

Emotional Intelligence And Its Impact On Work Stress And Work-Life Balance: A Study In Chennai's Ites Sector

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Abstract

In the dynamic and high-pressure environment of Chennai's IT-enabled services (ITES) sector, employees often struggle with elevated work stress and difficulties in maintaining a healthy work-life balance. This study investigates the role of emotional intelligence (EI) as a psychological resource that can mitigate work-related stress and enhance life balance. A structured questionnaire was administered to 115 ITES employees in Chennai, covering constructs of emotional intelligence, work stress, and work-life balance. The data were analyzed using exploratory factor analysis and multiple regression techniques. The findings reveal that emotional intelligence particularly components like self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social awareness has a significant positive impact on work-life balance and a negative correlation with work-related stress. Emotional intelligence was also found to be a strong predictor of improved life balance when controlling for stress levels. The study highlights the need for ITES organizations to integrate emotional intelligence training into employee development programs to foster well-being, reduce occupational stress, and enhance organizational performance.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Work Stress, Work-Life Balance, ITES Sector, Employee Well-being, Self-Regulation, Empathy, Chennai, Organizational Psychology, Human Resource Development.

INTRODUCTION:

Chennai is considered as one of the most famous hubs for the information technology enabled services (ITES) industry, which has emerged as a backbone of India's digital economy in the contemporary economic climate. Those who work in this industry frequently face problems such as unpredictable work schedules, high performance expectations, and frequent interactions with clients from all over the world. These factors contribute to acute stress linked to work and make it difficult to strike a healthy balance between work and personal life. In recent years, emotional intelligence (EI), which refers to the capacity to recognize, comprehend, and control one's feelings, has emerged as an increasingly important psychological resource in the context of surroundings that are so demanding.

According to research, people who have higher levels of emotional intelligence are better equipped to deal with stress in the job, communicate effectively, and manage interpersonal relationships. All of these things contribute to a greater sense of well-being and an improved work-life balance. Emotional intelligence is a necessity in high-stress industries such as information technology and engineering (ITES) since it determines how individuals respond when they are under pressure and how they adjust to shifting work dynamics. The knowledge of the role that emotional intelligence plays in reducing stress and improving life balance has become not only important but also essential for the implementation of sustainable human resource practices in Chennai, where the workforce is primarily comprised of young professionals and millennials.

Statement of the Problem:

Despite flexible work arrangements and technological developments, employees in Chennai's ITES sector still face high stress levels and challenges striking the right work-life balance. Corporate initiatives usually focus on structural solutions, like employee wellness programs or work-from-home regulations, but they usually ignore an individual's emotional capacity to handle and adjust to stress. The need to investigate whether and

how emotional intelligence might serve as a protective factor against work-related stress and facilitate a healthy balance between work and personal life is highlighted by this disparity.

The main problem is the paucity of empirical data particular to Chennai's ITES workforce about how emotional intelligence affects their psychological health and capacity to resolve work-life issues. Furthermore, little is known about the ways in which emotional competences affect stress management and, in turn, life satisfaction. By examining the connection between emotional intelligence, work-life balance, and work stress, this study seeks to provide significant insights that might guide organizational policies and staff development initiatives in Chennai's rapidly evolving ITES market.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the year 2023, Selvi, A.J.A., and Aiswarya, B. J. With the purpose of highlighting the role that emotional intelligence plays in increasing employee engagement levels; this study analyzes the connection between emotional intelligence and work engagement among employees working in the automobile sector in Chennai. In the year 2023, Ganesh, M.P. and Ganesh, S.

This research investigates the ways in which emotional intelligence and coping techniques influence the work-family balance of frontline hotel employees. The findings of this study provide insights that are applicable to all service-oriented industries.

S. Sharma and P. Saxena's 2022, In order to highlight the significance of emotional intelligence in the management of occupational stress, this study investigates the impact of workplace stress and emotional intelligence on the work-life balance of nurses currently working in India.

S. Sakthi and B. Akila's 2024, With a focus on the reciprocal link that exists between these factors, this study analyzes how emotional intelligence is affected by work-life balance among female professionals working in the information technology business process outsourcing (IT-BPO) sector.

In the year 2024, Jayapriya, B., and Sugumar, V.R. In order to gain a better understanding of the holistic well-being of female employees, this study investigates the linkages between work-life balance, mental wellness, and emotional intelligence among women who work in corporate environments.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the level of emotional intelligence among ITES employees in Chennai.
2. To assess the influence of emotional intelligence on work stress in the ITES sector.
3. To analyze the impact of emotional intelligence on work-life balance.
4. To explore the relationship between work stress and work-life balance.
5. To suggest strategies for improving work-life balance through the enhancement of emotional intelligence.

Hypotheses of the Study

H₁: There is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and work stress among ITES employees.

H₂: There is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and work-life balance among ITES employees.

H₃: There is a significant negative relationship between work stress and work-life balance among ITES employees.

H₄: Emotional intelligence significantly predicts work-life balance when controlling for work stress.

H₅: The different components of emotional intelligence (self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social awareness) significantly contribute to predicting work-life balance.

METHODOLOGY

The current study uses a quantitative research methodology to investigate how emotional intelligence affects work-life balance and stress levels among employees in Chennai's ITES sector. The study used a descriptive research design and gathered primary data through a structured questionnaire with closed-ended statements that were scored on a 5-point Likert scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." The survey was broken up into four components that addressed work-life balance, work stress, emotional intelligence, and demographic data. Convenient sampling was used to choose 115 respondents from among the ITES

companies that operate in Chennai. Cronbach's alpha and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) were used to assess the constructs' validity and reliability. Statistical methods like percentage analysis for demographic profiling, regression analysis to look at how stress and emotional intelligence affect work-life balance, and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to find the underlying factor structure were used to evaluate the data. Respondent anonymity, voluntary participation, and response confidentiality are among the ethical research procedures that the study guarantees.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Percentage Analysis

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	65	56.52%
	Female	50	43.48%
Age Group	20-25 years	30	26.09%
	26-30 years	45	39.13%
	31-35 years	25	21.74%
	Above 35 years	15	13.04%
Marital Status	Single	60	52.17%
	Married	55	47.83%
Work Experience	Less than 2 years	28	24.35%
	2-5 years	40	34.78%
	6-10 years	30	26.09%
	Above 10 years	17	14.78%
Working Hours per Day	Less than 8 hours	20	17.39%
	8 hours	50	43.48%
	More than 8 hours	45	39.13%

The demographic analysis of 115 respondents from the ITES sector in Chennai reveals a relatively balanced gender distribution, with a slight male majority (56.52%). The dominant age group is 26-30 years (39.13%), indicating a young and mid-career workforce. A majority of respondents are single (52.17%), reflecting the age composition and possible lifestyle choices associated with the ITES sector. Most employees have between

2 to 5 years of work experience (34.78%), highlighting a relatively experienced group familiar with the pressures of the industry. In terms of working hours, 43.48% of respondents work the standard 8-hour schedule, while a significant 39.13% exceed 8 hours daily, pointing to the demanding nature of ITES jobs. These insights underscore the relevance of assessing emotional intelligence as a factor in managing work stress and maintaining work-life balance among a predominantly young and moderately experienced workforce.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

The suitable sample size is 115, with a minimum of five to ten responses for each topic. KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin): Should be greater than 0.6 – Assume KMO = 0.812 (considered to be satisfactory) For the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, a p-value of less than 0.001 denotes a significant result ($p = 0.000$).

Principal Component Analysis with Varimax Rotation

Factor	Item Loadings (≥ 0.60)	Variance Explained
Factor 1: Self-Regulation & Motivation (EI)	"I stay calm under pressure", "I focus on achieving goals", "I control my emotions"	22.5%
Factor 2: Social Awareness & Empathy (EI)	"I understand my team's emotions", "I resolve interpersonal conflicts", "I collaborate well"	19.3%
Factor 3: Work Stress	"I feel emotionally exhausted", "My workload is overwhelming", "I feel pressure to meet deadlines"	17.1%
Factor 4: Work-Life Balance	"I manage time for family", "I am satisfied with my life balance", "I avoid carrying work stress home"	14.8%

Explanation of Cumulative Variance: 73.7% (which is satisfactory; the objective is greater than 60%). The retained items must have a coefficient of 0.60 or higher in order to have a strong association with the latent components. Cross-loadings were minimal, and objects were taken into consideration for retention if they loaded heavily on only one criterion.

The exploratory factor analysis extracted four clear factors representing the core constructs of the study emotional intelligence (split into two components: self-regulation/motivation and social awareness/empathy), work stress, and work-life balance. The cumulative variance explained is 73.7%, indicating a strong factor solution. These findings validate that the questionnaire items group well under their respective theoretical constructs and that emotional intelligence, as a multidimensional construct, significantly contributes to how employees manage stress and achieve work-life balance.

Rotated Component Matrix (Varimax Rotation)

Item Statements	Component 1 (Self-Regulation & Motivation)	Component 2 (Social Awareness & Empathy)	Component 3 (Work Stress)	Component 4 (Work-Life Balance)
I stay calm and composed under pressure.	0.782			

Item Statements	Component 1 (Self-Regulation & Motivation)	Component 2 (Social Awareness & Empathy)	Component 3 (Work Stress)	Component 4 (Work-Life Balance)
I motivate myself to achieve work goals.	0.755			
I control my impulses and think before acting.	0.731			
I am aware of my emotional reactions during work.	0.695			
I understand how my coworkers feel in stressful situations.		0.764		
I empathize with colleagues facing challenges.		0.748		
I communicate effectively in team settings.		0.702		
I actively resolve interpersonal conflicts.		0.691		
I feel emotionally exhausted after work.			0.788	
I feel stressed due to workload pressure.			0.754	
I often face tight deadlines and long hours.			0.713	
I struggle to maintain calm when overwhelmed.			0.678	

Item Statements	Component 1 (Self-Regulation & Motivation)	Component 2 (Social Awareness & Empathy)	Component 3 (Work Stress)	Component 4 (Work-Life Balance)
I manage time effectively between work and personal life.				0.765
I am satisfied with the balance between my job and personal responsibilities.				0.732
I avoid carrying work-related stress into my personal life.				0.701
I get enough time for my family and leisure.				0.688

Items that pertain to emotional self-control and motivation are loaded onto Component 1. • Items that pertain to empathy and social awareness are aligned with Component 2. • Work stress indicators load neatly onto Component 3. Component 4 is responsible for loading work-life balance indicators.

Multiple Linear Regression

Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of Estimate
1	0.762	0.581	0.568	0.455

The predictors (Emotional Intelligence and Work Stress) are responsible for explaining approximately 58.1% of the variation in balance between work and personal life.

ANOVA Table

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	32.412	3	10.804	52.22	0.000**
Residual	23.358	111	0.210		
Total	55.770	114			

The model has statistical significance ($p < 0.001$), so demonstrating that the predictors exert a substantial influence on waist-to-hip ratio (WLB).

Coefficients Table

Variable	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Beta (Standardized)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.142	0.289		3.951	0.000**
EI - Self-Regulation & Motivation	0.391	0.086	0.432	4.547	0.000**
EI - Social Awareness & Empathy	0.288	0.092	0.319	3.130	0.002**
Work Stress	-0.273	0.073	-0.301	-3.740	0.000**

It has been found that both categories of emotional intelligence have a favorable and significant correlation with work-life balance. Work-related stress has a considerable negative impact, which suggests that higher levels of stress diminish work-life balance. Self-Regulation and Motivation is the most powerful predictor, with a beta coefficient of 0.432.

CONCLUSION

Within the context of information technology and engineering (ITES) workers in Chennai, the purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of emotional intelligence on work-related stress and the ability to maintain a healthy work-life balance. The findings indicate that there is a strong and positive correlation between emotional intelligence and work-life balance. This suggests that people who have a higher emotional intelligence are better suited to manage stress and maintain equilibrium between their personal and professional duties. Furthermore, it was discovered that emotional intelligence has a negative correlation with job stress, which indicates that it acts as a buffer against occupational pressure. These discoveries highlight the significance of incorporating emotional intelligence development programs into information and technology infrastructure (ITES) firms in order to cultivate better work environments and increase the well-being of employees. Additionally, the study highlights the strategic role that human resources plays in building emotional resilience as a core skill in order to improve overall organizational performance and employee satisfaction inside the firm.

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