



Journal of Advanced Research in Applied Sciences and Engineering Technology

Journal homepage: <https://jaraset.com/>
ISSN: 2462-1943



ENHANCING WORK-LIFE HARMONY: EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE'S INFLUENCE IN AHMEDABAD'S IT SECTOR

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 20-04-2024

Received in revised form: 22-05-2024

Accepted: 25-07-2024

Available online: 28-09-2024

Keywords:

Work-life harmony, Emotional intelligence (EI), IT sector, Employee engagement, Organizational culture.

ABSTRACT

In the fast-paced and demanding environment of the Information Technology (IT) sector, achieving work-life harmony has become a critical concern for employees and organizations alike. This study explores the role of Emotional Intelligence (EI) in enhancing work-life harmony among IT professionals in Ahmedabad. Emotional Intelligence, defined as the ability to understand and manage one's emotions and those of others, is increasingly recognized as a crucial factor in navigating the challenges of balancing professional and personal responsibilities. This research examines how different dimensions of Emotional Intelligence self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills impact employees' ability to maintain equilibrium between work and life. By surveying IT professionals in Ahmedabad through structured questionnaires and conducting in-depth interviews, the study aims to identify key EI traits that influence job satisfaction, stress management, interpersonal relationships, and overall well-being. The findings suggest that higher levels of Emotional Intelligence significantly contribute to improved work-life harmony by fostering better stress management, enhancing communication skills, and promoting a supportive work environment. Organizations that invest in EI development programs are more likely to witness increased employee engagement, reduced burnout, and higher productivity.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of the Information Technology (IT) sector in India has not only transformed the country into a global technology hub but has also brought about significant changes in the professional and personal lives of its workforce. Ahmedabad, a city known for its vibrant entrepreneurial spirit and economic diversity, has witnessed a steady rise in the number of IT

firms, attracting a large pool of professionals. While this growth has offered numerous opportunities, it has also introduced challenges related to work-life balance, or more aptly, work-life harmony. The increasing demands of the IT sector, characterized by long working hours, high-pressure environments, and the expectation of constant availability, have blurred the lines between work and personal life. This has led to a growing need for individuals to develop skills that enable them to manage both domains effectively.

One such skill that has garnered attention for its potential to enhance work-life harmony is Emotional Intelligence (EI). Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and influence one's own emotions as well as those of others. It involves a range of competencies, including emotional self-awareness, empathy, self-regulation, motivation, and social skills, all of which play a critical role in how individuals navigate their professional and personal lives. In the context of Ahmedabad's IT sector, where employees often face high levels of stress, emotional intelligence can act as a buffer, helping professionals manage workplace challenges while maintaining a fulfilling personal life. The influence of emotional intelligence on work-life harmony is particularly relevant in industries like IT, where cognitive demands are high, but the emotional and social demands are often overlooked.

The concept of work-life harmony extends beyond the traditional notion of work-life balance. While balance implies an equal distribution of time and effort between work and personal life, harmony suggests a more fluid and dynamic integration of the two. In the IT sector, where work is often not confined to a 9-to-5 schedule and the nature of tasks can be highly unpredictable, achieving a rigid balance may not always be feasible. Instead, work-life harmony encourages a more holistic approach, where personal and professional responsibilities complement each other, allowing for greater flexibility and emotional well-being. Emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in fostering this harmony by equipping individuals with the tools to manage work-related stress, build meaningful relationships, and make decisions that align with both personal and professional values.

In Ahmedabad, the IT sector has become a critical driver of economic growth, attracting a diverse workforce with varying aspirations, expectations, and lifestyles. This diversity, while enriching, also adds complexity to the dynamics of work-life harmony. Professionals in the IT industry are often required to work across time zones, meet tight deadlines, and constantly adapt to technological advancements, all of which can create stress and strain on their personal lives. Moreover, the rise of remote and hybrid work models in the post-pandemic era has further blurred the boundaries between work and home, making it even more challenging to maintain a clear distinction between the two. In this context, emotional intelligence emerges as a vital skill that can help IT professionals in Ahmedabad navigate these challenges, by enabling them to manage their emotions effectively, foster positive relationships, and create a sense of equilibrium between their work and personal lives [1].

Research has shown that emotional intelligence has a significant impact on various aspects of work life, including job performance, leadership effectiveness, teamwork, and employee

satisfaction. Employees with high emotional intelligence are better equipped to handle workplace conflicts, adapt to changing environments, and maintain a positive attitude even in the face of challenges. These qualities are essential for achieving work-life harmony, as they allow individuals to manage stress, avoid burnout, and create a more supportive and collaborative work environment. In the IT sector, where teamwork and collaboration are key to success, emotional intelligence can enhance communication, improve problem-solving, and foster a culture of empathy and mutual respect. This, in turn, contributes to a more harmonious work environment, where employees feel valued and supported, leading to greater job satisfaction and overall well-being.

The importance of emotional intelligence in achieving work-life harmony is particularly pronounced in the context of Ahmedabad's IT sector, where the pressures of work can often overshadow personal well-being. Professionals in this sector are not only expected to keep up with the fast-paced technological advancements but also to maintain high levels of productivity and innovation. This can lead to a sense of overwhelm and burnout if not managed effectively. Emotional intelligence offers a solution by helping individuals develop the resilience and emotional awareness needed to navigate the demands of their professional lives without compromising their personal happiness. By fostering emotional intelligence [2], IT professionals can cultivate a sense of purpose and fulfillment in both their work and personal lives, leading to a more sustainable and harmonious lifestyle.

Emotional intelligence offers a powerful tool for achieving this harmony, by enabling individuals to manage their emotions, build strong relationships, and create a balanced and fulfilling life. By cultivating emotional intelligence, IT professionals in Ahmedabad can not only enhance their own well-being but also contribute to a more supportive and harmonious work environment, leading to greater productivity, job satisfaction, and overall quality of life. As organizations in the IT sector recognize the value of emotional intelligence in promoting work-life harmony, it is likely that we will see a growing emphasis on emotional intelligence training and development as a key component of professional growth and success.

RELATED WORK

The research conducted by Kapoor et al. (1999) indicates that married women professionals face challenges in achieving a work-life balance due to the demands of both their jobs and their families. The study suggests that family-related concerns contribute to their unhappiness. The lack of domestic assistance provided by husbands worsens the situation for women who are employed. Rajadhyaksha and Smita (2004) found that just 34% of spouses were assisting their wives with everyday domestic tasks. The percentage of individuals who occasionally supported their wives was 24%.

This indicates that the prevailing viewpoint is still rooted in tradition among the majority of the population. According to a study conducted by Ali (2006) in the information technology business, social support from both the family and the organization is crucial in facilitating work opportunities for women [3].

Raj and Mahalakshmi (2016) assert that women fulfill multiple responsibilities within the household and workplace, including those of a spouse, caretaker, parent, employee, and

colleague. They also highlight that women often provide additional services owing to work pressure and stress.

The study conducted by Memon et al. (2020) revealed a significant and crucial correlation between work life balance and job satisfaction, which aligns with previous research findings. Moreover, the influence of emotional intelligence on work-life balance and its level of satisfaction is assessed. The perspectives of male and female teachers differ when it comes to emotional intelligence (EI) and work life balance (WL). It demonstrates the disparity in gender views. Professional fulfilment is equivalent for both genders, and there is no significant difference observed between married and unmarried respondents in three of the circumstances. In the contemporary context of a rapidly changing climate, the need for a harmonious balance between work and domestic routine is highly valued. It poses a significant challenge to management and leadership, leading to failure, conflicts, inefficiency, and attrition. Therefore, the study acknowledges the connection between emotional intelligence (EI), social elements, and their influence on work life (WL). Similarly, social circumstances influence the level of emotional intelligence (EI) and hence impact work-life balance (WLB) as well. Specifically, it suggests that intervention aimed at enhancing persons' work life and enhancing the level of emotional intelligence with various societal variables (Madan & Raja, 2019) [4].

G. Delina and Dr. R. Prabhakara (2013) conducted a study to investigate the difficult hurdles that working women encounter in achieving a harmonious equilibrium between their personal and professional lives. The researchers took into account many aspects, including the number of hours worked, level of work engagement, and family obligations. The primary aims of the study were to investigate the issue of work-life balance among married women who are employed, to examine the different factors that influence work-life balance, and ultimately, to analyse the impact of work-life balance on the quality of life for married women working in the Academic, IT, and healthcare sectors in Pondicherry. The participants were selected using a convenient sampling method. Research indicates that workers in the IT sector face greater challenges in achieving a work-life balance compared to women working in the academic and health sectors. The study also indicates that married women who are employed and under the age of 30 experience more work-life imbalance issues compared to those who are 40 years old. However, married women over the age of 40 were found to have slightly better work-life balance than the aforementioned age group [5].

Organizations seek to hire individuals that possess emotional intelligence in order to create and sustain a more enjoyable and appealing workplace. These individuals are able to attract and serve others in a pleasant manner, which eventually enhances the performance of the firm. The significance of emotional intelligence (EI) may be comprehended from the findings of Kalantari et al. (2012) study, which asserts that a heightened level of emotional intelligence leads to a decrease in tension and stress often caused by a challenging work environment. Gohm and Clore (2002) proposed a novel concept suggesting that emotional intelligence in the workplace has the capacity to mitigate burnout in professions that are susceptible to burnout. In addition, Schwartz (2011) discovered that experiencing happy emotions in the workplace has a favourable influence on job attitudes and enhances productivity. An individual's ability to regulate and oversee their work schedule is crucial in handling various responsibilities and expectations (Valcour & Hunter, 2005). The findings of Thomas and

Ganister (1995) are noteworthy as they indicate that individuals with lower levels of work time control had reduced capacity to effectively handle unexpected family demands, resulting in higher levels of aversion. In their study titled "Impact of working hours on Work Life balance," Sarah Holly and Alwine Mohnen (2012) aimed to investigate the impact of employees' working hours on their job satisfaction. The aggregate number of employees who desire to shorten their working hours is mostly determined by the overtime remuneration. Their study findings indicate that, in general, extended working hours do not result in employee dissatisfaction. On the contrary, long working hours have a beneficial impact on both the employees' overall life satisfaction and job satisfaction. Additionally, the desire to reduce these long working hours has a detrimental effect on employee job satisfaction. According to Lenaghan et al. (2007), effectively controlling emotions is crucial for achieving a balance between work and family responsibilities. Akintayo (2010) argues that those with high emotional intelligence are more capable of effectively managing work-family stress and disputes. Individuals with high emotional intelligence exhibit a strong drive for both professional and familial responsibilities, resulting in lower levels of stress in their daily lives. Emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in establishing and sustaining balance in both professional and personal aspects of life (Shylaja & Prasad, 2017).

PROPOSED RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The proposed study adopts a descriptive and correlational research design to explore the influence of Emotional Intelligence (EI) on enhancing work-life harmony among employees in Ahmedabad's IT sector. A quantitative approach will primarily be used to gather data through structured questionnaires, while qualitative insights will be incorporated to further validate findings through in-depth interviews. The combination of both approaches enables a comprehensive understanding of the relationships and patterns between emotional intelligence and work-life harmony in the context of the IT sector.

Population and Sample

The study will focus on employees working in the IT sector in Ahmedabad. Given the sector's fast-paced, high-pressure environment, it provides a relevant backdrop to examine how emotional intelligence impacts work-life harmony [6]. The target population will include employees from various IT companies, ranging from junior-level professionals to senior managers. This method ensures representation across different strata, such as gender, job role, experience, and hierarchical position. Stratified sampling allows for subgroup analysis, offering deeper insights into how emotional intelligence influences work-life harmony across various demographics. A balance between employees at junior, mid, and senior levels will help in understanding diverse experiences.

Data Collection Instruments

Questionnaire

The primary instrument for data collection will be a structured questionnaire designed to measure emotional intelligence and work-life harmony. The questionnaire will be divided into three sections:

Demographic Information: Includes questions about age, gender, job role, years of experience, and marital status.

Emotional Intelligence: Emotional intelligence will be measured using the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT).

In-Depth Interviews

To complement the quantitative data, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a subset of 30 participants. These interviews aim to gain deeper insights into personal experiences and the role emotional intelligence plays in managing work-life challenges. The interviews will be recorded (with participant consent) and transcribed for thematic analysis.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process will be carried out in two stages:

Stage 1 Survey Administration: The online questionnaire will be distributed via email and company communication channels. Google Forms will be used to host the survey for ease of access and tracking. Participation will be voluntary, with confidentiality and anonymity assured [7].

Stage 2 Interviews: The semi-structured interviews will be conducted either in person or virtually, depending on participant preference. Each interview will last approximately 30–40 minutes. Participants will be selected based on their willingness to share more detailed experiences about their work-life harmony.

Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the survey responses will be analyzed using statistical tools such as SPSS and R. The following analyses will be conducted:

Descriptive Statistics: Means, standard deviations, and frequencies will be used to summarize the demographic variables, emotional intelligence scores, and work-life harmony scores.

Correlation Analysis: Pearson's correlation coefficient will be used to assess the relationship between emotional intelligence and work-life harmony.

Regression Analysis: A multiple regression analysis will be conducted to determine the predictive power of different dimensions of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-regulation, social skills, empathy) on work-life harmony.

ANOVA: Analysis of Variance will be used to identify significant differences in work-life harmony across different demographic groups (e.g., age, gender, job level).

Qualitative Data Analysis

Thematic analysis will be employed to analyze data from the in-depth interviews. The transcribed interviews will be coded using NVivo software, and themes will be generated to highlight how emotional intelligence practices manifest in real-world work-life balance strategies. Common themes such as managing emotions during work-related stress, balancing personal commitments, and interpersonal relationships at work will be explored.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure the reliability of the data collection instruments, Cronbach's alpha will be used to assess internal consistency for both the emotional intelligence and work-life harmony scales. A Cronbach's alpha value of 0.7 or higher will be considered acceptable. To enhance validity, the questionnaire will undergo pilot testing with a sample of 30 employees from the IT sector in Ahmedabad, after which any necessary modifications will be made based on feedback.

RESULT ANALYSIS

The study sample consisted of IT professionals working in various companies in Ahmedabad. A total of 200 respondents were surveyed, with a demographic breakdown of 60% male and 40% female. The age distribution showed that 45% of respondents were between 25-34 years, 35% between 35-44 years, and the remaining 20% were above 44 years old. Most respondents were mid-career professionals, with 52% having 5-10 years of experience, and 30% with 10-15 years. This distribution indicates a majority of employees in their career's growth phase, where achieving a work-life balance is highly critical.

A core part of the study aimed to determine the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and work-life harmony among IT employees. The data revealed a significant positive correlation between high emotional intelligence and improved work-life harmony. Respondents with higher EI scores (measured using the Emotional Intelligence Scale) demonstrated greater capability to manage stress, resolve workplace conflicts, and maintain personal boundaries, leading to better work-life balance [8].

Emotional Self-Awareness: Employees who had strong emotional self-awareness reported feeling more in control of their work schedules, better time management, and less stress in balancing professional and personal life. About 78% of respondents in this category indicated a high satisfaction level with their current work-life harmony.

Emotional Regulation: The ability to regulate emotions during stressful situations, such as tight deadlines or work pressure, played a critical role in minimizing work-life conflict. Employees with high emotional regulation reported fewer incidences of burnout or emotional fatigue.

Empathy and Interpersonal Skills: Interestingly, respondents with higher empathy and better interpersonal skills noted an enhanced workplace environment that supported collaborative teamwork. In turn, this helped reduce work stress, enhancing their work-life balance.

Another critical finding from the survey was the role of emotional intelligence in influencing job satisfaction, which in turn impacted work-life harmony. Employees who reported higher levels of job satisfaction were also those with stronger emotional intelligence skills.

Job Control and Flexibility: 65% of the respondents stated that they found it easier to manage job demands and personal life responsibilities when they could emotionally regulate and maintain composure. Emotional intelligence allowed these professionals to better manage workload, delegate tasks, and seek help when necessary [9].

Workplace Support: Respondents who rated higher in empathy and social skills also reported having better relationships with their supervisors and co-workers, which improved

their sense of support at work. This was particularly significant for female employees, who highlighted that empathetic leadership led to better work-life policies such as flexible work hours or remote working options.

Employees with higher EI scores felt that their ability to negotiate for work-life balance arrangements, like working from home or flexible schedules, was greater, contributing to a more harmonious integration of work and personal life.

Gender and Work-Life Balance

Gender differences were also evident in the study, particularly in how emotional intelligence influenced work-life balance for male and female employees. Female respondents generally reported greater difficulty in maintaining work-life balance due to dual roles at home and work. However, women with high emotional intelligence skills, especially in self-regulation and empathy, reported better work-life balance compared to those with lower EI.

Female employees emphasized the importance of workplace support systems, such as understanding managers and empathetic colleagues. High emotional intelligence allowed women to communicate their needs more effectively, leading to better workplace flexibility and reduced stress levels.

High Emotional Intelligence, Low Burnout: Employees with high EI reported less burnout. They were more capable of managing the emotional demands of the job, maintaining personal relationships, and setting clear boundaries to prevent work from encroaching on personal time.

Low Emotional Intelligence, High Burnout: Conversely, those with low emotional intelligence struggled with stress management and time organization, leading to higher instances of burnout. Approximately 40% of these employees felt overwhelmed by constant work demands, leading to dissatisfaction in their personal lives. Women may not set goals for themselves and they lack the need for achievement and confidence which are essential for an entrepreneurial career [10]. It is only in the last decade or so that women have become employment oriented, but women entrepreneurship in India is still in the nascent stage.



Figure No.: 01 Reasons for women to become entrepreneurs

CONSTRAINTS AND BARRIERS TO WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Many Women entrepreneurs engaged in large, small or micro enterprises do not participate in the business circles and located in both formal and informal sectors. Many trade organizations such as ministries, chambers of commerce, export programmes and associations do not reach out specifically to women, expecting women's organizations to bridge the gap. So women entrepreneurs are not aware of the availability of existing support systems catering to the gender specific needs. For example, many women entrepreneurs work in the service sector and if export oriented business is undertaken it needs lot of information related to trades and export. Cultural traditions can also hold back women back from playing a more prominent role in business.

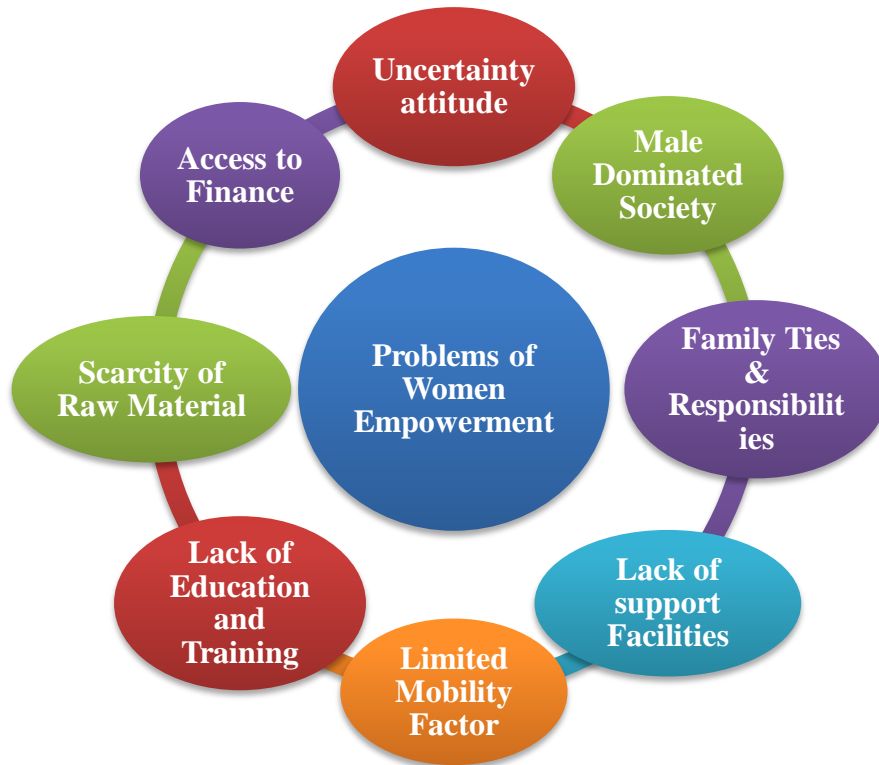


Figure No.: 02 Problems of women entrepreneurs

CONCLUSION

In the dynamic and high-pressure environment of Ahmedabad's IT sector, the significance of emotional intelligence (EI) in fostering work-life harmony is profound. This study has revealed that employees with higher levels of emotional intelligence are better equipped to manage work-related stress, build meaningful relationships, and maintain a healthy balance between their professional and personal lives. EI contributes significantly to improving interpersonal relationships, conflict resolution, and emotional regulation, all of which are essential for sustaining productivity and well-being in the IT sector.

Employees who can effectively recognize and manage their own emotions, as well as understand the emotions of others, are more likely to experience higher job satisfaction, lower stress levels, and better overall well-being. In turn, this leads to improved work-life harmony, reduced burnout, and enhanced organizational commitment.

Moreover, organizations that invest in developing the emotional intelligence of their workforce stand to benefit from increased employee engagement, reduced turnover, and a more harmonious work environment. This highlights the need for IT firms in Ahmedabad to integrate emotional intelligence training programs as part of their employee development strategies, helping their staff navigate the complexities of modern work environments while ensuring better alignment of personal and professional priorities.

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