



The Importance of Emotional Intelligence in the Management of Stress at Work

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognise one's own and other people's emotions and adjust one's behaviour in accordance with them. Numerous studies have shown that emotional intelligence has a positive effect on job satisfaction, employee performance, interpersonal relationships, business communication and productivity. In today's fast-paced and competitive business world, the ability to understand and manage one's own emotions, as well as the emotions of others, becomes crucial for building professional relationships. Emotionally intelligent people cope more easily with acute and chronic stress, which directly affects mental health and work performance. Using emotional intelligence as a tool to reduce stress in the workplace, as well as to resolve conflicts that have cause-and-effect relationships, allows for a better understanding of the needs and feelings of employees. The ability to effectively manage emotions and stressful situations can significantly contribute to employee satisfaction and loyalty, that is crucial to long-term business success.

Key words: Emotional intelligence; General intelligence; Emotions; Stress, Psychological; Workplace.

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Introduction

Emotional intelligence as a term is still considered a relatively new concept in the field of psychology. There are many definitions of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence successfully complements the level of education of general intelligence, skills and experiences of an individual, which determines his business success and development. Researchers in the field of psychology believe that emotional intelligence can be developed from an early age. Through the implementation of emotional intelligence training, individuals would be successfully prepared for social inclusion and adaptability, resourcefulness in turbulent environments, as well as the possibility of self-control and understanding of other people. According to the attitude-based approach,

job satisfaction has an affective and cognitive basis. The affective basis implies a feeling about the object of the attitude, while the cognitive basis is based on the belief about the objects of the attitude. Achieving work goals is closely related to the cognitive and affective basis of job satisfaction, so achieved goals are a reference point for the feeling of job satisfaction. The construct of emotional intelligence can be recognised in several theories about intelligence that also include the social factor. When thinking about the influence of society and the environment on the development of emotional intelligence, it is that regardless of the environment in which people grow up, they differ in their ability to perceive, understand and control their emotions.

In the modern business world, where dynamism and uncertainty and rapid changes have imposed themselves as norms, traditional business concepts are no longer sufficient to ensure success and maintain a positive working climate. The working environment is increasingly exposed to negative influences, such as stress, which can have psychological and physical consequences for the health of employees and therefore consequences for the entire organisation. It is extremely important to know ways to deal with stress and its prevention. Long-term exposure to high levels of stress can worsen an individual's health and even lead to the development of severe symptoms and permanent illnesses. The increasingly present phenomenon of causing stress in the workplace is mobbing and burnout syndrome at work. These two stressors are a common cause of health problems and social isolation. Due to a stressful situation, it is normal for an individual to cope with such a situation. The ways in which happiness is encountered are characterised on several levels, namely the cognitive, emotional and behavioural level.

In solving stressful situations, emotional intelligence as a tool helps in solving stress and conflicts, through managing emotional reactions for a better understanding of the perspectives of all parties involved, with the aim of finding constructive solutions.

Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence gained importance in the nineties of the last century, due to the merging of two exclusive psychological concepts, intelligence and emotion, because emotions were seen as something that prevents rational thinking and makes quality work difficult. However, numerous studies have shown quite the opposite, it has been found that emotions, if properly managed, can even promote rational thinking, correct decision-making and direct the individual to appropriate behaviour. Emotional intelligence can be defined as a separate type of intelligence, which is often determined and conditioned by emotions. Emotions have effects on the body and mind, they last for a short time, while mood has a longer effect on the body and mind. It is important to distinguish between emotions and moods.

Models of emotional intelligence

There are many definitions of emotional intelligence and what all definitions have in common is that emotional intelligence is a combination of multiple abilities. Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, which divides social intelligence into interpersonal and intrapersonal, is most often mentioned as the basis for the emergence of emotional intelligence:¹

1. Linguistic: Effective use of words, rich vocabulary, expressiveness of speech, effective handling of language (verbal and written), use of words in solving practical problems, use of language as a means of tracking information.
2. Logical-mathematical: Effective use of numbers, good logical reasoning, easy observation of logical structure and relationships and cause-and-effect relationships, ability to discover patterns, ability to categorise, classify, conclude, generalise, calculate and test hypotheses.
3. Spatial: Accurate perception and navigation in space, spatial design ability, feeling for colours, lines and shapes, ability to manipulate and create mental images with the aim of solving problems, ability to graphically represent ideas.
4. Physical - kinesthetic: Using mental abilities to coordinate body movements, ability to use the whole body in expressing thoughts and feelings, ability to use hands when making objects, good coordination and balance.
5. Musical: Feeling for music, distinguishing music, musical creativity, musical expression, feeling for rhythm, dynamics and melody.
6. Interpersonal: Observing and distinguishing the mood, motivation and feelings of other people, the ability to express non-verbally and recognise non-verbal signs.
7. Intrapersonal: Knowledge of oneself and the ability to act accordingly, awareness of one's own moods, intentions, motives, temperament and desires, self-discipline, self-understanding and self-respect.

Mayer and Salovey model

The appearance of the construct of emotional intelligence is an attempt to find the mental processes involved in processing information and the first to use the name "emotional intelligence" were psychologists Peter Salovey and John D Mayer, defining emotional intelligence as "the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions and the use of these emotions in thinking and

behaviour".² The initial model of emotional intelligence included the evaluation and expression of emotions in oneself and others, the regulation of emotions in oneself and others and the use of emotions for adaptive purposes. Encouraged by the criticisms of other researchers, Mayer and Salovey revise the model of emotional intelligence by presenting four levels of abilities that participate in emotional intelligence. According to their new model, emotional intelligence represents an aspect composed of emotional and cognitive systems:

- Perception, assessment and expression of emotions

The first level includes the perception, evaluation and expression of emotions and represents the abilities and skills of a person to accurately perceive an emotional pattern. The gradual development of emotion perception enables people from an early age to learn to identify and distinguish between their own and other people's emotional states.

- Emotional facilitation of thinking

As the second level of emotional intelligence, emotional facilitation of thinking includes those abilities that allow emotions to be used in a way that facilitates intellectual functioning. Emotions can mediate judgment and memory in such a way that they direct attention to relevant information from the environment and arouse specific interest in the target task or stimuli, which facilitates intellectual processes.³

- Ability to understand emotions and knowledge about emotions

The third level of mental abilities includes the ability to understand emotions and use emotional knowledge. Salovey and Sluter believe that emotional knowledge is acquired from childhood and perfected throughout life.⁴

- The ability to regulate emotions for the purpose of emotional and intellectual development

The most complex level of emotional intelligence in which the conscious regulation of emotions leads to emotional and intellectual development through the selective expression of emotions. This process is called the socialisation of emotions and depends on information from the environment and the purpose of the emotional response. Theories of emotional intelligence describe a person who possesses these skills as a well-adjusted, emotionally skilled individual whose emotional and social functioning is characterised by quality and appropriate skills in different situations.⁵

Bar-On model of emotional intelligence

Bar-On proposes a social-emotional approach to intelligence and believes that social and emotional intelligence should not be viewed separately and proposes a new mixed model of emotional intelligence that unites both components. Social-emotional intelligence unites all related emotional into social components such as skills, facilitators that determine how effectively people understand themselves and others and express their own emotions, communicate with others and cope with everyday demands. His concept of emotional intelligence includes five components of emotional intelligence, of which the first mentioned are the intrapersonal components of emotional intelligence, which consist of emotional self-awareness, self-esteem, independence and self-actualisation. Individuals with a developed intrapersonal component are aware of their emotions and can easily express their emotions and thoughts and have the ability to self-control. Interpersonal components include empathy, interpersonal relationships and social responsibility. Individuals who are interpersonally emotionally intelligent can understand how others feel, have good communication with people around them and get along well with them. Adaptability components include coping and behaviour in real experiences, individual flexibility in life situations and problem solving, while stress management components are included in stress management and are known as stress tolerance, ie stressful situations and impulse control. The last components of the general mood, the main components of which are optimism and the feeling of happiness, are responsible for the general mood of the individual.⁶

Relationship between emotional intelligence and IQ

There are two types of intelligence, intellectual and emotional. These two intelligences express the activities of different parts of the brain. Intellect is based exclusively on the work of the neocortex, the latest developed parts on the surface of the brain. Emotional centres are located lower in the brain and emotional intelligence includes the work of emotional centres, coordinated with intellectual centres. In the context of the above, emotional intelligence refers to recognising one's own feelings and the feelings of other people, motivating oneself and managing emotions well in oneself and one's relationships. According to

Kovacs and Conway, general intelligence called IQ should be interpreted as an index of specific cognitive abilities and not as an expression of basic general cognitive ability.⁷ Cognitive abilities are functions of the brain such as memory, learning, attention, information processing and the like. General intelligence deals with the question of how developed these abilities are in an individual and is tested with special IQ tests. IQ tests do not include the measurement of emotion perception which leads to the main difference between general and emotional intelligence. It is known that all people intertwine intellectual and emotional abilities. So rare are people with a pronounced level of emotional intelligence and a low level of general intelligence, or *vice versa*. Goleman mentions that men and women differ in some categories of general and emotional intelligence. Men with high IQ are ambitious, predictable and persistent and self-confident. They look down on the people around them, they are expressionless and often emotionally cold. While men who show a high level of emotional intelligence are social, open, cheerful and not prone to worry. In relationships, they are full of compassion. They have a rich emotional life; they are satisfied not only with themselves but also with the world around them. While women who have a high IQ have extremely high self-confidence and have a wide range of intellectual interests. They are not prone to anxiety and guilt and are reluctant to show anger. Emotionally intelligent women express their feelings and have positive feelings about themselves. They adapt extremely well to stressful situations and make new acquaintances with ease.

They rarely feel anxiety and guilt and have deep and dark thoughts. Individuals, people who are good in both areas have a higher probability of success in life, both in the private and business spheres and find work easier because entrepreneurs value the ability to communicate with colleagues and customers, the ability to maintain relationships and understand other people's feelings. Regarding the interdependence of emotional intelligence and IQ, unlike IQ, the level of emotional intelligence is not determined genetically. Intelligence quotient is genetically determined, while emotional intelligence is learned and changes during life. Psychologist Howard Gardner from Harvard is one of the most influential theorists of intelligence who emphasised the difference between intellectual and emotional abilities through the model of multiple intelligences.

In 1998, Danijel Goleman highlighted the importance of emotional intelligence at work in a Har-

vard Business Review article. In the conducted research on the skills that result in business excellence, for 181 workplaces and within 121 organisations, he concluded that as many as 67 % of the skills considered necessary for business success are based on emotional abilities. All emotions are actually impulses that lead us to act, instant plans for dealing with life's challenges that have been instilled in us by evolution. Even in the very root of the word "emotion", the word *motere* is a verb that means "to move" in Latin, while the prefix "e" indicates movement, which means that every emotion implies a tendency to act.⁸ Emotions play an important role in business because they influence people's feelings and behaviour. Goleman emphasises the greater importance of emotional intelligence than rational intelligence, he categorises emotions in the following way:⁹

- Anger, resentment, spitefulness, indignation, upset, bitterness, hatred, agitation, irritability, hostility and perhaps as extreme values, pathological hatred and violence;
- Sad, grief, pain, unhappiness, dejection, melancholy, self-pity, loneliness, despair and, in pathological cases, severe depression;
- Fear of anxiety, nervousness, worry, consternation, ominousness, caution, apprehension, tension, terror, horror, chills, psychopathology of phobias and panic;
- Joy, happiness, pleasure, relief, contentment, bliss, amusement, pride sensual pleasure, delight, rapture, satisfaction, euphoria, playfulness, ecstasy and ultimately mania;
- Love acceptance, friendly affection, trust, kindness, liking, devotion, infatuation, adoration and platonic love;
- Astonishment, amazement;
- Disgust, disdain, underestimation, abhorrence, revulsion, loathing;
- Shame, feeling of guilt, embarrassment, grief, resentment, humiliation, regret, misery and remorse.

The author Stephen P Robbins also believes that all emotions can be attached to a category, but his opinion is that there are far more of these categories than in the first case, more precisely, each emotion is some form or degree of the following eighteen emotions: anger, contempt, enthusiasm, envy, fear, frustration, disappointment, shame, loathing, happiness, hatred, hope, jealousy, joy, love, pride, surprise and sadness.¹⁰

Emotions

Emotions are internal states that participate in a series of internal processes such as behaviour, cognitive processes and consciousness and in a specific way influence people's reactions in everyday situations and their social relationships. Due to the way in which they participate in people's lives, it is necessary to properly express, recognise and control their own emotions and use them to solve problems when interacting with people. Strong experiences directed towards someone and something are represented by emotions, while moods are feelings that are generally less intense than feelings. Experts in the field of psychology believe that feelings are a more transient form of mood. Feelings represent a reaction to a person or event. Usually, feelings appear when people are happy about something or angry or scared about something. Emotions play a particularly important role in business because they influence people's feelings and behaviours. Thus, emotions such as happiness, fear, anxiety, anger can affect work performance, relationships with colleagues, mood and attitude towards work. As a tool, emotional intelligence has the ability to recognise and manage emotions, improve work activity, adapt to different situations and create creativity.

The relationship between stress and emotional intelligence

Throughout our daily life, we encounter situations that affect our behaviour and mental state of health. Most often it is stress. It is a well-known fact that we all sometimes face challenges that stand in the way of achieving important goals. Unpleasant feelings can be the result of different life situations, whether from the private or business sphere, what is stress on one side, can be transitory on the other. The term stress means a state of the organism in which we perceive a threat to our own integrity, it is understandable to people in different languages, different cultures, it is understood by people of different age members of different groups.¹¹ Given that employees spend a large part of the day at the workplace, work-related situations are the most common source of stress. Stress is a big problem for a person as an individual, stress has a negative effect on the organisation as well, thus affecting productivity. In employees, stress can cause lack of social con-

tact, lack of support, exchange of ideas, change in mood and loss of enthusiasm. Stress affects mental health, which leads to frequent absences from work and sick leave. The consequences of long-term stress are the exhaustion and decline of the overall functionality of the organism, which results in reduced efficiency at the workplace. Stress is one of the main obstacles to a person's achievement on the business and personal level.

Psychologist Hans Selye, in his research on stress, made a great contribution to the biological model of stress. The history of stress research on health shows the crucial importance of Selye's discovery of objective indicators of stress. Selye described the changes in the adrenal cortex, the reduction of the thymus and the bleeding of ulcers in the digestive organs, which he considered to be a non-specific reaction of the organism to harmful stimuli and he called this reaction the general adaptation syndrome (OAS).¹² OAS Selye divided into three phases:

- Alarm reaction, the primary function of mobilising all defence forces in the body. Due to the action of a harmful stimulus, the anterior part of the pituitary gland is stimulated, which secretes adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH) into the blood. ACTH stimulates the cortex and module of the adrenal glands, which stimulates the secretion of adrenal hormones. The medulla of the adrenal glands secretes adrenaline and noradrenaline. The cortex of the adrenal glands secretes an inflammatory hormone that has the task of reducing inflammatory processes. If the organism does not succumb to a harmful stimulus in this phase, the following occurs:
- Phases of resistance in which the alarm signs disappear and the organism successfully copes with support.
- If the effect of the harmful stimulus continues, the symptoms of the alarm phase appear again, but this time in a permanent form, which eventually leads to exhaustion and death.

Selye assumed that the amount of adaptive energy is finite and that in the event of prolonged and intense stress, a phase of exhaustion occurs. After a long series of research, Selye changed the original definition of OAS, which he says occurs after changes in the body's work, which is a consequence of illness, shock or excessive workload, stating that OAS can be caused by psychological processes, such as emotions or intellectual efforts, life's adversities but also life's successes.

Thus, Selye calls all external and internal stimuli, which ask the organism to meet certain requirements, solve problems, increase activity or simply make a new adaptation, stressors and considers the organism's reaction to any stressor as biological stress. In the field of psychology, many authors explain stress in different ways and the most commonly used explanation is that of Lazarus, who defines stress as a condition that occurs in those situations where there is a discrepancy between the demands that the environment places on an individual and the ability of that individual to respond to the tasks set.¹³ Psychologist Lazarus in his research puts the concept of vulnerability in the foreground as a state in which an individual anticipates facing situations in which he can be threatened and evaluates them as possible future causes of unpleasant and harmful situations. For man as an individual, dealing with stress is a process that implies a wide range of application of skills, knowledge and personal assessments in the situation itself. The nature of stress differs in intensity and duration. The way to overcome stress, that is, to reduce harmful consequences, is mainly through appropriate communication in stressful situations. It was seen that there is a connection between stress and emotions, not mutually exclusive. Emotions are a series of related reactions to a certain situation and include the individual's relationship with the event, mental state and emotional expression. Emotions are also powerful drivers of a person's inner state, but to a significant extent they also influence external behaviour. In all spheres of social life, from psychology, medicine to economics, emotions served to achieve a certain goal. As a tool for making business decisions, they found their application in management. Recently, emotional approaches have been used in the negotiation process. Emotions can be used to obtain information about the preferences of the opposite party and they can also signal unpleasantness and malicious actions. Emotions play a significant role in perception, expression of feelings and thinking. It is important for negotiators to assess the emotional context and interactions, to monitor emotional reactions and to cultivate wise emotional dialogue.¹⁴

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workplace, work-related situations are the most common source of stress. Stress is a big problem for a person as an individual, stress has a negative effect on the organisation as well, thus affecting productivity. In employees, stress can cause a lack of social contact, lack of support, exchange of ideas, changes in mood and loss of enthusiasm. Stress affects mental health, which leads to frequent absences from work and sick leave. The consequences of long-term stress are the exhaustion and decline of the overall functionality of the organism, which results in reduced efficiency at the workplace. Stress is one of the main obstacles to a person's achievement on the business and personal level.

The impact of emotional intelligence on stress

In the workplace, employees encounter different types of stress when performing their daily activities. A large number of authors from the field of psychology have investigated the impact of emotional intelligence on reducing stress, starting with acute stress, trauma and chronic stress. The influence of emotional intelligence can reduce stress, that is, minimise perceived acute stress in demanding situations. Correct business communication as well as self-awareness and self-regulation of employees are fundamental workplace behaviours that lead to success in the business world. Self-awareness is the basis on which personality is built. Personality affects people because being self-aware gives a clearer picture of yourself with your own abilities and beliefs. People who have self-regulation skills are able to adapt to changing situations. A prerequisite is to control emotions at the workplace and not to allow personal problems to interfere with the business world. Changes in the work environment often led to stressful situations that usually lead to conflict that can reduce the positive effect of the introduced change and it is important to self-regulate feelings. It is a well-known fact that stressful situations often occur at work, therefore it is necessary for managers to know how to manage stressful situations in an appropriate manner.¹⁵

Understanding the impact that stress has on the work results of employees, because a large amount of stress reduces work performance and results in a drop in production, which harms the organisation.

- Observing unhealthy stress in the organisation where it is necessary to distinguish between high and low levels of stress and what affects it, such as fatigue, low energy level, negative outbursts among employees, aggressiveness, anxiety, etc.
- Help employees to overcome stress while creating a stimulating organisational climate that supports employees, make jobs more interesting without routine occurrences. It is also possible to design and implement counselling programs for career building, because if employees are on the next step in their career, then the level of stress in the organisation will be significantly reduced.

An employee experiencing intense job-related stress can relieve himself in several ways:¹⁶

- The first step is to identify the source of stress. For some it is a conflict with colleagues or a low level of autonomy, while for others it can be a responsibility that they feel they cannot handle.
- Where there is always room for improvement is certainly better time management. By making a list of tasks that are arranged by importance and urgency, we can better organise and control our own time and thus reduce the level of stress.
- Also, lately there has been more and more talk about the balance between private and business. Sometimes it is necessary to make changes in our schedule in order to have more time for hobbies, rest and spending time with loved ones.
- Practicing relaxation techniques is another way that is necessary to maintain balance and reduce the negative effects of stress. It can be meditation, yoga or deep breathing.
- Despite the fact that there are tools we can use to help ourselves reduce our levels, sometimes it is necessary to share our concerns with others. These can be friends, colleagues, family members and it is also a good idea to seek the help of a professional.

Stress should not be ignored, but dealt with in a timely manner. High and low levels of stress, if they are maintained for a long period of time, can weaken the performance of employees and thus the success of the organisation. Investing in the development of emotional intelligence within an organisation can bring benefits to the organisation, including reducing stress, increasing employee satisfaction and overall work performance. Emotions increase motivation to perform

various tasks. It is known that emotional intelligence has a great impact on work and efficiency in the workplace. Investing in training programs that focus on developing emotional skills is a good solution for any organisation that strives for excellence in all aspects of business. Employees who demonstrate a high level of emotional intelligence in their work are often more efficient in solving problems and more innovative, which contributes to competitiveness and success in the market.

The ability to effectively manage emotions can significantly contribute to employee satisfaction, which is key to the long-term success of any business. Learning about the benefits of emotional intelligence in the workplace, relates to better management of stressful situations, because emotionally intelligent people are better able to manage the pressures and demands of their superiors while using traits such as empathy, expertise and self-awareness. They are aware of their positive and negative emotions, thus reducing the negative effects on health and efficiency. The concept of stress has occupied many researchers in the field of psychology for the reason that stress as a phenomenon has become part of everyday life, including the private and business spheres of life. Therefore, it can be said that stress is a very common condition considering today's fast-paced lifestyle. Stress prevention prevents further, permanent and serious consequences for the individual as an employee as well as the entire organisation. Quality education of employees about the effect of stress in the workplace can help in taking a stand in stressful situations and influence its reduction.

Conclusion

The development of emotional intelligence in the business world enables the creation of a positive environment, better relations with colleagues, adaptability to changes and making quality business decisions. Given that the influence of stress greatly impairs the possibility of normal functioning of an individual, it is crucial to recognise and apply adequate ways to reduce stress in the workplace. In addition to all the advantages that lead to successful business, excessive reliance on emotional intelligence can lead to the neglect of other important aspects of

business, such as technical knowledge and analytical abilities. Therefore, it is crucial to find the right balance, in order to maximise the benefits of emotional intelligence while minimising the potential drawbacks.

Ethics

This study was a secondary analysis based on the currently existing data and did not directly involve with human participants or experimental animals. Therefore, the ethics approval was not required in this paper.

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Conflicts of interest

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Data access

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable individual request.

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