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BI-DIRECTIONAL ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN HANDLING INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Emotional Intelligence, Interpersonal Relations, Occupational-Stress	Emotional intelligence is the ability of a person/employee to comprehend his own emotions and emotional experiences as well as the same of others/co-workers in the work environment so that emotionally stable interpersonal relations could be developed, maintained and used in the favor of the organization. Further, emotional control by the employees enables them to effectively manage their occupational stress and working smoothly. In this study, the positive relations of emotional intelligence with interpersonal relations and negative connection between emotional intelligence and occupational stress have been tested in the workplace of Gomal University as experienced by non-teaching/ministerial staff. Both positive and negative assumptions/predictions have been established with statistical significant. Further, designation and qualification of the respondents have significantly brought group mean differences. Findings of the study are useful for the employees as well as organizational HRM to consider the issues of EI in relation to IPR and OS using results of this study.

INTRODUCTION

Pakistanis are working under the tension-ridden work environments since last three decades. The invasion of Russia in Afghanistan in 1979 and then 9/11 brought USA in Afghanistan. These circumstances make the situation more intense and greatly hampered interpersonal relations. Emotional intelligence [EI] has become indispensable for every citizen in family, community or in the workplace (Law, Wong & Song, 2004). Working together with required the interpersonal relations [IPR] demands emotional understanding and stability among all the workers in any organization (Schmidt, Moideenkutty, & Busaidi, 2013) including universities in Pakistan in general and in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in particular. Lack of EI increases occupational stress [OS] thereby damaging individual and group behavior (Abe & Masson, 2016), which leads to physical and psychological imbalances in the work environment (Jyoti, 2016). EI is the capacity of an individual to identify and use personal EI and social EI in the workplace (Goleman, 1995; 1996).

In the work environment, the employees' mostly work in groups and every single employee have to interact with the colleagues, subordinates and officers in most of the working hours in the organizations.

Given the high tension working environments in Pakistan, both personal and social EI is need of the day so current organizations in Pakistan have to arrange for workers with required levels of the EI to normally perform their official duties (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2000). In stressful work environment, understanding of mutual emotional conditions are inevitable to work as team. Personal EI is the basis of social EI because one who is unaware of personal emotions he cannot realize others emotions (Baron, 1997; 2002). EI is thus the ability of workers to keep track of their own and others' emotions in their group behavior like '*interpersonal relations*'. IPR in the workplace are very critical and decisive for performance. IPR are the relations with people like friends, family, and coworkers (Voorde, Paauwe & Veldhoven, 2012). Understanding procedures, mechanisms and dynamics of IPR are yet to be explored (Velmurugan, 2016). A worker communicates at many levels with organizational workforce. In organization, formal and informal social relations occur and significant for performance of organization (Konishi & Li, 2010). Employees having high EI perform better in controlling stress and create strong IPR with employees.

Human behavior in IPR consists of informative, emotional and behavioral contents to generate required behavior in organization (Schmidt et al., 2013). Successful IPR needs effective stress management to get better results (Abe & Mason, 2016). Psychological and physical tension of employees in the workplace is called occupational stress. Quick and Quick in 1984, conducted research on the occupational stress and stress management. Sauter, Murphy and Hurrell (1990) started a program to understand and control widespread stress. Job-related stress got attention in 1980s to pinpoint 10 health problems related to work in USA and Western states (Quick & Henderson, 2016). In recent globalization, the employees are facing mega changes in workplace associations and IPR and great pressure to manage work life, overwhelming communications, higher levels of competition and several international crises (ILO, 2016). EI assists employees in understanding their own and emotions of co-workers in handling issues of occupational stress properly as per situation. EI is powerful tool to create best possible IPR in work environment. This study tests these hypotheses about positive links amid EI and IPR while negative relations with OS.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional Intelligence

Salovey & Mayer presented EI and defined it as type of social intelligence enabling an employee to monitor personal and others emotions, ability to differentiate between the feelings, and apply this know-how to direct theory and selection of employees (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Goleman (1995) introduced trait model, which suggests social and personal capability of employees in EI. Ability-model of Mayer & Salovey (1997) presents expressive intelligence as ability for reasoning

and Reuven Baron (1997; 2002) presented “social emotional competencies model”, which is based on personality aspects and cognitive abilities.

Personal Emotional Intelligence

- ✓ Self-awareness: Ability to stay abreast of emotions faced and why? Also knows about the impacts of his emotions on co-workers.
- ✓ Self-regulation: Controlling the individual emotions and behaving politely in the stressful situations by regulating the emotional interruptions.
- ✓ Motivation: Ability to continue focus on targets in the presence of the setbacks, work with confidence and hope and not fear and readiness for change to achieve objectives.

Social Emotional Intelligence

- ✓ Empathy: Ability to understand the feelings of the co-workers and behaving accordingly aiming at helping them in work in peace and stability.
- ✓ Social skills: These are the abilities to handle the issues without asking for help and not allowing own or others' unwanted moods to stop collaboration with team members (Jyoti, 2016).

Interpersonal Relationships

IPR in the workplace are characterized by some leading attributes including the social-support, relational-justice, team-building and employee-communication. Employees work in groups or more precisely in groups within groups (Song & Olshfski, 2008). Group activities are dependent on interactions of group members both verbally and physically (Stoetzer, Ahlberg, Zapf, Knorz & Kull, 1996). Since these behaviors are based on the knowledge and beliefs of the individuals therefore, certain care is needed practice IPR in workplace (Stoetzer, 2010). The interpersonal relations are critical for the employees and the organizations as well to share their views and opinions in an optimistic manner to achieve desired objectives. Schmidt et al. (2013) reported that when employees are educated and trained in extending social support, practice relational justice, help in building the team through effective communication skills, the IPR is powerful thereby leading to the best possible employee, the individual/group organizational productivity and performance.

Positive psychology is the new approach to bring positive behavioral practices based on positive psychological effects created by the concepts of courage, optimism, hope, and resilience (Song & Olshfski, 2008). People with positive minds are more capable to generate effective IPR in the team members for best possible individual and group performance. The employees trained in inspired to use optimistic strategies to handle group interactions, are capable to support the group members (Schmidt et al., 2013). These are the most critical situation which are vital for the performance of the individual employees as well as the organizations in the contemporary competitive environment to gain the competitive edge (Abe & Mason, 2016). By activating the positive psychology of employees, management train them in giving social care, active relative justice, contributing in team building and effective communication amid employees (Hardjati & Roziana, 2019).

Occupational Stress

Occupational stress is the tension experienced by the employees when primarily there is wide gap between the resources available to the employee and the tasks or assignments or the duties he/she has to perform as a worker/manager/teacher (Ganster & Rosen, 2013). Tension is the feelings of abnormal mind and body conditions and teacher works with live anxiety feelings at workplace. Stressful conditions are characterized by worries, pressure, strain and moodiness, which obviously negative affect the employee performance (Quick & Henderson, 2016). There are individual, group and organization related stressors which cause stress among employees in one or another way. For example, role conflict in the employee causes stress for the employee and he/she works with lack of interest rather tension and trauma (Kuper & Marmot, 2003). Group problems are second major source of stressors. An employee may not feel fit in the group or may not be ready to work with some co-workers due to bad behavior or lack of cooperation. Organizational HRM policies may be against expectations of employee or employees (Hopkins & Yonker, 2015).

Issues of Occupational Stress

- ✓ Physical: High blood pressure, cholesterol, ulcers, arthritis, the heart problems and cancer.
- ✓ Psychological: Anger, tensions, anxiety, depression, nervousness, irritability, and boredom.
- ✓ Behavioral: These include overeating/under eating, drug-abuse, smoking and sleeplessness.

Individual-level Measures/Strategies

- ✓ Exercise: Careful diets and exercises.
- ✓ Relaxation: The continuous working adds causes stress. The employees need to rest as well.
- ✓ Self-control: Enhanced by growing facts about human psychology and the spiritual strength.
- ✓ Cognitive-therapy: Cognitive techniques (principles of psychiatry) help handling the stress.
- ✓ Networking: Employees with extrovert behavior get less stressful than the introverts. Extroverts actually have the habit of sharing their good and bad news with close ones so stress is shared/reduced.

Organizational Strategies

- ✓ Organizational Support: Management and organization authorities have to create kind work environment where employees/workers stay safe from getting into the occupational stress.
- ✓ Task Design: Work should be challenging and interesting. The employees are more expected to work with attention at workplaces and consequently there is no time left to get stressful.
- ✓ Clarity of Roles: HRM must do something to manage conflicts at levels of individual, group or the organization to reduce the chance of stressful workplace in the organizations in spirit.
- ✓ Counseling and Career Paths: the employees' sureness about their career development stay cool and effective worker for the employer organization wherein they are performing duties.

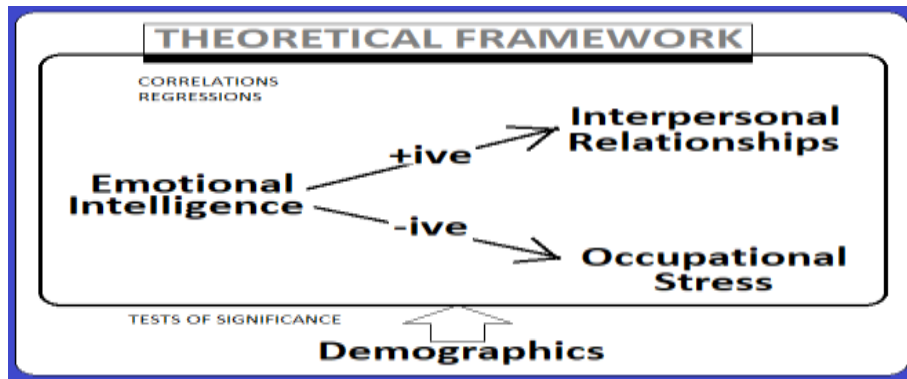
Demographic Impacts

In every behavioral research, demographic qualities of the sample are collected to test for the group mean differences among respondents on different research variables including predictors

and the criterion variables. The designation and qualification of the ministerial staff have been tested in this study.

Theoretical Framework

Figure 1 Diagram of The Research Model



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Philosophy and Approach

In social sciences, Positivism is widely used statistics is used to test the hypotheses. Positivism assumes that knowledge can be verified through observational scientific methods and recorded and communicated through standard concepts or terminologies. This study extracts research model from the literature review in the form of knowledge, which is then verified using field data thereby qualifying the conditions imposed by positivism. Survey approach was applied for both primary and secondary data collections.

Reliability & Validity of Instrument & Data

Reliability of instrument refers to the repeatability of the tool with similar results in different situations. So it is the dependability of the instrument for repeating the results. Reliability or internal consistency is computed using Cronbach's alpha technique. Cronbach's alpha refers to the coefficient of reliability or internal consistency.

Table 1 Reliability Statistics on All Variables

SN	Variables	Items	Alpha Score
1	Emotional Intelligence	15	0.729
2	Interpersonal Relations	15	0.883
3	Occupational Stress	18	0.906
4	Questionnaire	48	0.833

Validity statistics measures the ability of an instrument to capture exactly what is made for. A valid question or questionnaire means that whatever is meant by the researcher to ask from the

respondent is very closely recorded as answer to the question. Factor analysis has been used to compute validity. The procedure consists of KMO and Bartlett's tests as preconditions and factor analysis as the final output detailed below.

Required Critical-values

1. KMO test [Sampling Adequacy]: = or > 0.7
2. Bartlett's test [test of Sphericity]: = or < 0.05
3. Factor-loading: = or > 0.4

Table 2 Pretests [KMO & Bartlett]

	Emotional Intelligence	Interpersonal Relations	Occupational Stress
KMO test	.699	.842	.888
Bartlett's test	Chi-square [608.102] [df.36] <i>p-value</i> = .000	Chi-Square [1123.141] [df.78] <i>p-value</i> = .000	Chi-Square [1768.123] [df.105] <i>p-value</i> = .000

Table 3 Factor-Loadings

Component Matrix		Component Matrix		Component Matrix	
Factors	Loadings	Factors	Loadings	Factors	Loadings
EI 1	.808	IR 1	.856	OS2	.672
EI 2	.543	IR 2	.749	OS3	.591
EI 3	.810	IR 3	.664	OS4	.818
EI 4	.742	IR 5	.592	OS5	.852
EI 6	.726	IR 6	.749	OS6	.741
EI 7	.551	IR 7	.829	OS7	.868
EI 8	.435	IR 8	.697	OS8	.557
EI 14	.570	IR 9	.713	OS9	.827
EI 15	.430	IR 10	.449	OS10	.743
		IR 11	.639	OS12	.693
		IR 12	.507	OS13	.641
		IR 13	.503	OS14	.573
		IR 15	.736	OS16	.609
				OS17	.713
				OS18	.466

DATA ANALYSIS

Both qualitative and quantitative data was collected therefore separate tools were applied for analysis. To process qualitative findings, thematic-analysis was used for both data collection and analysis of data. The quantitative data from field study was analyzed using statistical procedures of correlation, regression and tests of significance.

Descriptive Results

The descriptive results prove the information about the description of the research variables under considerations.

Table 4 Designation-Qualification Classification

Designation	Qualification.		Total
	Graduate	U-Graduate	
Officer	36	22	58
Staff	31	64	95
Total	67	86	153

Table 5 Descriptive Statistics

Variables	N.	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Emotional Intelligence	153	4.20	6.87	5.8710	.5699
Interpersonal Relations	153	3.13	5.00	4.3682	.4248
Occupational Stress	153	2.22	5.72	3.0359	.6221

Testing of Hypotheses

H₁: Emotional Intelligence is correlated with Interpersonal Relations and Occupational Stress

Table 6 Correlation Statistics

[sample size = 153]		Emotional Intelligence	Interpersonal Relations
Interpersonal Relations	r	0.423**	1
	p	0.000	
Organizational Stress	r	-0.252**	0.109
	p	0.002	0.179
**. Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

The first hypothesis was about the association among the research variables. The results from Correlation procedure show significant 'associations' b/w the predictor and criterion variables. H₁ is therefore accepted as substantiated.

H₂: Interpersonal Relations is significantly and positively predicted by Emotional Intelligence

Table 7 Regression Statistics

Model Summary						
Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error	F.	Sig..
1	.423 ^a	.179	.174	.38625	32.933	.000 ^b
Coefficients						
Model 1		Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
	Constant	2.516	.324		7.762	.000
	Emotional Intelligence	.315	.055	.423	5.739	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Interpersonal Relations; b. Predictors: Emotional Intelligence						

The second hypothesis was related with the prediction of interpersonal relations through the emotional intelligence. Results show that interpersonal relations is positively and significantly predicted by emotional intelligence with R2 of 0.179 (18%) and p-value = 0.000. Thus, H₂ is accepted as true.

H₃: Organizational Stress is significantly & negatively explained by Emotional Intelligence

Table 8 Regression Statistics

Model Summary						
Model.	R.	R2	Adjusted R2	Std. E	F.	Sig.
1.	.252 ^a	.064	.057	.60400	10.258	.002 ^b
Coefficients						
Model.		Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t.	Sig.
		B	Std. E	Beta		
1	(Constant).	4.652	.507		9.176	.000
	Emotional Intelligence	-.275	.086	-.252	-3.20	.002

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Stress; b. Predictors: Emotional Intelligence

The third hypothesis was the negative prediction of the occupational stress through emotional intelligence. The results show that emotional intelligence negatively and significantly predicts occupational stress. The R2 is 0.064 (6%) with p-value of 0.002. Thus, hypothesis 3 is also accepted as proved.

H₄: Staff is scoring lower than officers (See Annexure-1 Table A)

Table 9 Group Mean Difference

t-Test (independence of samples) (H4)						
		F.	Sig.	t.	df.	Sig.
Emotional Intelligence	Eva	1.895	.171	13.090	151	.000
	Ena			14.296	148.933	.000
Interpersonal Relations	Eva	1.031	.311	4.966	151	.000
	Evna			4.879	113.814	.000
Occupational Stress	Eva	8.673	.004	-.038	151	.970
	Evna			-.043	148.468	.966

Key: EVA= Equal-variance-assumed. EVNA= Equal-variance not assumed.

The fourth hypothesis was about the group mean differences in responses of the respondents about the research variables. Emotional intelligence and interpersonal relations have different responses from officers and staff thereby declaring that H₄ is accepted though partially as substantiated.

H₅: Graduates are scoring higher than Undergraduates (See in Annexure-1 Table-B)

Table 10 Group Mean Difference

t-Test (independence of samples) H5						
		F.	Sig.	t.	df.	Sig. (2-tailed)
Emotional Intelligence	Eva	7.652	.006	3.921	151	.000
	Evna			3.826	126.4	.001
Interpersonal Relations	Eva	.086	.77	10.71	151	.000
	Evna			10.64	138.0	.001
Organizational Stress	Eva	14.113	.001	3.027	151	.003
	Evna			3.277	127.2	.001

Key:- EVA= Equal-variance-assumed EVNA= Equal-variance not assumed

The fifth hypothesis was about the group mean differences in responses of the respondents. All three research variables have been affected by the demographic differences with significant statistics so H₅ is substantiated and stands true.

Table-A Descriptive statistic on Designation

Group Statistics					
	DSG.	N.	Mean.	SD	SE Mean.
Emotional Intelligence	Officer	58	6.4011	.29984	.03937
	Staff	95	5.5474	.43769	.04491
Interpersonal Relations	Officer	58	4.5713	.41306	.05424
	Staff	95	4.2442	.38403	.03940
Organizational Stress	Officer	58	3.0335	.38686	.05080
	Staff	95	3.0374	.73150	.07505

Table-B Descriptive data on Qualification

Group Statistics					
	Qualification	N.	Mean.	SD	SE
Emotional Intelligence	Graduate	67	6.0667	.60302	.07367
	Under-Graduate	86	5.7186	.49493	.05337
Interpersonal Relations	Graduate	67	4.6836	.33117	.04046
	Under-Graduate	86	4.1225	.31334	.03379
Organizational Stress	Graduate	67	3.2040	.35261	.04308
	Under-Graduate	86	2.9050	.74564	.08040

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Emotional intelligence is the best tool to create wanted interpersonal relations in the workplace because when an employee has the ability to identify and understand his own emotions and that of the co-workers or the team members in the workplace (Baron, Brown, Kirkcaldy & Thome, 2000; Pooja & Kumar, 2016). Obviously, an emotionally competent employee has the ability to self-control as well as manage emotional conditions of colleagues thereby best possibly creating

wanted and productive interpersonal interactions and successfully handle their occupational stress effectively (Baron, 2002; Mayer, Roberts & Barsade, 2008). The results of the field study testify philosophical norms about positive link of EI with interpersonal relations and negative interaction of the EI with occupational stress (Shukla & Srivastava, 2016; Hardjati & Roziana, 2019). The results give further know how about the current conditions of issue in workplace of higher education.

The statistics reveal the existing levels of the positive and negative relationship of the Emotional intelligence with interpersonal relations and occupational stress, which are usable to inform the human resource management policies, strategies and practices in the concerned institution. It is, therefore, concluded that emotional intelligence is the order of the day. Given the stressful work conditions in the developing countries like Pakistan, the role of emotional knowledge and skills have increased. Ignorance in emotional intelligence can cause damages to the people both in family and work life. As empirically supported in the current study, emotional intelligence need to be focused in the work environment of higher education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa so that the employees working therein become able enough to harness occupational stress and practice friendly interpersonal relations. Further, demographic differences based on designation and qualification also need attention to be addressed while devising different HRM policies and practices.

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