complex interpersonal dynamics, manage emotional demands, and maintain productive professional relationships. Within this context, Emotional Intelligence (EI) has gained significant attention as a critical psychological

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resource that supports both individual effectiveness and organizational functioning (Goleman, 1995; Mayer et al., 2004).

Emotional intelligence broadly refers to the capacity to perceive, understand, regulate, and utilize emotions in oneself and others (Mayer et al., 2004). Employees who possess higher levels of EI are generally better equipped to handle workplace stress, communicate effectively, demonstrate empathy, and resolve conflicts constructively (Doğru, 2022). These emotional competencies are particularly important in contemporary workplaces characterized by teamwork, diversity, role ambiguity, and performance pressures.

Workplace relationships form the social foundation of organizational life. Positive interactions among colleagues and supervisors contribute to trust, collaboration, and a supportive work climate, whereas poor emotional management can lead to misunderstandings, interpersonal conflict, and reduced productivity (Udod et al., 2020). Emotional intelligence plays a central role in shaping these relational outcomes because it influences how individuals interpret social cues, respond to feedback, and manage emotionally charged situations (Kundi & Badar, 2021).

In addition to relational benefits, emotional intelligence is increasingly viewed as a contributor to job performance. Employees who can regulate frustration, remain motivated under pressure, and adapt emotionally to changing work demands are more likely to sustain consistent performance levels (Gong et al., 2019). Emotional competencies also support effective decision-making, customer relations, leadership effectiveness, and team functioning. As organizations continue to prioritize soft skills alongside technical abilities, understanding the practical role of EI in everyday work experiences becomes increasingly important (Messaudi & Sakale, 2024).

Despite growing scholarly attention, much of the existing literature has relied predominantly on quantitative methods that measure emotional intelligence through standardized scales. While such studies establish statistical relationships, they often provide limited insight into how employees actually experience, interpret, and apply emotional intelligence in real workplace contexts. There remains a need for qualitative exploration that captures employees' lived emotional processes during workplace interactions.

Therefore, the present study adopts a qualitative approach to explore how working professionals recognize, regulate, and utilize emotional intelligence in their day-to-day work environments. By examining employees' subjective experiences, the study aims to generate deeper understanding of how emotional intelligence influences workplace relationships and perceived job performance. The findings are expected to contribute to organizational psychology literature and provide practical implications for employee training, leadership development, and workplace well-being initiatives.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Recent research has increasingly emphasized the importance of emotional intelligence (EI) and spiritual intelligence (SI) in shaping workplace effectiveness. Salleh et al. (2025) examined how EI and SI influence workplace behavior, job performance, interpersonal relationships, and job satisfaction among employees. Using a cross-sectional survey design, the study collected self-reported data from employees across various industries. The findings revealed that both emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence independently and interactively contribute to improved job performance and stronger workplace relationships.

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Employees with higher EI demonstrated better emotional regulation and stress management, whereas those with higher SI showed greater resilience and sense of purpose. Importantly, the combined effect of EI and SI significantly enhanced overall workplace effectiveness and satisfaction. The authors concluded that organizations should integrate EI and SI training into employee development programs to foster a more productive and supportive work environment.

Messaoudi and Sakale (2024) highlighted the critical role of interpersonal skills as a foundation for developing emotional intelligence (EI) in the workplace. The paper emphasized that soft skills such as effective communication, active listening, assertiveness, and conflict management significantly enhance employees' ability to regulate emotions and interact productively with others. The authors discussed various communication styles—analyser, driver, relater, and expresser—and explained how adapting verbal and non-verbal behaviors can improve workplace relationships and teamwork. The study further noted that building trust, providing constructive feedback, and managing conflict appropriately require strong emotional monitoring and control. Overall, the paper concluded that strengthening interpersonal skills serves as an effective pathway for enhancing emotional intelligence, which in turn contributes to professional success, creativity, and positive team dynamics in organizational settings.

Doğru (2022) conducted a comprehensive psychometric meta-analysis to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and key employee outcomes across organizational settings. The study synthesized findings from 253 effect sizes representing 78,159 participants collected from research published between 1990 and 2020. The analysis categorized EI into three streams—ability EI, self-report EI, and mixed EI—to provide a more nuanced understanding of its workplace impact. The results demonstrated that emotional intelligence was positively associated with organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, job satisfaction, and job performance, while it showed a significant negative relationship with job stress. Notably, self-report EI showed slightly stronger correlations with most positive outcomes compared to the other EI streams. The study concluded that emotionally intelligent employees tend to manage emotions more effectively, exhibit higher workplace engagement, and experience lower stress levels. The findings strongly support the inclusion of emotional intelligence development in organizational training and human resource practices.

Kundi and Badar (2021) investigated the relationship between interpersonal conflict and counterproductive work behavior (CWB), with emotional intelligence (EI) and gender as moderating variables. Using survey data from 193 employees working in various organizations in Pakistan, the study found that interpersonal conflict significantly increases employees' tendency to engage in CWB. However, emotional intelligence was found to buffer this negative relationship. Employees with higher EI were better able to regulate their negative emotions arising from workplace conflict, thereby reducing their involvement in counterproductive behaviors. Furthermore, gender differences emerged in the moderating effect of EI, with the buffering role of emotional intelligence being stronger among female employees compared to males. The authors suggested that organizations should invest in emotional intelligence training programs to minimize the harmful effects of interpersonal conflict and promote healthier workplace behavior.

Udod et al. (2020) explored the role of emotional intelligence (EI) in creating empowering work environments from the perspectives of middle managers. The study used a qualitative

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descriptive design with in-depth interviews to understand how managers perceive their leaders' behaviors and their own sense of empowerment at work. The findings were organized into two major themes: perception of leader behavior and feelings of empowerment. Results indicated that leaders who demonstrate emotionally intelligent behaviors—such as empathy, effective communication, and relationship building—are more successful in fostering employee empowerment and job satisfaction. The study highlighted that emotionally intelligent leadership contributes to stronger interpersonal relationships and encourages creativity and effectiveness in the workplace. The authors concluded that integrating EI-based leadership practices is essential for organizations aiming to build supportive and empowering work environments.

Gong et al. (2019) examined the direct and indirect effects of emotional intelligence (EI) on job burnout and job performance, with psychological capital as a mediating variable. The study surveyed 450 employees from various enterprises using standardized questionnaires. The findings indicated that emotional intelligence positively predicts both psychological capital and job performance, while showing a significant negative relationship with job burnout. Psychological capital—which includes hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy—was also found to positively influence job performance and negatively influence burnout. Importantly, the study confirmed that psychological capital partially mediates the relationship between EI and both job performance and job burnout. This suggests that emotionally intelligent employees tend to build stronger psychological resources, which in turn enhance performance and reduce burnout. The authors concluded that organizations should focus on developing employees' emotional intelligence to strengthen psychological capital and improve workplace outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

Aim of the Study

The aim of the present study is to explore the influence of emotional intelligence on workplace relationships and job performance among working professionals.

Operational Definitions

- **Emotional Intelligence:** Emotional intelligence refers to an individual's ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and effectively use emotions in oneself and others to guide thinking and behavior in workplace situations.
- **Workplace Relationships:** Workplace relationships refer to the quality of interpersonal interactions and professional connections that employees maintain with colleagues, supervisors, and subordinates within an organizational setting.
- **Job Performance:** Job performance refers to employees perceived effectiveness, productivity, and ability to accomplish assigned work tasks and responsibilities within their professional roles.

Research Framework

The present study adopts a qualitative exploratory framework to understand how emotional intelligence operates within real workplace contexts. Emotional intelligence is considered the central psychological construct influencing two major outcome domains: workplace relationships and job performance.

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The framework assumes that employees who demonstrate higher emotional awareness, emotional regulation, and empathy are more likely to:

- Maintain healthier professional relationships
- Manage workplace conflicts effectively
- Demonstrate better perceived work performance

Since the study is qualitative in nature, the framework focuses on experience-based understanding rather than statistical causation.

Objectives of the Study

The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To explore how employees recognize and understand their own emotions during workplace interactions.
2. To examine the strategies employees use to regulate emotions in stressful work situations.
3. To understand how emotional awareness of others influences workplace relationships.
4. To explore the role of emotional intelligence in workplace conflict resolution.
5. To examine employees' perceptions of the impact of emotional intelligence on their job performance.

Research Questions

1. How do employees recognize and understand their emotions during workplace interactions?
2. What strategies do employees use to regulate emotions in challenging work situations?
3. How does understanding others' emotions influence workplace relationships?
4. In what ways does emotional intelligence contribute to conflict management at work?
5. How do employees perceive the role of emotional intelligence in their job performance?

Variables Under Study

Since the study is qualitative:

- Core construct: Emotional Intelligence
- Outcome domains:
 - Workplace Relationships
 - Job Performance

(The study explores perceived influence rather than measuring statistical variables.)

Universe of the Study

The universe of the study comprises working professionals employed in various organizational sectors, including education, corporate, healthcare, and service industries.

Geographical Area

The study will be conducted among working professionals located in Bangalore, Karnataka.

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Research Design

The present study adopted a **qualitative descriptive research design** to explore the influence of emotional intelligence on workplace relationships and performance among employees from diverse professional sectors.

Sample Distribution

The study will involve working professionals with varied occupational backgrounds to obtain diverse experiential perspectives on emotional intelligence in the workplace.

Inclusion Criteria

- Adults currently employed in an organization
- Minimum of five year of work experience
- Willing to participate voluntarily
- Able to communicate experiences in English

Exclusion Criteria

- Individuals currently unemployed
- Interns or trainees with less than five-year experience
- Individuals unwilling to provide informed consent

Sampling Procedure

The present study will use purposive sampling to select participants who can provide rich and relevant information about emotional experiences in varied workplace settings. Participants will be approached through professional networks and institutional contacts. Sampling will continue until data saturation is achieved — that is, when no substantially new themes emerge from additional interviews.

Tools Used for the Study

Data for the present study were collected using a researcher-developed semi-structured interview method consisting of demographic information and five open-ended questions related to emotional intelligence in workplace contexts. The tool was designed to capture participants' experiences regarding emotional awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, conflict management, and perceived job performance. Semi-structured interview was chosen for its accessibility, ease of distribution, and ability to maintain participant anonymity while facilitating systematic qualitative data collection.

Procedure of the Study

Participants were approached through professional networks, email, and social media platforms. The Google Forms link was shared along with a brief description of the study and an informed consent statement. A semi-structured interview was conducted using 5 questions. The participants were encouraged to give maximum open-ended responses to the statements. The researcher confidentially introduced the purpose of the research and facilitated the interview for about 40 minutes where in detailed responses were taken and also the session led to sharing experiences among each other and the concluding remarks were given by the researcher. Finally, the accumulated verbatim information was converted in thematic analysis.

Confidentiality and anonymity of participants were strictly maintained throughout the research process.

Thematic Analysis

The study will employ Thematic Analysis to analyze qualitative data.

Steps involved:

1. Familiarization with the data
2. Generation of initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Preparing the final report

This method is suitable for identifying recurring patterns related to emotional intelligence in workplace experiences.

Ethical Considerations

- Informed consent will be obtained from all participants.
- Participation will be entirely voluntary.
- Participants will have the right to withdraw at any stage.
- Confidentiality and anonymity will be strictly maintained.
- Data will be used solely for academic research purposes.
- Institutional permission will be obtained prior to data collection.

RESULTS AND THEMATIC ANALYSIS

The qualitative responses of five participants were analyzed using thematic analysis. After repeated reading, coding, and clustering of meaning units, five major themes emerged reflecting the role of emotional intelligence in workplace functioning.

Theme 1: Emotional Self-Awareness in Workplace Interactions

Participants demonstrated varying levels of awareness of their internal emotional states during workplace interactions. Several respondents described conscious monitoring of bodily reactions, thoughts, and emotional triggers. One participant noted paying attention to “inner reactions—like tightness in my chest or racing thoughts,” while another reported using a “Quick Check-In Method” to identify feelings.

However, emotional awareness was not always stable. Some participants indicated fluctuation depending on workload and situational pressure, describing certain days as “overwhelming” and emotionally difficult to manage.

Interpretation:

This theme reflects that employees generally possess emerging emotional self-awareness, but its consistency is influenced by workplace stress and situational demands.

Theme 2: Personal Emotion Regulation Strategies

Participants reported multiple strategies to manage emotions in stressful work situations. Common approaches included:

- Pausing and deep breathing
- Physical self-care (staying fit and healthy)
- Taking breaks or short holidays
- Sharing feelings with coworkers or loved ones
- Cognitive self-reflection
- Temporary avoidance or ignoring emotions

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One participant emphasized the importance of “Pause and Respond, Not React,” while another admitted occasional emotional outbursts followed by self-calming.

Interpretation:

Employees actively attempt emotional regulation, but strategies range from highly adaptive (mindful pausing, relaxation) to less adaptive (suppression, avoidance).

Theme 3: Empathy and Interpersonal Sensitivity

A strong pattern across participants was the role of understanding others’ emotions in improving workplace relationships. Respondents reported that emotional awareness helps them:

- Adjust communication tone
- Offer support to overwhelmed colleagues
- Become better listeners
- Maintain healthy professional relationships

One participant stated that empathy helps them “balance my emotions as well as what my dear colleagues are going through.”

However, one response also revealed **surface-level adjustment behavior** (agreeing with supervisors to avoid escalation), suggesting emotional labor in hierarchical settings.

Interpretation:

Emotional intelligence enhances empathy and relational harmony, but power dynamics may shape how empathy is behaviourally expressed.

Theme 4: Emotional Regulation as a Conflict Resolution Mechanism

Participants consistently viewed emotional management as central to resolving workplace conflicts. Key processes identified were:

- Pausing before reacting
- Listening without defensiveness
- Not taking conflicts personally
- Maintaining calm communication
- Speaking up thoughtfully

One participant highlighted that emotional control transforms conflicts into “solutions rather than arguments.” Another pointed to organizational fear (promotion, appraisal concerns) that sometimes inhibits open conflict resolution.

Interpretation:

Emotional intelligence functions as a de-escalation tool in workplace conflicts, though organizational climate may moderate its expression.

Theme 5: Emotional Intelligence as a Driver of Performance and Resilience

All participants perceived emotional intelligence as strongly linked to job performance and productivity. Reported benefits included:

- Better focus under pressure
- Clearer communication
- Reduced energy drains from conflicts
- Greater confidence
- Sustained productivity during setbacks

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- Improved mental balance

Participants working in corporate settings particularly emphasized the need for emotional strength to survive high-pressure environments.

Interpretation:

Employees view emotional intelligence as a critical psychological resource supporting both performance sustainability and workplace well-being.

Summary of Themes

The analysis yielded five major themes:

1. Emotional Self-Awareness in Workplace Interactions
2. Personal Emotion Regulation Strategies
3. Empathy and Interpersonal Sensitivity
4. Emotional Regulation in Conflict Resolution
5. Emotional Intelligence as a Driver of Performance

Coding Framework

The qualitative responses collected through Google Forms were analysed using thematic analysis. An inductive coding approach was adopted to identify recurring patterns related to emotional intelligence, workplace relationships, and performance.

Table: 1 Coding Framework

Code	Description	Example Meaning
Emotional Awareness	Recognition of one's own emotions	Employees noticing mood changes
Emotional Regulation	Ability to manage emotional reactions	Staying calm during conflicts
Empathy	Understanding others' feelings	Supporting colleagues
Communication Quality	Clarity and openness in interaction	Healthy discussions
Conflict Management	Handling disagreements constructively	Resolving misunderstandings
Team Cohesion	Sense of belonging and cooperation	Working collaboratively
Work Motivation	Internal drive to perform	Increased enthusiasm
Job Performance	Efficiency and productivity at work	Meeting targets effectively

Table: 2 Emergent Themes with Participant Quotes

Code	Description	Example Meaning
Emotional Self-Awareness	Employees reported being mindful of their emotional states at work	"I have learned to recognize when I am getting stressed and pause before reacting."
Effective Emotional Regulation	Participants described controlling impulses during workplace stress	"Even during pressure, I try to remain calm and think logically."
Empathy Enhances Relationships	Many employees linked empathy with better teamwork	"Understanding my colleagues' feelings has improved our coordination."
Improved Workplace Communication	High EI was associated with open and respectful communication	"I communicate more patiently now, which avoids misunderstandings."
Better Conflict	Employees with higher EI	"Instead of arguing, I try to listen first"

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Code	Description	Example Meaning
Resolution	handled disagreements constructively	and then respond.”
Enhanced Work Performance	Participants perceived that EI improved productivity	“Managing my emotions helps me focus better on my tasks.”

DISCUSSION

The present study examined the influence of emotional intelligence on workplace relationships and job performance among employees. The findings indicate that emotional intelligence plays a meaningful role in shaping how individuals manage workplace demands, interact with colleagues, and sustain productivity under pressure.

Across participants, emotional awareness emerged as a foundational component of effective workplace functioning. Employees who reported consciously recognizing their emotional states were better able to pause before reacting, communicate thoughtfully, and maintain professionalism during stressful interactions. This supports the view that self-awareness acts as the first step in emotionally intelligent behaviour, enabling individuals to regulate responses rather than act impulsively.

Emotional regulation strategies varied among participants, yet those who used adaptive techniques—such as deep breathing, pausing before responding, sharing concerns with trusted colleagues, and taking restorative breaks—reported better emotional balance at work. In contrast, participants who described emotional overwhelm or avoidance strategies indicated greater difficulty managing pressure. This pattern suggests that not merely experiencing emotions but effectively regulating them is crucial for workplace adjustment.

Interpersonal understanding and empathy were consistently linked to healthier workplace relationships. Participants noted that recognizing coworkers’ emotional states helped them adjust communication style, offer support, and maintain harmony within teams. This finding aligns with the broader understanding that emotionally intelligent employees contribute to psychologically safer and more collaborative work environments.

Conflict resolution also appeared strongly connected to emotional management. Employees who described staying calm, listening actively, and avoiding defensive reactions reported that conflicts were less intense and more solution-focused. Conversely, fear of escalation, performance consequences, or managerial pressure sometimes inhibited open communication, highlighting the influence of organizational climate alongside individual emotional skills.

Regarding job performance, participants widely perceived emotional intelligence as a factor that sustains focus, decision-making quality, and resilience during demanding periods. Emotional awareness was described as helping prevent bias, reduce unnecessary conflicts, and maintain productivity. However, some participants also acknowledged that high workplace pressure and toxic managerial practices can strain even emotionally capable employees, suggesting that emotional intelligence operates within environmental constraints rather than in isolation.

Overall, the findings reinforce the proposition that emotional intelligence functions as an important psychological resource in modern corporate settings. Employees who demonstrate stronger emotional awareness, regulation, and empathy tend to report more constructive

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workplace relationships and better perceived performance outcomes. At the same time, the data indicate that organizational stressors and power dynamics may moderate how effectively emotional intelligence can be applied in real-world work contexts.

These insights highlight the practical importance of incorporating emotional intelligence training, supportive leadership practices, and psychologically safe work environments to enhance both employee wellbeing and organizational effectiveness.

Limitations of the Study

Despite its contributions, the present study has certain limitations.

1. The sample size was small and limited to five participants, which restricts the generalizability of the findings.
2. The qualitative nature of the study captures depth of experience but does not allow for statistical generalization.
3. Participants were drawn from selected occupational sectors; therefore, the findings may not be generalizable to all other work settings.
4. The study relied on cross-sectional data, which does not capture changes in emotional intelligence or workplace experiences over time.

These limitations should be considered while interpreting the results.

Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the limitations and findings, the following suggestions are proposed:

1. Future studies may include a larger and more diverse sample to enhance generalizability.
2. Researchers may adopt mixed-method or quantitative designs to statistically examine the relationship between emotional intelligence, workplace relationships, and performance.
3. Longitudinal studies may be conducted to understand how emotional intelligence develops over time in organizational contexts.
4. Comparative studies across different sectors (education, healthcare, IT, government) may provide broader insights.
5. Future research may also examine the moderating role of organizational climate, leadership style, and workplace culture.

Implications of the Study

The findings of the present study highlight the practical significance of emotional intelligence in contemporary workplace settings. First, the results suggest that organizations should prioritize emotional intelligence development through structured training programs, workshops, and leadership development initiatives. Enhancing employees' emotional awareness, regulation, and empathy can contribute to healthier interpersonal relationships and improved team functioning.

Second, the study underscores the role of emotionally intelligent leadership in creating empowering and psychologically safe work environments. Managers who model emotionally responsive behaviour may foster greater trust, openness, and collaboration among employees. Therefore, human resource policies may incorporate EI competencies into performance appraisal, recruitment, and promotion criteria.

Third, the findings have implications for employee well-being programs. Since participants reported stress, pressure, and emotional overload in corporate settings, organizations may

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integrate EI-based coping strategies, mindfulness practices, and supportive communication channels to reduce burnout and enhance productivity.

Finally, from an academic perspective, the study contributes to the growing body of literature linking emotional intelligence with workplace relationships and performance, particularly within the Indian corporate context.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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