

Review Article

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**Emotional Intelligence emerging as a significant tool for Female Information Technology professionals in managing role conflict and enhancing quality of Work-Life and Happiness**

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**ABSTRACT**

Emotional Intelligence is considered to be a very powerful tool to an employee to manage relationships and achieve success at work. The study explored its relationship to some of the important psychosocial variables in order to assess what exactly makes this component so useful indeed. The psychosocial variables included in the study were Quality of Work Life, Work-Family Role Conflict and Perceived Happiness of female IT professionals. The variables were assessed through the following Questionnaires – (i) A measure of Emotional Intelligence, developed by Schutte et al., 1997, (ii) Quality of Life Scale, developed by Dasgupta and Pal, (iii) Work-family Conflict Scale and Family-work Conflict Scale developed by Netemeyer et al., 1996 and (iv) Subjective Happiness scale developed by Lyubomirsky and Leeper, 1997. Purposive sampling was used in the study and correlational design was followed. The sample consisted of 30 female IT professionals of Kolkata. The findings were encouraging as Emotional Intelligence had been found to bear significant relationships with all other variables. It was positively correlated with Quality of Work-Life and Happiness, indicating that it contributes toward achieving higher Quality of Work Life and greater Perceived Happiness and was negatively correlated with both the domains of Work-family Role Conflict, indicating that Emotional Intelligence tunes down the perception of Role conflict and thereby reduces the stress produced by it. The implication of the study is far-reaching, as it suggests an important tool to HR professionals to deal with some of the very important variables like stress, discontentment, Quality of Work Life and Work-family Life Balance. It may be assumed with fair amount of certainty that developing Individual and Group Emotional Intelligence among employees through training would prove to be much less expensive than dealing with all these problems in isolation.

**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence, Work-family Role Conflict, Quality of Work-Life, Perceived Happiness, Female Information Technology professionals.

**1. Introduction**

The present decade has seen an ongoing interest of professionals and academicians toward the value of emotions at workplace. Tall claims have been made on one hand, while, on the other hand, the validity of such claims have been severely questioned. In this context, the present researcher wished to identify the relationship of Emotional Intelligence (EI) with factors that

may be indicative of an over-all adjustment and satisfaction level of an individual. The factors that were identified as relevant for the purpose, and therefore, included in the present study were *Work-Family Role Conflict*, which includes Work-Interfering-Family (WIF) and Family-Interfering-Work (FIW) Conflict, *Quality of Work Life (QWL)* and *Happiness*.

## **2. Theoretical Background of the Study**

Research on IT employees reveals that the top performers characterised by high Emotional Intelligence Competence (EIC) are 1,272% more productive than average employees (Martin, 1990; Jones, 1986, 1991, Spencer, L.M., 2001). Moreover, it is empirically found that, while IQ accounts for only about 10% of the variance in-job performance, the biggest difference is made by abilities such as being able to handle frustrations, identifying others' emotions, control own emotions and get along with other people (Rosenthal, 1977; Snarey and Vaillant, 1985; Sternberg, 1996). Daniel Goleman's analysis of 181 jobs in 121 organizations found that emotional competencies were the best differentiator between star performers and typical performers. Hay McBer's study of hundreds of executives at 15 global organizations, including *Pepsi*, *IBM* and *Volvo* found that two thirds of the competencies deemed essential to success were emotional competencies. While these studies illuminate how employees benefit from EI, there are other studies that focus on how lack of EI may ruin one's career. For example, the Egan Zehnder concluded that managers who derailed all had high levels of expertise and intelligence but many were arrogant and had a disdain for team work, i.e., they lacked EI. In an attempt to discover the factors that are related to EI and may account for such dramatic findings, the researcher focussed on studies revealing the relationship that EI bear with Work-Family Role Conflict, a burning issue characterising today's organizational scenario, and especially characterising the lives of IT professionals. It was found that people with high EI manage Work-Family conflict better and mediate the negative influence that work-family Conflict cast upon one's happiness (Jordan et al., 2002; Carmeli, 2003; Lenaghan et al. 2007). There are also findings suggesting a more direct relationship between EI and Happiness, with the former leading to a greater experience of the latter (Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1995; Saarni, 1999; Salovey and Salovey et al., 1995; Schutte et al., 2002). Since, EI is comprised of qualities such as sustained motivation, optimism, negotiating conflicts, self-discipline, leadership, innovation etc, it may be further hypothesized that EI would enhance the QWL of the professionals.

### **2.1 Research Goals**

Studying the role of Emotional Intelligence in managing Role Conflict and enhancing Quality of Work Life and happiness among female IT Professionals

#### **2.1.1 General Goal**

- Studying the contribution of Emotional Intelligence in the total effectiveness of female employees

#### **2.1.2 Specific Goals**

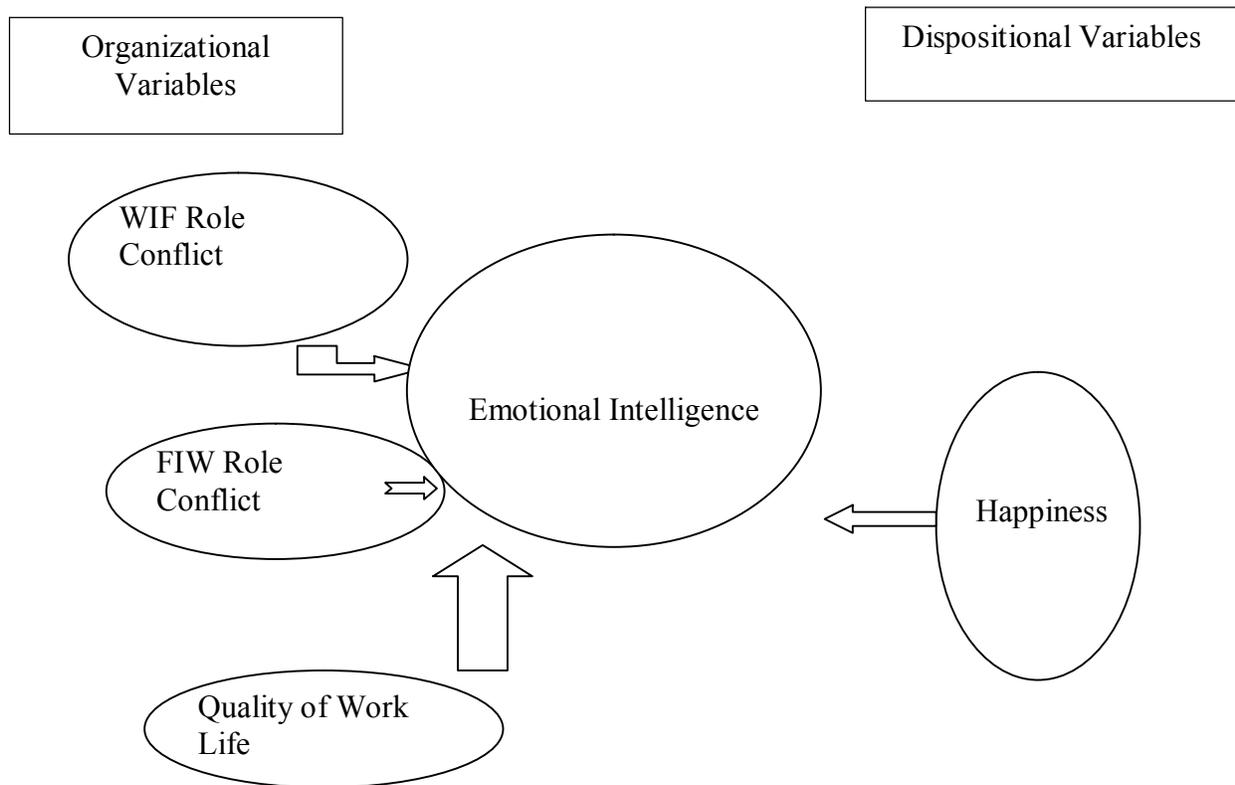
- Study of the relation between Emotional Intelligence and Work-Interfering-Family Role Conflict among female IT professionals of Kolkata.

- Study of the relation between Emotional Intelligence and Family-Interfering-Work Role Conflict among female IT professionals of Kolkata.
- Study of the relation between Emotional Intelligence and Quality of Work Life among female IT professionals of Kolkata.
- Study of the relation between Emotional Intelligence and Happiness among female IT professionals of Kolkata.

### 3. Research Hypotheses

- First Hypothesis: Higher the EI, lesser will be the WIF conflict among female IT employees.
- Second Hypothesis: Higher the EI, lesser will be the FIW conflict among female IT employees.
- Third Hypothesis: Higher the EI, better will be the QWL of the female IT employees.
- Fourth Hypothesis: Higher the EI, greater will be the perceived level of Happiness among female IT employees.

#### 3.1 Research Model



**Figure 1:** Layout showing the research model

### 3.2 Research Variables

Hypothesis	Independent Variable	Dependant Variable
First	Emotional Intelligence	WIF Role Conflict
Second	Emotional Intelligence	FIW Role Conflict
Third	Emotional Intelligence	Quality of Work Life
Fourth	Emotional Intelligence	Happiness

### 3.3 Research Variables' definitions

**Emotional Intelligence:** Emotional Intelligence is the ability to become aware of even subtle changes in one's and others' emotional tones and to control them, to keep calm in the midst of pressure, to initiate and maintain healthy relationships with others, and to maintain an optimistic outlook towards life.

**Work-Family Role Conflict:** Work-Family Role Conflict is an unpleasant experience whereby the person concerned feels that the demands placed on him/her by the two very important domain of his/her life- Work & Family- are incompatible with each other to such an extent that a proper balance between them can not be maintained (Following Hammer & Thompson, 2003). Work-family Role Conflict is comprised of two domains: Work-Interfering-Family (WIF) Role Conflict and Family-Interfering-Work (FIW) Role Conflict (Kelloway, 1999). WIF Role Conflict occurs when work-related activities spill over or interfere with home responsibilities and Family-Interfering-Work (FIW) conflict arises when family role responsibilities spill over or impede work activities. The two types were separately considered in the study.

**Quality of Work Life:** QWL may be defined as the degree to which a work can meet the needs of an individual employee and create a sense of satisfaction within him/her. The concept is so broad that it covers the whole continuum of needs ranging from fair remuneration or physical work-environment to autonomy at workplace or social relevance of the work.

**Happiness:** Happiness may be defined as the experience of frequent positive affect, infrequent negative affect and an overall sense of satisfaction with life as a whole (following Myers & Diener, 1995).

**IT professionals** was especially the point of focus in the present study, since, researches reveal that this industry is experiencing tremendous challenges in meeting the employment market demand and a good HR solution is much needed in this domain to help the employees be more productive and happy in life (Rethinam & Ismail, 2008). The shift duties and frequent onsite requirements take a toll on the IT professionals, especially so for the female professionals, since, females are deemed to take the larger share of home responsibilities, even today.

### 3.4 Sampling

The sampling was purposive in nature. The study included 30 female IT professionals based on Kolkata. Female professionals with two years of experience in IT industry and at least one year of marriage were included in the study. The age of employees ranged between 25-35 years, and they all belonged to middle or upper-middle strata of the society. The minimum educational level was set to be graduation.

### 3.5 Data Collection

Data were collected through administering the questionnaires mentioned below under “Tools”. The purpose of the study was partially explained, though the term ‘Emotional Intelligence’ was deliberately avoided, to minimize test anxiety. Only those participants who had expressed willingness to participate were included in the sample. Each of the participants was interviewed by the researcher in order to acquire a deeper insight into the problem area.

### 3.6 Tools:

- A measure of Emotional Intelligence, developed by Schutte et al., 1997.
- Quality of Life Scale, developed by Dasgupta and Pal, 2001.
- Work-Family Conflict Scale developed by Netemeyer et al., 1996.
- Family-Work Conflict Scale developed by Netemeyer et al., 1996 and
- Subjective Happiness scale developed by Lyubomirsky and Leeper, 1997

### 3.7 Data Analysis by descriptive statistics usage

**Table 1:** Pierson Correlation Coefficient Test Results for the Relation between Emotional Intelligence & WIF Role Conflict

#### *First Hypothesis*

WIF Role Conflict		Emotional Intelligence
	Correlation	-0.46
	Significance level	0.05
	Number	30

**Table 2:** Pierson Correlation Coefficient Test Results for the Relation between Emotional Intelligence & FIW Role Conflict

#### *Second Hypothesis*

FIW Role Conflict		Emotional Intelligence
	Correlation Percentage	-0.46
	Significance level	0.05
	Number	30

**Table 3:** Pierson Correlation Coefficient Test Results for the Relation between Emotional Intelligence & Quality of Work Life

***Third Hypothesis***

Quality of Work Life		Emotional Intelligence
	Correlation Percentage	0.54
	Significance level	0.01
	Number	30

**Table 4:** Pierson Correlation Coefficient Test Results for the Relation between Emotional Intelligence & Happiness

***Fourth Hypothesis***

Happiness		Personal Commitment	Quality
	Correlation Percentage	0.53	
	Significance level	0.01	
	Number	30	

**4. Discussions**

From the table, two general trends may be noted:

- EI bears statistically significant relationship with all the Dependent Variables included in the study
- The directions of the correlations are also in line with that of research hypotheses.

Thus, it may be stated with confidence, that EI does bear a negative relationship with Work-Family Role Conflict and a positive relationship with QWL and Happiness.

The negative relationship with Work-family Role Conflict implies that people with higher level of EI experiences lower level of Role Conflict, and are better at managing their role demands at both fronts. This may be due to the fact that Emotionally Intelligent people are highly motivated and thus, meet their role demands without experiencing much stress. Also, since, they understand and value others' emotions, they tend to make better bonds with people around them, their empathetic nature probably makes the significant others more understanding and empathetic towards them, thus practically lessening the role demands placed upon them.

The positive relationship between EI and QWL implies that people with higher EI enjoys better QWL as compared to those with lower EI. This may be because; high EI ensures high motivation, high inspiration level, leadership quality, high negotiation skills and a pleasant personality. Thus, individuals with high EI find themselves in a better position at the workplace irrespective of their position in organizational ladder. Moreover they tend to develop more “friends” than “foes” in the workplace. This makes them derive more satisfaction from

workplace. Moreover their optimistic approach towards life goes a long way to enhance their QWL.

The positive relationship between EI and happiness indicates that higher the level of EI in an individual, greater his/her level of Happiness. This may be considered to be the most impactful finding of the present study, since, the sole objective of mankind is to be happy, in whatever way they choose to achieve it. Research reveals that Happiness is dispositional in nature, rather than being circumstantial (Myers & Diener, 1995). All of the four inner traits that have consistently been found to mark happy people are actually components of EI: Self-esteem, a sense of control, optimism and extraversion. (Myers and Diener, 1995). Moreover, building social bonds have been found to be especially contributively towards long-term Happiness (Burt, 1986; Cohen, 1988; House, Landis, & Umberson, 1988; Pavot et al., 1990), and the ability to build such bond is a key component of EI. Thus, much of the qualities possessed by Emotionally Intelligent persons directly help them to achieve greater happiness in life, reducing the impact of negative emotions and stress.

#### **4.1 Limitation of the Study**

While appreciating the overwhelming support obtained from the empirical findings for all of the research hypotheses, the present author would also like to make a cautious note of all those factors that were restrictive in nature.

- The sample size was small in the study, hampering the capacity for generalization.
- The study included only female professionals, excluding their male counterparts, without any scientific justification.
- There are several dimensions inherent in Quality of Work Life, and it would have been better to treat each of them separately in this study, but that was not feasible in such a short-term study.

#### **5. Conclusion**

In conclusion, it may be stated that the study provides an encouraging finding, as, female IT professionals have been found to be benefiting from their level of EI in achieving a work-family life balance and experiencing a higher Quality of Work Life and experiencing an enhanced level of happiness. This has two-fold implication, one, the Management may consider the candidate's level of EI while recruiting employees, and second, EI being a learned attribute, organizations may allocate resources for training programmes aimed at developing EI in employees. This may prove to be a beneficial alternative in the long run.

#### **5.1 Future Work**

Further research may be conducted with larger sample size, including both the gender, and involving employees from different professions and across cultures. An experimental design, involving training on EI and pre-post measure of Dependent variables would provide a stronger base for the claims made.

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