

# EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND JOB PERFORMANCE

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**ABSTRACT:** In their work activities people also bring their emotions, and emotion will influence the relationships they establish with their colleagues, the way they accomplish their working tasks, will influence decision taking and will shape their job performances. Emotions are psycho-physiological systems that enable the body's adaptive responses to environmental stimulus but people's emotional responses may have adaptive valences and desadaptive/ non functional valences (especially in unpredictable and highly unusual situations). The desadaptive/ nonfunctional potential of people's emotional responses may be pinned to insufficient development of their emotional intelligence, respectively their self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, social skills and empathy. More and more studies highlight the fact that emotional intelligence is a good predictor for children's future acquisitions, for success in both professional and personal life, for higher performance in school, job and interpersonal relations.

The current paper aims to present the theoretical frame and a series of scientific research results that highlight the link between emotion, emotional intelligence and job performance.'

**KEY WORDS:** emotional intelligence, performance, emotions, job.'

Ontogenetically speaking, the working activity represents the superior form of structuring and conducting the relationship between man and nature. Working activity constitutes itself as the main objective framework, in which people's real capabilities are validated, by referring them to certain requirements, criteria and standards of performance. The structure of working activity reveals two sides, strongly interrelated:

- The objective side, represented by the objectives and work tasks that need to be resolved to at certain qualitative and quantitative standards and
- The subjective side, represented by all the skills, capacity and availability required of a person who engages in a specific activity of work.

The core of any working activity is represented by the human factor. At the working place, understood as a social space, in addition to knowledge, habitudes, abilities, skills man also brings his emotions, dispositions, affects and feelings that will influence the relationships he establishes with the team that he is part of, the work tasks that he has to fulfill, will have an impact on the decisions he will make and, not least, will shape he's work performance.

Professional staff performance evaluation represents a practice that has known, nowadays, an increasingly prevalence both in large organizations and in medium and small ones. The need to evaluate professional staff performance is justified by the concern for the quality of products and services, for productivity and for staffs' competence and is required by the rapid changes inherent to the work activity, the accelerated implementation pace of new techniques and technologies, working methods that enhance challenges of new work tasks and the need of employees adapting to them. [15], [17]

## 1. AFFECTIVE DIMENSION OF WORK

When we refer to the affective dimension within working activity, respectively within organizational environment, we must take into account, on one hand, how the work environment affects people's emotions and on the other hand, the impact that people's emotions have on organization functioning. These links are synthetically captured in the diagram below:

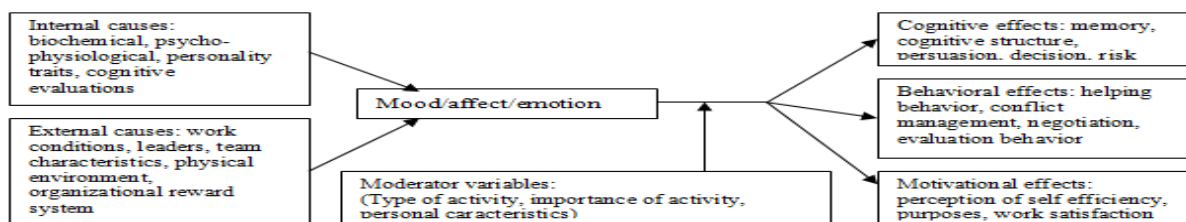


Fig.1 Preceding factors and effects of moods/emotions[17]

In other words, feelings/ affects / emotions experienced at work can be both cause for attitudes towards work, as well as their indicator.

Although colloquially included under the generic name of emotions, affective experiences have varying degrees of complexity, emotional reactivity standing at different levels. Thus we can differentiate between primary affective processes (affective tone of cognitive processes, emotional experiences of organic origin and affects), complex affective processes (current emotions, superior emotions and feelings) and superior affective processes (affections and passions).

Affects are simple emotional experiences, impulsive and powerful, very intense and of short duration, with sudden onset and impetuous progress (e.g. anger, fear, laughs out loud). Feelings are characterized as generalized emotional feelings, not tied to a particular stimulus, of lower intensity, not being able to interfere with cognitive processes. Emotions are associated with specific stimuli and their intensity is so high that they can disrupt cognitive processes.<sup>[15]</sup>

Emotions are psycho-physiological systems that facilitate adaptive responses of the organism to the environment but people's emotional responses may have adaptive valence or, especially in highly unpredictable and new situations, dysfunctional valences. Regarding the adaptive valences of emotional responses, we distinguish between two types of features<sup>[6]</sup>:

1. Adjusting features at intra-individual level:
  - Adjusts the cognitive style based on situational requirements;

- Facilitates decision making;
  - Prepares the individual for rapid motor responses;
  - Promotes learning.
2. Adjusting features at inter-individual (social) level
    - Provides information on behavioral intentions;
    - Provides hints about the character of the stimuli;
    - Allows compliance with complex social behavioral scenarios.

Association between emotional experiences with relevant behaviors in working places is stronger and stronger supported by an increasing number of studies and research. Thus, feelings and emotions are associated with civic behavior in organizational environments, performance evaluation, creative problem solving but also with withdrawal behaviors such as absenteeism and job abandonment.<sup>[15]</sup>

Positive emotions at work (whose central function and positive effects have been demonstrated on numerous occasions) are associated with: positive self-image; self-confidence; personal autonomy; consciousness of work well done; professional competence; gratification of needs; recognition of professional merit; harmonious relationships with colleagues and outside the organization, in the family. Negative emotions at work are associated with: negative self-image; fear of failure; low self-confidence; conflict situations; difficult relationships with colleagues; personal problems affecting work capacity<sup>[2]</sup>. The table below illustrates some examples of organizational phenomena that could be linked to experiencing emotions:

General category	Specific behaviors and cognitions
Redraw / implication	Intention to quit, absences, efficiency, emotional commitment
Motivation	Concentrated attention, initiating/sustaining action, anticipating rewards, avoiding negative emotions, personal efficiency, contra-productive behaviors
Pro/anti social behavior	Civic behavior, aggression, harassment, criticism, unfit behaviors
Carrier	Career decisions, learning and personal development
Team work	Team background, interpersonal relationships, coordination, communication
Relationships	Charismatic leadership, upward/downward communication, management efficiency, relationships, between team members, relational systems
Cognitive processes	Decision making, attention, social judgments

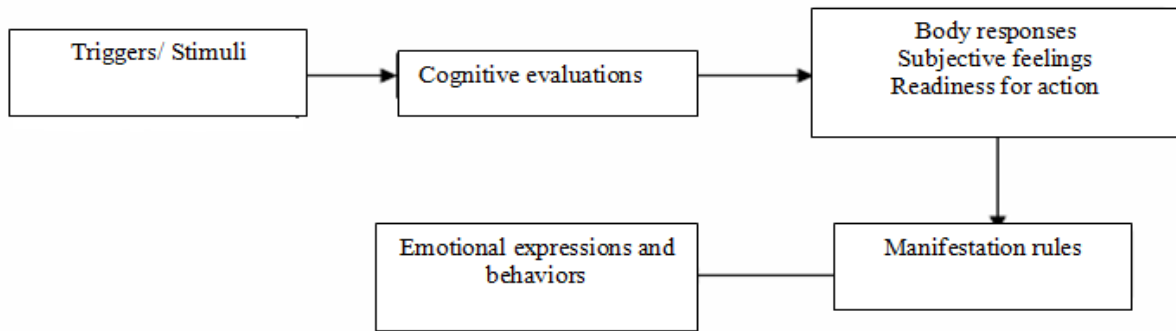
**Table 1** Organizational phenomena linked to experiencing emotions<sup>[2]</sup>

Affect and cognition are closely interacted, despite the large differences between the two types of processes. Agreement of emotional conflicts (clash of emotions, feelings, passions) and cognitive conflicts (clash of ideas, concepts, ways of solving etc.) leads to an increased efficiency of intellectual activities. The opposite is also true; decreasing of emotional tension will also decrease the individual's ability to solve new problems. Disagreement between rational and emotional, especially in situations where a higher intellectual level is coupled with violent, blind primary emotions, leads to transitory inadequacy<sup>[9]</sup>.

Emotional experiences are based on cognitive assessments of stimuli to which the individual is

exposed, the evaluation process being affected by both person related influences (goals, beliefs, mental representations, etc.) and environmental influences (requirements, constraints, resources, etc.)<sup>[6]</sup>. Thus, in the environment specific to working activities, emotional experiences generating factors originate in the individual, in the work activity particularities but also in the particularities of the environment in which a person operates. Moreover, some authors, such as Pekun and Frese<sup>[15]</sup> argue that there are: emotions of process, resulted from the present tasks that must be carried out, prospective emotions resulted from considering future and retrospective emotions resulted from considering tasks already carried out.

Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between emotion's components.



**Fig. 2** Model of emotions <sup>[17]</sup>

Emotions, in turn, affect different levels of cognitive processes. Thus, according to "broaden and build" theory on emotions <sup>[5]</sup>, developed by Barbara Fredrickson in 2001, positive affective states are associated with widening the repertoire of thought and action. Thus, people experiencing positive emotions have a notably more flexible cognitive organization, with high levels of novelty and plasticity, integrative, open to information and more efficient (effects that are related to increased levels of dopamine in the brain). Experimental data of the mentioned author <sup>[5]</sup> indicate that there are two types of positive emotions (a high activation state of joy and a low activation state of contentment) that lead to broader attentional scope and thought-action repertoire compared to neutral emotional states. Positive emotions are also associated with an increased capacity to solve problems, reliving pleasant events, risk seeking and increased optimism related to the prospect of positive events in the future.

However, maintaining positive emotional experiences for a long period of time, although it has positive effects in creative activities, will cause poor performance in tasks with greater rigor, requiring focus and planning. For example, unlike people who have balanced positive emotions (and are able to deal realistically and with lucidity with work problems), people characterized by unrealistic optimism will underestimate risk and will face difficulties in solving problematic situations. <sup>[1]</sup>

On the other hand, negative emotions (studies referring to anxiety, depression and failure) have the opposite effect, respectively narrowing the repertoire of thought and narrowing the attentional field. Narrowing the field of thought leads to a restriction of ways to act, this representing a characteristic of negative emotions, respectively that they are associated with specific action tendencies. For example, anger is associated with a tendency to attack, disgust with the trend to eliminate / remove and fear with the tendency to flee / avoidance / escape. These tendencies to act in a predetermined direction are accompanied by physiological activation and psychological preparing, body mobilizing resources for the execution of the modality of action (e.g. the tendency to flee, accompanying emotion of fear, is accompanied by mobilizing the body's autonomous required by flight, by directing blood flow to large muscle groups).

Negative emotions are also associated with susceptibility to relive negative events and overestimate

the chances of negative events happening in the future, hinder discriminative use of available information, professional dissatisfaction. In some situations, emotions are strong enough to block cognitive processes and directly guide behavior, as in the case of phobias or addictions. <sup>[10]</sup>

Negative emotions, when they are extreme, prolonged or contextually inappropriate, can lead to serious problems for the individual and the organization in which he operates, covering a range that can include anxiety disorders, phobias, violence and aggression, depression, eating disorders, disturbance associated with stress. <sup>[5]</sup> However, a series of studies have shown that a number of negative emotions can attain a functional character in the course of work, by streamlining cognitive processes and making perceptions more realistic. <sup>[1]</sup> For example, anger is associated with stereotypical thinking, limited analysis, and low attention given to arguments and high attention given to allusions, whilst fear or anxiety are associated with controlled comprehensive and systematic processing of information. <sup>[18]</sup>

## 2. PERFORMANCE AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

The growing importance that both organizations and professionals working in the field of organizational psychology attach to emotional experiences in the context of work activities (management of emotions in organizational context) is justified by the wide range of behavioral manifestations that are influenced more or less, in a direct or less direct manner, by employees' experiencing different emotions, feelings and affective states. Managing emotions in organizational context is made at two levels:

- at individual level, with reference to the person's emotional self-control skills, emotional resources management, the ability to cope with negative emotions, interpersonal relationships management, etc;
- at organizational level, with reference to the rules of emotional expression, strategies for optimization and increasing of employees' emotional well-being, ensuring optimal emotional climate by conflict management, fostering communication etc.

Managing emotions (emotional self-control), social awareness, self-knowledge, and interpersonal relationship management consists in the four components of emotional intelligence. Two of the four components are considered personal components of

emotional intelligence and the other two are social components of emotional intelligence. Table 2 illustrates and details the components of emotional

intelligence as they were described by Daniel Goleman [8].

	Definition	Hallmarks
Self Awareness	The ability to recognize and understand your moods, emotions, and drives, as well as their effect on others	Self confidence Realistic self assessment Self deprecating sense of humor
Self Regulation	The ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods. The propensity to suspend judgment –to think before acting	Trustworthiness and integrity Comfort with ambiguity Openness to change
Motivation	A passion to work for reasons that go beyond money and status A propensity to pursue goals with energy and persistence	Strong drive to achieve Optimism even in the face of failure Organizational commitment
Empathy	The ability to understand the emotional makeup of other people Skill in treating people according to their emotional reactions	Expertise in building/retaining talent Cross cultural sensitivity Service to clients and customers
Social Skill	Proficiency in managing relationships and building networks An ability to find common ground and build rapport	Effectiveness in leading change Persuasiveness Expertise in building/leading teams

**Table 2** The five component of emotional intelligence at work [8]

There are numerous definitions of emotional intelligence (EI) proposed by different researchers and specialists in the field of psychology. According to Mayer and Salovey [14], whom took into account both emotion and cognition when giving the definition of emotional intelligence, this is not a single skill, but rather a complex of emotional and rational skills. Emotional intelligence involves:

- the ability to correctly perceive, assess and express emotions;
- the ability to access and / or generate emotions when they facilitate thought;
- the ability to understand emotions and emotional knowledge;
- the ability to regulate emotions in order to promote emotional and intellectual growth.

Interest and enthusiasm of researchers, and also of the general public, in emotional intelligence has led to countless studies and research that investigates how the development of the different components of emotional intelligence influences individual's life and work. More and more studies point out that emotional intelligence is a good predictor for future acquisitions made by children, for success in professional and personal life, for higher performance in school, work and in human relationships. Thus, as far as work activity is concerned, there have been proven close links between emotional intelligence and leadership, group performance and individual performance.

Currently, there is some consensus on that work performance is manifested in relation to three types of realities: task performance, contextual performance and adaptive performance (component left out of the initial model, although anticipated by researchers, and introduced later). Performance task, defined by Borman and Motowildo [11], represents behaviors directly related to accomplishing work tasks.

Contextual performance, defined by the same two authors, is represented by activities directed at

maintaining and enriching the social network of an organization and the psychological climate that supports the performing of work tasks (informal actions, interpersonal behaviors and actions that benefit the organization). Adaptive performance represents behaviors that demonstrate the ability to cope with change and the ability to transfer learning from one task to another, depending on job requirements. This performance component has two aspects:

- Cognitive aspects - applying learning skills and problem-solving;
- Non-cognitive / emotional aspects - emotional adjustment depending on the changing of job requirements.

Performance dimensions	Indicators
Task performance	Task competence, Efficiency Communication
Contextual performance	Readiness for achieving tasks Persistence with an extra effort Cooperation and helping others Following/ endorsing organizational procedures and rules
Adaptive performance	Creative problem solving Managing uncertainty Interpersonal/ Cultural/ Physical adaptability Stress and crisis management Adaptation through learning

**Table 3** Performance dimensions [12]

Looking closely at the tables shown above, one can easily see that emotional intelligence includes a lot of factors of those we find when we refer to contextual, but also adaptive performance. But emotional intelligence is also related to task performance, as evidenced by numerous studies. In occupations of medium complexity, a high performing person is 12 times more

productive than a low performing one and in terms of occupations with high complexity, a high performing individual is 127% more productive than an average performing one. Studies conducted in over 200 organizations worldwide have shown that one third of these differences are due to cognitive abilities and technical skills while two thirds are due to emotional competences. [12] Incidentally, Daniel Goleman [7], who closely studied emotional intelligence, states that IE is responsible for greater performance variations than any other factor. Studies carried out by Goleman indicate that, at best, general intelligence contributes about 20% to the factors that determine success in life. Amjad Ali and Abid Chaudhry Usman [3] identified studies (Dulewicz and Higgs (2000)) indicating that, regarding individual organizational success, 16% of the variation is explained by managerial intelligence, 27% by IQ, and even more than 36% by emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence has been associated with a number of indicators of work performance, such as position within the organization, recent salary increases [13] and higher scores on cognitive task performance. [16] Other studies have indicated that for increasing task and contextual performance, personal components of emotional intelligence play an important role. [12] Improving social components of emotional intelligence, although do not affect the performance of employees who are not part of management, is particularly important for managers. Thus, high levels of IE's social components are important for managers in order to increase staff performance, both task and contextual performance. In addition, there are numerous empirical evidences supporting the idea that the leader's emotions influence the emotions of the group he leads.

Employees' emotional intelligence was positively correlated with workplace behavior, behavior in work teams, commitment towards the organization and career and negatively correlated with employee's intentions to leave and with occupational stress. [3] Same authors concluded that "within the professional activity, employee's emotional intelligence instates them traits, attitudes and behaviors that help them to be more efficient. [3]

Cherniss [4] suggests that a person's ability to perceive, identify and manage emotions (respectively a person's emotional intelligence) represents the foundation for emotional competencies that are important for performance in almost any occupation. This implies the idea that work performance is determined mostly by competences pertain to emotional intelligence.

TalentSmart [20], the number one global provider of emotional intelligence, analyzed emotional intelligence together with other 33 important skills for the work activity, concluding that emotional intelligence is the strongest predictor of job performance, explaining up to 58% of success all kinds of work.

Emotional intelligence may be developed. In its grater part, emotional intelligence arises in the limbic system's neuro-transmitters, so that programs for its development should target this brain area. This involves unlearning some thought, feeling and behavior habits

that are strongly rooted and learning new ones. Brain's neuroplasticity refers to the brain's ability to remodel, according to experiences we live. As we learn new skills, our brain creates new connections which become automatic habits by repeated use. [8] Thus, as we train the brain using emotional intelligence strategies, emotional intelligence behaviors become habits. Currently there are many tools and programs designed on the one hand for assessing and on the other hand for developing employee's emotional intelligence, made available to managers. Daniel Goleman [8] draws attention to the fact that many programs targeting emotional development are focused on the neocortex, part of the brain that is responsible for notification of concepts and logic instead of being focused on the limbic system, which governs emotions, impulses and behavior development. This orientation towards the neocortex, according to the author's research, may lead to the opposite of the desired result; respectively negatively affect employee's performance. Therefore, in order to develop emotional intelligence, people have to be trained and assisted to break old behavioral habits and replace them with new ones, approach that besides requiring a longer period of time than traditional vocational training, also requires an individualized approach.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

The influence that affection has on human behavior in general and behavior in the course of employment, in particular, is demonstrated by numerous studies and research. The fact that employee's emotional experiences influence their work performance leads to the idea of the importance of emotion management, interpersonal management and emotional skills development. All these elements are components of emotional intelligence, whose role in moderating work performance is demonstrated by research of an increasing number of specialists. The accelerated pace of change and growing demands exerted by work places on employee's cognitive, emotional and psychological resources indicate the more and more important role that emotional intelligence plays in work activity. Means to asses and develop emotional intelligence are numerous and available for managers who intend to grow in this way, the staff's performance.

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