

**SELF-AWARENESS: THE FOUNDATION OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND STRESS
MANAGEMENT: A STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO LIC OF INDIA NORTH BRANCH**

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ABSTRACT

Self awareness is the foundation of personal growth and success and it is the 'keystone' of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence (EQ) is more important than one's intelligence (IQ) in attaining success in their lives and careers. As individuals our success and the success of the profession today depend on our ability to read other people's signals and react appropriately to them. Therefore, each one of us must develop the emotional intelligence skills which required to better understand, empathize and negotiate with other people — particularly as the economy has become more global nowadays. Otherwise, success will elude us in our lives and careers. Stress is unavoidable on the part of the employees as the systems, procedures; techniques are getting complicated with the use of advance technology. The highly competitive insurance sector has levied varied role requirements on employees resulting in stress. Such a study may provide guidelines for the HR professionals in the career management of the insurance sector. Analysis was conducted and the findings of this study can have a great implication for insurance sectors.

Keyword: *Emotional Intelligence, Health, Organization, Self-Awareness, Stress.*

INTRODUCTION

Emotional Self-Awareness is the ability to recognize and understand one's own emotions. People with this competence are able to identify subtle differences in their emotions and know how their emotions affect their behavior, decisions, and performance. If we are unaware of what is going on inside, we can't influence or change it. But by consistently practicing the skills of emotional self-awareness, we will get great insights about our own world and will be able to change it to our benefit. We will benefit greatly from knowing **"Who, what and why pushes our buttons"**. This strategy will help us to take control of the situations when we are provoked or overpowered by our own anger, frustration, or fear. **Become "Emotionally Smart"** by paying attention to the signals of our self-awareness.

STRESS

Stress is a necessary, innate/natural part of our survival instinct and physiological makeup; it motivates us to take action to keep us safe or to keep reaching just that bit further to achieve our dreams and aspirations; it's the 'fuel' that propels us. Employee stress is a growing concern for organizations today. Stress can be defined as a lively circumstance in which people face constraints, opportunities, or loss of something they desire and for which the consequence is both unpredictable as well as crucial. Stress is the response of people to the unreasonable/excessive pressure or demands placed on them.

SELF AWARENESS MEETS EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Emotional intelligence consists of four basic capabilities, or domains. These are: Self Awareness, Self Regulation, Social Awareness and Relationship Management. According to Daniel Goleman the competencies associated with self-awareness are:

- **Emotional self awareness:** recognizing our emotions and the impact they have on our life.
- **Accurate self-assessment:** identifying our strengths and limitations.
- **Self-confidence:** know our worth and capabilities.

DEVELOPING SELF-AWARENESS

Awareness of self and emotions can be developed. Spend some time recognizing areas we need to develop and intentionally making an effort to develop or strengthen that aspect of our self so that we can become more aware of our strengths and areas for development. We could

- Rate us: What do we think our strengths are?

- Ask others for feedback: Be open to hearing what others think of us.
- Complete a formal assessment test. These could include a personality test, discovering our values, our skills, our abilities.

IMPROVING SELF-AWARENESS INCREASES OUR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

One of the most popular EQ assessment tools, the EI Profile, which measures emotional intelligence competencies in four quadrants: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management. As a reminder, here's the short version of what the EI Profile assessment tool measures:

1. **Self-awareness:** The ability to recognize one's emotions, internal states, preferences, resources and intuition
2. **Self-Management:** The ability to manage one's emotions and impulses, and adapt to changing circumstances
3. **Social Awareness:** The ability to sense, understand and react to others' feelings, needs and concerns while comprehending social networks
4. **Relationship Management:** The ability to inspire, influence and develop others while managing conflict.

SELF-AWARENESS WHERE EQ BEGINS

Enhancing our self-awareness begins the journey to achieving higher emotional intelligence, or increasing our EQ. We simply must be aware of our own emotions before we can manage them effectively. Self-awareness of our emotions also helps us to empathize, so we can better understand what others are experiencing. People with high emotional self-awareness know how they feel at any given time, can identify the source of those feelings and can recognize how the feelings manifest in physical symptoms, such as sweaty palms and headaches.

DEVELOP EMOTIONAL SELF-AWARENESS

Emotional Self-Awareness isn't something that we can achieve at once. Every moment is an opportunity to be self-aware or not. It is a continual endeavor, a conscious choice to be self-aware. The good news is that the more we practice it, the easier it becomes. One way to become more self-aware is to check in with our sensory experience.

We know that Emotional Self-Awareness can begin with sensations in our body or with our thoughts. When emotions are activated, they are accompanied by bodily changes. There may be changes in breathing rate, in muscle tension, in heart rate. Emotional Self-Awareness in part is the awareness of one's own body. The very first and real foundation for Emotional Self-Awareness is interoception. It's knowledge of what is going on in the body. Tuning in more to the body's signals is one practical way of developing self-awareness.

THE ROLE OF SELF-AWARENESS IN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Self-awareness is a simple phrase for a complicated set of information. It refers to an awareness of ourselves on many different levels: our body and our physical reactions; our emotions, preferences, and intentions; our goals and values; and our knowledge about how we come across to others. The more self-awareness, we have, the more easily we can adjust our responses to others, and more mutually satisfying our interactions and transactions. Tuning in to ourselves and becoming more aware of what we are experiencing can improve Emotional Intelligence.

OBJECTIVES

- To analyze the causes and the level of stress among the employees of LIC of India with special reference to Salem North branch.
- To ascertain the importance of emotional self awareness to manage stress.
- To examine the effectiveness of Emotional self awareness among employees and offer suitable suggestions based on the findings of the study.

METHODOLOGY

Both primary and secondary data were used. The primary data have been collected from 50 employees located at various insurance branches of LIC of India in Salem North branch. The analysis was carried out by adopting convenience sampling through a questionnaire. Based on the response analysis interpretations were made using Percentage Analysis tool and Chi-square Test.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table-1.1: Job specific factors that are causing the employee stress out

Factors	No. of Respondents	%
Job insecurity	10	20
Unsocial hours	17	34
Meeting deadlines	15	30
Poor supervision	8	16
Total	50	100

Source: Primary

Table 1.1 shows that out of 50 respondents, the majority of 34 per cent of employees is stressed out by unsocial hours.

Table-1.2: Consequences of stress

Sufferings	No. of Respondents	%
Hypertension	16	32
Headache	14	28
Chest pain/ palpitations	9	18
Insomnia	10	20
Hair loss	1	2
Total	50	100

Source: Primary

From table 1.2, it is clear that, a maximum of 32 employees suffered from hypertension.

Table-1.3: Conflict between work and home life

Statements	No. of Respondents	%
Often take work home to complete it	23	46
Not able to give enough time to family	12	24
I can't access my leave as per my family need	15	30
Total	50	100

Source: Primary

From the table 1.3 it is inferred that 46 per cent of employees often take work home to complete it.

Table-1.4: Utilizing EQ testing and training in a work environment

Purposes	No. of Respondents	%
Better able to handle the challenges in the work environment	13	26
To overcome the personal challenges	14	28
Overcome depression and social anxiety	23	46
Total	50	100

Source: Primary

Table 1.4 shows that a maximum of 46 per cent have utilized EQ for overcoming depression and social anxiety.

Chi square test is used to test the significance of association between the demographic variables and the job specific factors that are causing the employee to be stressed out. The demographic variables are age, gender, education qualification and residential area. The factors include job insecurity, unsocial hours, meeting deadlines, poor supervision.

In view of the above following null hypothesis has been formulated and tested by using Chi-square test.

Null Hypothesis (Ho):

There is no significant association between the demographic variables and job specific factors that causes stress.

Table-1.5: Job specific factors that are causing the employee to be stressed out: Chi-square Test

Demographic Variables	p	Sig.
Gender	0.000	Highly significant
Educational Qualification	0.006	Highly significant
Age	0.017	Significant
Residential Area	0.033	Significant

Source: Computed

As the p value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, it is concluded that there is a highly significant association between the demographic variables of the respondents and the job specific factors.

Null Hypothesis (Ho):

There is no significant association between the gender, educational qualification, age, residential area and consequences of stress.

Table-1.6: Emotional Awareness

Statements	p	Sig.
On the whole, I get along well with others at work	0.016	Significant
No conflict within my team	0.007	Highly significant
I am able to share my feelings with my boss/ colleagues	0.014	Significant
I am confident to succeed in the job	0.044	Significant

Source: Computed

As the p value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, it is concluded that there is a highly significant association between the gender, educational qualification, age, residential area of the respondents and emotional awareness.

SUGGESTIONS

- Interestingly, self-awareness comes not only from careful observation of ourselves, but from those around us. In fact, significant others in our lives can provide valuable data to increase our self-awareness. Many organizations make use of this idea through some form of 360-degree feedback in which customers, peers, and subordinates, as well as supervisors, provide feedback on how we are doing. Such feedback will increase our awareness by reducing blind spots.
- When an organization invests in emotional intelligence workshops, they help build the emotional quotient of their employees, improve the mental health, which lead a far from stress and that improves job performance.

CONCLUSION

Today, millions of employees in India suffer from some degree of mental illness. A recent study conducted by the professional counseling company shows that “around one in two employees in corporate India display signs of anxiety and depression”. What compounds this issue is that many organizations in the country look after only the physical safety of their employees and take few, non-committed or zero measures to protect the mental health of their workforce. The stigma around mental health prevents many employees from even opting for external psychological treatment or worse, acknowledging they have a mental health issue. This situation can lead to low productivity and poor work quality and eventually even impact the overall business and revenue of an organization. That’s why the World Health Organization’s 2017 theme ‘Mental Health in the Workplace’ for World Mental Health Day on October 10 must be upheld by all organizations. It is high time the Indian corporate fraternity tries to prevent this issue instead of waiting to cure it.

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