



## RELATIONSHIP OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE WITH OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND BURNOUT IN PRIVATE BANKING SECTOR

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### ABSTRACT

An employee's job performance is dependent upon many things, including emotional intelligence (EI). The emotions an employee experiences in their organization may affect his/her psychological and physical health, and also that employee's attitude towards duties, the organization, and work-related accomplishments. The current study investigated the relationship of emotional intelligence (EI) with occupational stress and burnout. A sample of 100 employees (male- 50, female-50) participated in the present study. The measure of emotional intelligence, occupational stress and burnout were used for data collection and a series of statistical analysis were conducted to investigate the aims of this study. Employees who reported feeling in control of their emotions in the workplace and who reported knowing how to deal with emotions effectively were less likely to report feelings of occupational stress. Similarly, employees who were adept at using and managing their emotions in the workplace were less likely to report suffering from burnout. The results of this study highlight the existence of a relationship between EI and occupational stress. Finally, this study makes a significant theoretical contribution to this area of research by demonstrating the link between EI and stress and between EI and burnout in the workplace.

**KEYWORDS:** Emotional Intelligence, Employee's Attitude, Psychological and Physical Health

### INTRODUCTION

The term Emotional Intelligence (EI) in this study refers to the ability to identify, use, understand and manage emotions and emotional information. It has been suggested that there are individual differences in our ability to utilize emotions and emotional information (Mayer & Salovey, 1993) and as such EI has become a popular construct with researchers and practitioners alike. The popularity of EI has stemmed primarily from the suggestion that it underpins various aspects of performance and success that are not accounted for by other psychological constructs (such as intelligence and personality).

Mayer and associates (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1990), though, conceptualized emotional intelligence as an ability to perceive, assimilate, understand and manage emotions whereas others (e.g. Bar-On, 1997; Goleman, 1995) have defined it as involving much more than ability and they include motivation, non-ability dispositions, traits and global personal and social functioning also in their models of emotional intelligence. Presently, thus, there are two types of models of emotional intelligence, one which emphasizes more on the cognitive aspects, such as perception, understanding, analysis and reflective regulation (thinking about feelings), of emotions (e.g. Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1990) and the others which include non-cognitive aspects, such as motivation, general mood and global personal and social functioning along with some cognitive aspects (e.g. Bar-

On, 1997; Goleman, 1995). Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2000) have labelled the later model of EI as mixed models and their own model as ability model.

Mixed models (e.g. Bar-On, 1997; Goleman, 1995), though, have gained popularity because of their claim that EI can give an unqualified advantage for getting success in life, researchers have often emphasized to distinguish the popular conception of EI (mixed model) from the scientific one (e.g. Mayer & Salovey, 1997). The popular models of EI (e.g. Bar-On, 1997) define emotional intelligence as "an array of noncognitive capabilities, competencies and skill that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures" (Bar-On, 1997, p-14). Another popular conception of EI has been presented by Goleman (1995) according to whom "emotional intelligence includes self-control, zeal and persistence and the ability to motivate oneself" (Goleman, 1995, p. XII). Recently, Mayer and associates (Mayer, 1999; Mayer, Caruso & Salovey, 2000; Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2000), have heavily criticized the "mixed models" of EI and concluded that confounding (inclusion) of such qualities / traits as reality testing, problem solving, optimism, self-regard, assertiveness (Bar-On's model, 1997), 'floe' experience, smooth social interaction etc. (Goleman's model, 1995) in the definition of EI seems to undercut the utility of the terms under consideration. Such conception of EI has described the semantic confusion inasmuch as it becomes difficult to

differentiate the construct of emotional intelligence from personality. Mayer (1999) argues, "Such popular models are using a catchy new name to sell worth old fashioned personality research and predictors". In a recent review, Thingujam and Ram (2000) suggests, "It is highly desirable to stop research using such (mixed) models".

The foregoing review thus, reveals that Mayer and associates (Mayer & Salovey, 1997. Salovey & Mayer 1990) model of EI is more scientific inasmuch as

- (1) It presents a well-developed nomologic network of the construct including the well-defined construct boundaries.
- (2) It emphasizes only on the ability and do not confound it with earlier established personality traits and motivational abilities, and
- (3) is based on both emotion and intelligence. Recently, Mayer, Caruso and Salovey (2000) have presented some empirical data for the validity of this model and have demonstrated that EI in this model can be measured according to the contemporary psychometric standards for an intelligence measure.

One of the rapidly growing areas of interest with regard to EI is its role in the workplace. Traditionally the workplace has been considered to be a cold and rational environment, a place where there is no room for the experience or expression of emotions and in fact researchers fostered the belief that 'emotion is the antithesis of rationality' (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Ashkanasy, Zerbe & Hartel, 2002). However, this view has begun to be challenged, with the recognition that individuals bring their affective states, traits and emotions to the workplace. The question is no longer focused upon whether emotions have a place in the work environment, but is about trying to determine the impact of using and managing emotions in the workplace and the differences between employees in dealing with emotion and the impact this may have on other variables within the work environment.

Despite the theoretical advances in understanding emotion in the workplace, empirical literature has yet to catch up. The emergence of EI has provided researchers with a means to measure 'effective' utilization of emotion in the workplace and to relate this to a number of workplace variables. One area that has remained under investigated is the role of EI in the occupational stress process and burnout. Occupational stress, in this study, is defined as an imbalance between an individual's perceived demands and their perceived ability to deal with these demands (Cox, 1978; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Occupational stress is an individual response that varies, depending both on the organization and the employee's job. Therefore, it can be said that in the past few decades' occupational stress has become a serious threat for the employees' well-being and performance, and many researches have been conducted in order to investigate its sources, features and occupational, psychological and social consequences (Bashir & Ramay, 2010). Knowing that stress and emotions are intertwined constructs, where one cannot occur without the other (Lazarus, 1999), it is important to systematically study the relationship between occupational stress and how we deal with emotions, in order to understand whether the ability to effectively deal with emotions is related to the

perception of stress and the negative outcomes of stress. Essentially, it is important to understand whether employees differing in their ability to manage their emotions in the workplace also differ in terms of the stress they perceive and the outcomes of stress.

Emotional Intelligence is a relatively new construct in psychological research and provides an opportunity to systematically study the role of emotional management in the workplace. Utilizing this construct, may aid in the understanding of the role of dealing with emotions in the occupational stress process. Thus, the overall aim of present study is to empirically examine the relationship between EI and occupational stress and the relationship between EI and Burnout.

According to Rothman (2008) occupational stress can be related to poor working conditions, high workload, involuntary overtime, inflexible working hours, excessive demands, very frequent changes or monotony. In addition, role vagueness, role conflict and degree of responsibility are likely to become sources of stress for an organization's employees (Jamal, 1990; Jawahar et al., 2007). Furthermore, an employee's career evolution and an organization's structure and management can be possible sources of occupational stress. More specifically, an employee's personal effort for career advancement, the lack of job security and the process of job performance evaluation are likely to affect his/ her level of occupational stress (Cavanaugh et al., 2000), while the lack of the feeling of belonging to an organization and the lack of participation opportunities are likely to cause occupational stress and burnout (Baltzer et al., 2011). Moreover, occupational stress has been correlated with demographic features, like gender and age (Barkat & Asma, 1999), years of experience, educational level, position held and marital status (Elahi & Apoorva, 2012).

Several studies have shown that occupational stress can lead to various negative consequences for the individual and the workplace (Oginska-Bulik, 2006). Stress in the workplace can ultimately rob people of their spirit and passion for the job, resulting in impaired individual functioning, low motivation and decreased morale (Fako, 2010). As well, dampened initiative, reduced interest in working, high absenteeism rates, decreased capacity to perform, poor job performance, reduced efficiency, poor quality control, low quality products and services, and poor health, poor mental and physical wellbeing (Salami, 2010; Dewe et al., 2010; Avey et al., 2009; Obiora & Iwuoha, 2013).

Emotional Intelligence plays an important role to low down the stress level among teachers (Kaut & Kaur, 2013). University teachers with high level of emotional intelligence use mechanisms which help them to adapt to environmental changes. Teachers with low level of emotional intelligence on the other hand lack this ability to adapt properly to changing conditions (Burger, 2009; Yong, 2011).

Job burnout is the most excessive type of occupational stress in which the employee experiences physical, mental and emotional exhaustion, caused by long term exposure and involvement in emotionally demanding situations (Maslach, 1993). It involves the development of a negative self-concept, negative job attitude, and hick of

concern for clients. It has also been defined as a maladaptive psycho physiological and behavioural response to occupational stressors. (Boyle, Crap, Younger & Thornby, 1991). Burnout has been defined by Maslach and Jackson (1981) as a tripartite syndrome comprising emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. As it became more clearly identified as a form of job stress, it received increasing attention from researchers in the field of organizational psychology.

The work life of bank employees is not very easy. This situation arises from diverse factors; the pressure from increased workload, inadequate basic facilities, lack of novelty, dealing with different type of peoples and not so suitable work environment which can lead to depression, irritability, and burnout. So, the bank employee in these setting need skills such as emotional intelligence which makes them able to manage these emotions which may interfere with personal, professional and daily working lives, which create an urgent need for researchers to investigate the relationship of emotional intelligence with occupational stress and burnout among bank employees.

In response to the contradicting empirical literature investigating EI and occupational stress, and EI and burnout, the goals of this study were to investigate the relationship between EI and the occupational stress process, and secondly, the relationship between EI and burnout.

It is hypothesized that there will be a negative correlation between EI and occupational stress and between EI and burnout, such that high levels of EI will be associated with low levels of occupational stress and burnout. The present study would be based on the ability model of emotional intelligence as proposed by Mayer and associates (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). The reason for using this model is its psychometric superiority and validity.

## METHOD

**Sample:** 100 respondents (50 male and 50 female) who were employees in the different private banks (i.e. HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank) in the Gorakhpur city, India participated in the present study. The respondents were selected randomly from the population. They all belonged to middle socio economic status. Their age ranged from 25 to 40 years.

### Tools:

#### 1. *Multidimensional Self report emotional intelligence Scale (MSREIS, Pandey R; 2002).*

The scale consists of a total 56 items. This scale is based on the Mayer and Salovey's (1997) revised model of EI. It is a self-report scale based on four dimensions of emotional intelligence: - Ability to perceive emotions (18 items), Ability to utilize emotions (18 items), Ability to express emotions (9 items), & Ability to manage emotions (11 items). The

participants were asked firstly to decide whether they were agree or disagree with the statement and therefore they had to mention the intensity of their response ranging from 1 (very much) to 3 (to some extend). High score indicates high emotional intelligence.

#### 2. *Occupational Stress Index (Srivastava & Singh 1981):*

The occupational stress Index, developed and standardized by Srivastava and Singh (1981) was used to assessed occupational stress. It is a self-report scale. It consist of 46 items related to 12 relevant components of job - role overload, role ambiguity, role conflict, unreasonable group and political pressures, under participation, responsibility for persons, powerlessness, poor peer relations, intrinsic impoverishment, low status, strenuous working conditions and unprofitability. The respondents were requested to give their response on five point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). High score indicates high occupational stress.

#### 3. *Maslach Burnout Inventory Hindi Version (Maslach & Jackson, 1981):*

Burnout was assessed by using Maslach Burnout Inventory developed by Maslach & Jackson (1981). It consists of 22 items and measures three important dimensions of burnout i.e. emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment. The respondents were requested to give their responses on the basis of their intensity and frequency of experience (rated on 7 point scale of agreement - disagreement). Burnout is characterized by high emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and low personal accomplishment. High score indicates high burnout which means high emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and low personal accomplishment.

## PROCEDURE

The participants were given the set of questionnaire individually that contained all necessary instructions, test items and response sheets. The subjects were briefly told about the purpose of the study. The test was not time bound and test materials were self-administered. The confidentiality of their responses was assured to them. After completing the questionnaire, they were asked to check that they had given responses to all the items or not.

## RESULTS

The present study sought to explore the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Occupational stress. Bi-variate correlation was conducted between all the dimensions of emotional intelligence and occupational stress in order to investigate this relationship. The result of correlation analysis has been depicted on table-1

**Table-1** Bi-variate correlation between the dimensions of Occupational stress and Emotional intelligence

Dimensions of Occupational Stress	Ability to perceive emotions	Ability to utilize emotions	Ability to express emotions	Ability to manage emotions	EI Total
Role overload	-.228*	-.123	-.142	-.057	-.168
Role ambiguity	-.173	-.114	-.114	-.231*	-.179
Role conflict	-.146	-.239*	-.305**	-.217*	-.244*
Unreasonable group and political pressures	-.280**	-.312**	-.307**	-.249*	-.326**
Responsibility for persons	-.189	-.256*	-.309**	-.208*	-.264**
Under participation	-.157	-.155	-.197*	-.250*	-.207*
Powerlessness	-.231*	-.202*	-.264**	-.240*	-.261**
Poor peer relations	-.168	-.148	-.300**	-.341**	-.251*
Intrinsic impoverishment	-.211*	-.217*	-.320**	-.264**	-.275**
Low status	-.092	-.065	-.142	-.126	-.113
Strenuous working condition	-.261**	-.225*	-.274**	-.308**	-.298**
Unprofitability	-.168	-.101	-.166	-.145	-.163
OS TOTAL	-.328**	-.308**	-.398**	-.362**	-.387**

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

It is clear from this correlation table-1 that role overload have been found to be negatively correlated with ability to perceive emotions ( $r = -0.228, p < .05$ ). Role ambiguity has been found to be negatively correlated with the ability to manage emotions ( $r = -0.231, p < .05$ ). Role conflict has been found to be negatively correlated with ability to utilize emotions ( $r = -0.239, p < .05$ ), ability to express emotions ( $r = -0.305, p < .01$ ), ability to manage emotions ( $r = -0.217, p < .05$ ) and emotional intelligence as a whole ( $r = -0.244, p < .05$ ). Unreasonable group and political pressures has been found to be significantly negatively correlated with the ability to perceive emotions ( $r = -0.280, p < .01$ ), ability to utilize emotions ( $r = -0.312, p < .01$ ), ability to express emotions ( $r = -0.307, p < .01$ ), ability to manage emotions ( $r = -0.249, p < .05$ ) and emotional intelligence as a whole ( $r = -0.326, p < .01$ ). Responsibility for persons has been found to be negatively correlated with ability to utilize emotions ( $r = -0.256, p < .05$ ), ability to express emotions ( $r = -0.309, p < .01$ ), ability to manage emotions ( $r = -0.208, p < .05$ ) and emotional intelligence as a whole ( $r = -0.264, p < .01$ ). Under participation has been found to be negatively correlated with ability to express emotions ( $r = -0.197, p < .01$ ), ability to manage emotions ( $r = -0.250, p < .05$ ) and emotional intelligence as a whole ( $r = -0.207, p < .05$ ). Powerlessness has been found to be significantly negatively correlated with the ability to perceive emotions ( $r = -0.231, p < .05$ ), ability to utilize emotions ( $r = -0.202, p < .05$ ), ability to express emotions ( $r = -0.264, p < .01$ ), ability to manage emotions ( $r = -0.240, p < .05$ ) and emotional intelligence as a whole ( $r = -0.261, p < .01$ ). Poor peer relations has been found to be negatively correlated with ability to express emotions ( $r = -0.300, p < .01$ ), ability to manage emotions ( $r = -0.341, p < .01$ ) and emotional intelligence as a whole ( $r = -0.251, p < .05$ ). Intrinsic impoverishment has been found to be significantly negatively correlated with the ability to

perceive emotions ( $r = -0.211, p < .05$ ), ability to utilize emotions ( $r = -0.217, p < .05$ ), ability to express emotions ( $r = -0.320, p < .01$ ), ability to manage emotions ( $r = -0.264, p < .01$ ) and emotional intelligence as a whole ( $r = -0.275, p < .01$ ). Strenuous working condition has been found to be significantly negatively correlated with the ability to perceive emotions ( $r = -0.261, p < .01$ ), ability to utilize emotions ( $r = -0.225, p < .05$ ), ability to express emotions ( $r = -0.274, p < .01$ ), ability to manage emotions ( $r = -0.308, p < .01$ ) and emotional intelligence as a whole ( $r = -0.298, p < .01$ ). Occupational stress as a whole has been found to be significantly negatively correlated with the ability to perceive emotions ( $r = -0.328, p < .01$ ), ability to utilize emotions ( $r = -0.308, p < .01$ ), ability to express emotions ( $r = -0.398, p < .01$ ), ability to manage emotions ( $r = -0.362, p < .01$ ) and emotional intelligence as a whole ( $r = -0.387, p < .01$ ).

The present study also sought to explore the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Burnout. Bi-variate correlation was conducted between all the dimensions of emotional intelligence and burnout on the basis of intensity and frequency both in order to investigate this relationship. The correlation analysis result has been depicted on table-2.

It is clear from table-2 that on intensity basis, emotional exhaustion has been found to be significantly negatively correlated with ability to perceive emotions ( $r = -0.204, p < .05$ ), ability to utilize emotions ( $r = -0.208, p < .05$ ) and emotional intelligence as a whole ( $r = -0.218, p < .05$ ). Depersonalization has been found to be significantly negatively correlated with the ability to perceive emotions ( $r = -0.255, p < .05$ ), ability to utilize emotions ( $r = -0.216, p < .05$ ), ability to express emotions ( $r = -0.290, p < .01$ ), ability to manage emotions ( $r = -0.226, p < .05$ ) and emotional intelligence as a whole ( $r = -0.277, p < .01$ ). Personal accomplishment has been found to be positively correlated with ability to utilize emotions

( $r = 0.222$ ,  $p < .05$ ), ability to manage emotions ( $r = 0.232$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and emotional intelligence as a whole ( $r = 0.228$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Overall on intensity basis, none of the dimensions of burnout has been found to be significantly correlated with any of the dimensions of emotional intelligence. On frequency basis, emotional exhaustion has not been found to be significantly correlated with any of dimensions of emotional intelligence. Depersonalization has been found to be significantly negatively correlated with the ability to perceive emotions ( $r = -0.248$ ,  $p < .05$ ), ability to express

emotions ( $r = -0.232$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and emotional intelligence as a whole ( $r = -0.221$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Personal accomplishment has been found to be significantly positively correlated with the ability to perceive emotions ( $r = 0.220$ ,  $p < .05$ ), ability to utilize emotions ( $r = 0.250$ ,  $p < .05$ ), ability to express emotions ( $r = 0.211$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and emotional intelligence as a whole ( $r = 0.229$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Overall on the frequency basis, none of the dimensions of burnout has been found to be significantly correlated with any of the dimensions of emotional intelligence.

**Table-2**Bi-variate correlation between the dimensions of Emotional intelligence and Burnout

Variables	Dimensions of Burnout	Ability to perceive emotions	Ability to utilize emotions	Ability to express emotions	Ability to manage emotions	EI Total
<b>Burnout (Intensity)</b>	Emotional Exhaustion	-.204*	-.208*	-.168	-.172	-.218*
	Depersonalization	-.255*	-.216*	-.290**	-.226*	-.277**
	Personal Accomplishment	.182	.222*	.171	.232*	.228*
	INTENSITY TOTAL	-.091	-.053	-.081	-.022	-.073
<b>Burnout (Frequency)</b>	Emotional Exhaustion	-.159	-.013	-.177	-.079	-.118
	Depersonalization	-.248*	-.116	-.232*	-.186	-.221*
	Personal Accomplishment	.220*	.250*	.211*	.097	.229*
	FREQUENCY TOTAL	-.097	.062	-.111	-.068	-.055
	<b>BURNOUT TOTAL</b>	-.120	.026	-.128	-.065	-.078

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

## DISCUSSION

The present study investigates the relationship of emotional intelligence with occupational stress and burnout among bank employees. The obtained results from this study show a negative relationship of occupational stress and burnout with emotional intelligence. This could be attributed to the fact that the employees who are unaware of their emotions and could not regulate and manage them in proper ways, can lead to occupational stress and burnout. As well, they experience a low confidence in their capabilities which may have the tendency to look at things as if they are tougher than they really are, a belief that fosters stress, and a myopic vision of how best to tackle problems.

The findings of the present study supports the emotional intelligence model of Salovey and Mayer's which explains that the level of emotional intelligence will increase individuals' competencies and this can increase their ability to decrease stress situations (Salovey & Mayor, 1990). These findings go in line with scattered previous studies [Vaezi & Fallah, 2011; Salami, 2010; Darvish & Nasrollahi, 2011; Adeyemo & Ogunyemi, 2005; Verešová & Malá, 2012).

Occupational stress is an area of particular concern to Government bodies primarily due to the financial cost associated with employees experiencing stress. It is also concerning for individual organisations and the community as a whole due to the negative impact of stress in terms of well-being and relationships. Prevalence rates in the workforce are increasing rapidly and the impact of

occupational stress can be devastating for the individual, their family and their organisation. The consequences of suffering occupational stress can be extreme in terms of psychological and physical health, job satisfaction, organisational commitment and conflict between work and family life (Burke, 2002; Evans & Steptoe, 2002; Ganster & Schaubroeck, 1991; Quick et al., 1992; Whitener, 2001).

The relationship between EI and occupational stressors was initially explored so as to gain a systematic understanding of the way the EI dimensions (*Ability to perceive emotions, Ability to utilize emotions, Ability to express emotions, & Ability to manage emotions* and *Total EI*) and the twelve stressors (*role overload, role ambiguity, role conflict, unreasonable group and political pressures, under participation, responsibility for persons, powerlessness, poor peer relations, intrinsic impoverishment, low status, strenuous working conditions, unprofitability* and *Total OS*) related to one another. Although previous literature has examined the relationship between EI and occupational stress (Ciarrochi et al., 2002; Salski & Cartwright, 2002), the current study differed to previous work in that it utilised a self-report measure of EI and investigated the relationships between these variables in a private bank employees.

A number of significant relationships emerged between EI and the occupational stressors. Four dimensions of EI, *Ability to perceive emotions, Ability to utilize emotions, Ability to express emotions, & Ability to manage emotions*, appear important in these relationships.

*Ability to manage emotions* measured the extent to which the employee was able to repair negative emotions and maintain beneficial positive emotions both within themselves and others. This dimension correlated negatively with *role ambiguity, role conflict, unreasonable group and political pressures, under participation, responsibility for persons, powerlessness, poor peer relations, intrinsic impoverishment, and strenuous working conditions*. This suggests that those employees who are able to effectively manage both positive and negative emotions at work are more likely to know that they have the appropriate skills and training for the job, be more likely to understand their job expectations and priorities, be able to realise when they are experiencing conflicting role demands or loyalties in the workplace, and be more likely to feel a sense of responsibility for the welfare and performance of colleagues. It may be through *Ability to express emotions* that these employees can use the experience of negative emotions as a warning that feelings of stress are increasing, and through being able to manage these negative emotions they are more able to deal with the stressor than if the negative emotions continued unchecked. Support for this proposition can be seen in the work of Lazarus (1999) who noted that certain emotions (anger, envy, jealousy, anxiety, fright, guilt, shame and sadness) could be called 'stress emotions' because they tend to arise from stressful situations. If an employee is able to recognise and manage these emotions as they occur, they may be more able to deal with the stressor that is causing them.

*Ability to utilize emotions* measures the ability of the employee to utilize their negative emotions experienced at work in a more constructive manner. This dimension correlated negatively with *Unreasonable group and political pressures, Role conflict, Responsibility for persons, Powerlessness, Intrinsic impoverishment, Strenuous working condition*. This finding suggests that employees who believe they are able to effectively control strong emotions at work and not let those emotions affect the way they interact and perform at work would be less likely to have the demands of their job exceed their resources, more likely to realise that they have the right training, education and skills their job needs, more able to understand their job requirements and expectations, and would be less likely to experience conflicting supervisory demands. As noted by Spector and Goh (2001) an employee who feels in control of a situation is likely to appraise it differently to an employee who lacks this feeling of control. Whilst Spector and Goh related this statement to the experience of occupational stress, it can be extrapolated to EI. An employee who feels emotionally in control of a situation which elicits a strong emotion (as most stressful situations tend to do) could be more likely to be able to manage that situation, than an employee who does not feel a sense of emotional control, and who therefore suffers less from the experience of occupational stress.

In the current study *Ability to perceive emotions* was significantly related to a number of the stress variables (i.e. *Role overload, Unreasonable group and political pressures, Powerlessness, Intrinsic impoverishment, Strenuous working condition*), suggesting that having the

ability to recognise how you are feeling and to express those feelings accurately may assist employees in being able to manage stress at work. An individual who is able to recognise feelings related to this scenario (such as worry, anger, frustration, or fear) could use these negative emotions as indicators of a problem in the environment and so take action to change these emotions (such as talking to their supervisor or going through their position description), thereby dealing with the stressor. A potential reason for the difference in the current results and the results of Ciarrochi et al. (2002) could be due to the difference in the way stress was measured and the different participant population. Ciarrochi and his associates used a scale measuring life events to assess stress in a sample of university students, whereas present study has utilised a sample of employed professionals and a comprehensive measure of occupational stress (Srivastava & Singh 1981).

Collectively the findings of the present study indicate that particular dimensions of EI (*Ability to perceive emotions, Ability to utilize emotions, Ability to express emotions, & Ability to manage emotions*) are valuable competencies to have in dealing with occupational stress (which is in line with the findings from Slaski and Cartwright, 2002). Spector and Goh (2001) emphasised that an emotional reaction will follow from a perceived stressor, and the results of the current study help extend this theory by providing evidence that those who are able to effectively recognise, understand, manage and control emotions in the workplace will, upon perceiving the stressor, be better able to manage emotional reactions and will therefore be more able to deal with the stressor itself than those who are less able to utilise these EI related variables.

When an employee is forced to exhibit emotions to customers that are insincere, such as smiling to a customer when having a bad day, causes emotional dissonance. Researchers have suggested that sustained emotional dissonance reduces an individual's self-identity or even promotes a strong contrary (pseudo) identity and this leads to feelings of stress, frustration, or burnout/emotional exhaustion. High levels of EI are linked to increased coping skills, on and off the job. Contrary results have also been obtained by few researchers. For example, Moon and Won-Moo (2011) speculated that individuals, who are good at utilizing their emotions by incorporating emotion in thought, and understanding emotions by employing emotional knowledge, may be more likely to experience emotional exhaustion. Since they put more effort into making emotional facilitation in thinking, and analysing their own and others' emotions, this process may generate a feeling of stress, frustration, or burnout/emotional exhaustion.

According to the study done by Maslach, Jackson & Lute (1986) the presence of specific requests, work overload and personal conflicts, and also lack of specific resources (social support, autonomy and involvement in decision making) influence the appearance of professional exhaustion (Demerouti et al., 2001).

Various researchers have noted the importance of EI (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2000; Freshwater & Stickley, 2004; Petrides & Furnham, 2006; Mayer & Salovey, 1997), and

connections have been established between EI and burnout (Ciarrochi, Deane, & Anderson, 2002; Nikolaou & Tsaousis, 2002) and job satisfaction (Akerjordet & Severinsson, 2007; Maslach, 2004). Laschinger (2012) conducted a study that determined a connection between empowerment, burnout, and job satisfaction for newly graduated nurses. Similarly, Burks and Kobus (2012) concluded that empathy impacts burnout, and improves job satisfaction for medical students and health professionals.

EI has been found to mitigate workplace and organizational stress (Arora et al., 2010). A correlation exists between increased levels of burnout and decreased levels of 32 empathy (Brazeau, Schroeder, Rovi, & Boyd, 2010). EI is a skill and can deteriorate (Doherty et al., 2013), and level of empathy may change depending on work environment.

Cherniss (2000) argues for the role of emotional intelligence in the workplace, stating that the implementation of programmes that are based on applications of emotional intelligence are necessary because of employees' poor emotional baggage, whereas emotional skills are essential in obtaining performance at work (according to previous studies, self-confidence, flexibility, empathy, social skills are the abilities associated with performance). The fact that people spend most of their time at work is another strong enough reason to introduce people to the emotional intelligence domain.

Our study has limitations such as a small sample size, selection bias and reporting bias (as majority of the scales are self-rated). We had residents from only one place, so our results cannot be generalized to overall populations. Our findings do not necessarily show a cause and effect relationship. Further studies should be done with a larger sample size and across different places to substantiate our findings. Studies should also investigate how educational interventions can affect EI, occupational stress and burnout in the Indian work scenario.

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