

A STUDY ON “THE SIGNIFICANT ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN MODERATING JOB STRESS WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO ITES SECTOR”

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Abstract

IT-enabled services (ITES) are the outsourcing services that use information technology in the processing and delivery of the service. ITES related professionals are at a constant pressure to deliver services efficiently and have to be cost effective. Employees working in ITES industry are prone to develop a lot of health problems due to continuous physical and mental stress of their work.

A good knowledge of one's own and others emotions and ability to manage them can also help a person to cope up with job stress in a work environment. Individuals with high emotional intelligence are more capable of understanding and managing their emotions, which allows them to adjust to their surroundings and become more tolerant to challenging conditions, including stress. Because stress is a perceived concept, emotional intelligence plays a role in the mental process of determining the source of the stress.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, ITES, Stress

1.Introduction

In the era of globalization where there is high cultural, scientific, economic and social exchange the success of a person depends on many personal factors. This includes attitudes, parental support, good education, social network, financial support and so on. Even with all of these, there can be failure in success when the root cause for this was searched it points towards EI. The present world demands higher level of interrelationships, mutual understanding and greater productivity at workplace. A good knowledge of one's own and others emotions and ability to manage them can also help a person to cope up with job stress in a work environment.

IT Enabled services (ITES) are the outsourcing services that use information technology in the processing and delivery of the service. Services are typically delivered through a telecommunications or data network, or other electronic media.

Often the business processes are information technology-based, and are referred to as ITES. Knowledge process outsourcing (KPO) and legal process outsourcing (LPO) are some of the sub-segments of business process outsourcing industry.

IT Enabled Services (ITES), also called web enabled services or remote services or Tele-working, covers the entire gamut of operations which exploit information technology for improving efficiency of an organization. These services provide a wide range of career options that include opportunities in call Centre, medical transcription, medical billing and coding, back-office operations, revenue claims processing, legal databases, content development, payrolls, logistics management, GIS (Geographical Information System), HR services, web services etc.

ITES related professionals are at a constant pressure to deliver services efficiently and have to be cost effective. Employees working in ITES industry are prone to develop a lot of health problems due to continuous physical and mental stress of their work. The reason for choosing particularly ITES employees is that the level of stress these employees face is comparatively higher than other employees. Any kind of a job has targets, and an employee becomes stressed when he or she is allotted with unachievable targets and are unable to manage a given situation.

Emotional intelligence (EI) is one of the biggest factors that contribute to the success of individuals who assume various tasks and roles in modern life. It is also important in determining how individuals cope with the stress. By developing EI one can build a bridge between stress and better performance.

Need for study

Intelligence quotient (IQ) is an important factor that determines the success of person but beyond a level it is emotional quotient that matters more than IQ in coping with stressful situations in work environment.

1. Emotional Intelligence abilities can help employees to control impulses, prevent negative emotions and accurately perceive emotions of self and others.
2. Stress at work may affect the work life and vice-versa, which has direct implication on quality at work as well as personal life. EI helps in understanding and dealing with job stress.
3. Various studies has been carried out to understand the impact of EI on job stress however, relatively little research has been conducted in examining the role of EI in moderating job stress.

2.Problem Statement

The 21st century is an era of stress. Individuals face stress in their organizational and daily lives. Although society has a set of legal regulations to help individuals live in a healthy manner, these regulations do not eliminate stress. Thus, a completely stress-free life is impossible. The widespread nature of stress in ITES has given rise to the term '**techno-stress**', which is used to explain the phenomena of stress arising due to usage of computers. Thus, there is a strong need for systematic research on stress among IT/ITES professionals. Individuals with high emotional intelligence are more capable of understanding and managing their emotions, which allows them to adjust to their surroundings and become more tolerant to challenging conditions, including stress. Because stress is a perceived concept, emotional intelligence plays a role in the mental process of determining the source of the stress.

3.Industry Profile

IT/ITES industry in India got tremendous boost in the past decade due to factors like liberalization and globalization of the Indian economy coupled with favorable government policies. This sector of the sunshine industry brought a new work environment and sea changes in the employment trends. The IT-BPO sector has become one of the significant growth sectors for the Indian economy. In addition to fueling India's economy, this sector is also positively influencing the lives of its people through an active direct and indirect contribution to various socio-economic parameters such as employment, standard of living and diversity. IT sector has played a significant role in transforming India's image from a slow-moving bureaucratic economy to a place of innovative entrepreneurs and a global player in providing world class technology solutions and business services.

Growth of IT/ITES Sector

The internet industry in India is likely to double to reach US\$ 250 billion, growing to 7.5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP). The number of internet users in India is expected to reach 730 million by 2022, supported by the fast adoption of digital technology, according to a report by the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM).

- Indian IT exports projected a growth at 7-8 percent in 2017-18, in addition to adding 130,000-150,000 new jobs during the same period.
- As of 2018-19, the expenditure on global Technology stood at USD 3.65 Tn.
- India in 2018-19 witnessed 1,70,000 net new hires in the industry - a total of 6,00,000 digitally skilled human resources, and a 20-25% increase in learning and development budget of IT-BPM companies.
- India's IT-BPM industry amounts to 55% of the global outsourcing market size.
- There is a presence of skilled manpower, as India is home to 4.14 million IT-BPM professionals.
- Digital payment in India has saw a growth from 32 percent in 2013-14 to 62 percent in 2017-18 in terms of volume of transactions.
- Total spending on IT by banking and security firms in India is expected to grow 8.6 percent year-on-year to US\$ 7.8 billion by 2017.

- Indian technology companies expect India's digital economy to have the potential to reach US\$ 4 trillion by 2022, as against the Government of India's estimate of US\$ 1 trillion.
- Indian IT and BPM industry is expected to grow to US\$ 350 billion by 2025 and BPM is expected to account for US\$ 50-55 billion out of the total revenue.
- The E-commerce market in India is set to grow at 30 percent annually to hit US\$ 200 billion gross merchandise value by 2026 according to investment bank Morgan Stanley.
- The domestic revenue of the IT/ITES industry is estimated at US\$ 49 billion and export revenue is estimated at US\$ 178 billion in FY 2022. The IT industry employed almost 0.5 million employees in FY 2022. The IT–BPM sector overall employs 5 million people as of March 2022.
- FY2023 growth estimates for the technology industry reflect the optimism of FY2022. 72% tech CEOs indicate 2022 Tech spend to be in line with 2021 (NASSCOM Tech CEO Survey 2022). R&D investments are expected to grow between 10% and 20% over last year.
- India's IT/ITES industry contributed around 7.7 percent to the country's GDP and is expected to contribute 10 percent to India's GDP by 2025.

4.Literature Review

Concepts of Emotional intelligence and Stress

The foundations of emotional intelligence are based on Thorndike's social intelligence concept, which is defined on the ability to understand and manage individuals based on their social behavior. To gain a historical understanding of emotional intelligence and the job stress, a review of recent and historical literature was necessary.

- The phrase EI was first used by Payne (1985) and was considered to be the person's ability to relate to fear, pain and desire.
- Mayer & Salovey (1997) have defined Emotional Intelligence in terms of the ability to, "understand emotions, and to regulate emotion", for one's personal growth. Their research focused on the four essential dimensions of Emotional Intelligence in dealing with Emotional Intelligence and growth.
- Goleman (1998) described Emotional Intelligence as, as an ability that helps an individual to recognize his own feeling and the feelings of others for, "managing emotions well within us and in our relationships". Goleman focused on the aspect of motivation and workplace success by using emotional competencies while dealing with colleagues at work.
- Dalip Singh (2003) explains Emotional Intelligence as the ability of an individual to be able to adequately respond to emotional stimuli that the individual feels from within himself and sometimes his immediate environment.
- Chadha (2005) suggested that all intelligence has an emotional base and Emotional Intelligence means an appropriate use of one's emotions for accomplishing, "personal goals". Chadha referred to emotions as a base of all intelligence and behaviour, highlighting the importance of emotional competence.

In addition to EI the present study also focuses on stress. Job Stress is **"any condition or situation that elicits a negative emotional response such as anger/frustration or anxiety/tension"**. The detailed analysis has been done in this study through discussion of previous qualitative and quantitative studies.

- According to Bell et al. (2012), job stress is something in the work environment that is perceived as a threat or demand, or a situation in the workplace that causes discomfort in employees.
- Robbins and Judge (2015) define stress as an adaptive response to situations that are considered challenging or threatening to the welfare of individuals.
- Ikonne, (2015) and Shukla & Srivastava (2016) defined Job stress as a dangerous physical and psychological response that occurs when work is not in accordance with the capabilities, resources, and needs of employees.
- Robbins & Judge (2015) mentioned Positive stress or eustress will motivate individuals to achieve

their goals, make them able to change their environment, and succeed in facing life's challenges.

- Alcides Moreno Fortes (2020)- Occupational stress is generally acknowledged as a global phenomenon with significant health and economic consequences in both developed and developing countries.
- Yang Zhang (2021) Occupational stress is the process by which workplace psychological experiences and demands (stressors) produce both short- and long-term changes (strains) in mental and physical health.

Emotional Intelligence and Job Stress

When psychologist began research on intelligence, they focused on non-emotional aspects such as thinking, cognition, intellect, memory and problem solving (Intelligence Quotient). However, there were researchers who recognized early on that, emotional aspects such as feelings, moods and non-cognition were equally important (EQ).

Constantly changing organization impose new rules and duties on their employees who want to handle new roles and duties need to have a good intelligent quotient and a good emotional quotient (EQ) in the process of decision making and problem solving.

- Abraham (2000) in his studies assessed that the social skills component of EI is related to positive interpersonal relationship and it increase the feeling of job satisfaction and decreases occupational stress.
- Nikolaou and Tsaousis (2002) had surveyed 212 professionals from mental health institution. The outcome of the research was Individuals with high levels of EI should be able to cope better with challenges and control their emotions more effectively than individuals with low levels of EI, which should in turn improve the physical and psychological health outcomes associated with stress.
- Slaski and Cartwright (2002) found that managers with high emotional intelligence suffered from less subjective stress, experience better health and also helped in better management performance.
- Pau (2003) investigated the emotional intelligence and perceived stress among the undergrad dental students of London. Study revealed that students who scored high on EI were better able to manage emotions evoked by dental training and which resultant in less stress.
- King and Gardner (2006) had surveyed 157 professional staff in New Zealand and found that emotional self-management and understanding others emotions played crucial role in managing work related stress.
- Montes Berges *et al.*, (2007) conducted a study with among nursing students have shown that EI is a skill that minimized the negative consequences of stress. The results showed positive correlations between social support and repair, clarity and social support, and mental health and social support. Hierarchy regression analysis pointed out that emotional repair is the main predictor of mental health, and emotional and clarity repair are predictors of social support. These results displayed the importance of perceived emotional intelligence (PEI) in coping of stress within the nursing framework.
- Gopal Anvita (2011) explored the connection between wellness; emotional intelligence as well as work stresses. The study even revealed that emotional intelligence, which presents wellness of a person, will help in conquering job/ occupational anxiety.
- Sharma and Sharma (2014) surveyed 250 respondents from BPO industry of Gurgaon. The results revealed that emotions direct cognition, emotional management and emotional control emerged as significant predictor for factors of occupational stress i.e. role overload, role insufficiency, role ambiguity, role boundary and responsibility.
- Shalini Srivastava *et al.*, (2019) assessed the association linking employee silence and burnout, as well as emotional intelligence (EI) likely mediating task on affiliation with silence exhaustion. The results of the study suggest that there is a significant link between burnout and employee silence as long as there is a mediating role on the part of emotional intelligence.

5. Challenges faced by employees of ITES sector:

ITES industry in India got tremendous boost in the past decade due to factors like liberalization and globalization of the Indian economy coupled with favorable government policies. This sector of the sunshine industry brought a new work environment and sea changes in the employment trends. The challenges in this field are-

- Service providers have to adhere to strict deadlines set by the customers.
- Working in different time zones.
- Interdependency in teams.
- Increased interaction with offshore clients.
- Professionals are constantly under pressure to deliver the services efficiently as well as to remain cost effective.
- Customer expectation in terms of skills required for processing jobs keeps changing and forces professionals to upgrade/adapt very fast to their demands.
- Contemporary industries face new competition requiring employees to work for longer hours under competitive time bound deadlines
- Lifestyle in the young BPO workers lead to health hazards at the workplace and lifestyle leading to heart attacks and other major ailments.

These working conditions lead to high stress in the professionals. Organizations have started recognizing high stress as a worthy area to address growing attrition rate prevalent in this sector. Prolonged exposure to such stressful situations leads to a depletion and exhaustion of resources in the mind and body; with dysfunctional effects on job performance and overall organizational effectiveness. The Indian ITES industry is a fast paced service industry that is characterized by such stressful work situations and related outcomes

Stressors that lead to Occupational stress among ITES employees

- Personality
- Role Overload
- Role Ambiguity
- Work relations in the Organization's
- Perceived lack of career progress
- Mismatch between personality and the task demands of the job.
- Workplace violence
- Graveyard timings (Night shifts)

These stressors result in the following outcomes-

- a. Behavioral outcomes**-Dissatisfaction, Poor performance, Absenteeism, Turnover, Accidents etc.,
- b. Cognitive outcomes** – Poor decision making, lack of concentration, Forgetfulness etc.,
- c. Physiological outcomes**- Increased blood pressure, Heart diseases, Gastrointestinal disorders, gynecological problems in women employees., etc

6. Role of EI in dealing with Job Stress

Emotional Intelligence (EI) addresses the emotional, personal, social and survival dimensions of intelligence. The five domains of EI help us in understanding the significance of EI in managing stress-

1. Self-Awareness
2. Self-Regulation
3. Motivation
4. Empathy
5. Social skills



1. Self-awareness

Self-awareness is the ability to recognize and understand personal moods and emotions and drives, as well as their effect on others. It depends on one's ability to monitor one's own emotion state and to correctly identify and name one's emotions

Hallmarks of self-awareness include self-confidence, realistic self-assessment, and a self-deprecating sense of humour.

2. Self-regulation

Self-regulation is the ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods, and the propensity to suspend judgment and to think before acting.

Hallmarks include trustworthiness and integrity; comfort with ambiguity; and openness to change.

3. Internal motivation

Internal motivation is a passion to work for internal reasons, such as an inner vision of what is important in life, a joy in doing something, curiosity in learning, a flow that comes with being immersed in an activity, and a propensity to pursue goals with energy and persistence.

Hallmarks include a strong drive to achieve, optimism even in the face of failure, and organizational commitment.

4. Empathy

Empathy is the ability to understand the emotional makeup of other people, and a skill in treating people according to their emotional reactions.

Hallmarks include expertise in building and retaining talent, cross-cultural sensitivity, and service to clients and customers.

5. Social skills

Social Skills is proficiency in managing relationships and building networks, and an ability to find common ground and build rapport.

Hallmarks of social skills include effectiveness in leading change, persuasiveness, and expertise building and leading teams.

Thus, the major stress signs are in the form of behavioral and emotional signs. EI helps in understanding the emotions of oneself and also others.

The following is the list of emotions, the understanding of which helps us to avoid stressful situations and cope up with job stress.

Emotions that will have a negative impact-Unless they are well managed	Emotions that are likely to create a positive productive work climate
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Frustration• Anger• Insecurity• Uncertainty• Pessimism• Disappointment• Unhappiness• Resentment• Jealousy• Bitterness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Determination• Motivation• Confidence• Optimism• Resilience• Happiness• Hope• Excitement• Empathy• Acceptance

7. Conclusions

The rapid growth of ITES-BPO and IT industry as a whole is having a deep affect on the socio-economic dynamics of the country. IT/ITES sector has led to the creation of IT workforce which has its distinct forms of work, employment, organization, and management along with its distinct work culture that have emerged which has its affect on lifestyle, sociality and identity that are taking place within this new global workforce. The daily impact of IT on our lives continues unabated. As innovations and computer capacities increase this influence will continue to grow in the coming years at an increasing rate. As technology advances, there is also increased stress that is associated with it called as “technology stress.” IT is here to stay. Thus there is an increasing significance of the role of emotional intelligence in understanding and managing stress. The awareness of one’s emotions and the knowledge of how to manage these emotions helps an individual to cope up with inevitable stressful situations. The development of EI skills is also very important because it is an area that is generally overlooked when skills development programs are designed.

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