

# EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, WORK/FAMILY CONFLICT, AND WORK VALUES AMONG CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES: BASIS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

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## ABSTRACT

This research paper discusses the profile of emotional intelligence, work/family conflict, and work values among 437 purposively selected customer service representatives (CSRs) from the Middle East, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, India, and the Philippines. Moreover, the study leads to a set of organizational change development programs to assist organizations coping with their diversity concerns. Descriptive, comparative-correlational methods were employed. This paper also aims to find the correlates of emotional intelligence such as work/family conflict, and work values. The researchers utilized several instruments, the Demographic Profile Sheet, Emotional Competence Inventory, Work/Family Conflict Scale, and Work Values Inventory. The general findings reveal that there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and work/family conflict, particularly in the areas of self-management, social awareness and relationship management. There is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence (particularly in the clusters of self-management, social awareness and relationship management) and work values (specifically in the areas of management, achievement, supervisory relations, way of life, and independence). The organizational development support programs with emphasis on diversity management have been recommended to set future directions for call center organizations involved in the study.

**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence, Work/Family Conflict, Customer Service Representatives, Work Values, Organizational Support

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15549/jeecar.v2i1.86>

## INTRODUCTION

Industry analyst Ben Teehankee said that the policy among customer service firms to keep changing their employees to keep them fresh and enthusiastic is a strategy which is not consistent with giving good jobs to employees and developing people for higher job responsibilities (Pena, 2008). In this light, the researchers have conceptualized this research paper by examining the role of emotional intelligence on work/family

conflict and work values.

An important feature of call center work is the presentation of emotions that are specified by the organization and embodied in the rules of employment (Morris & Feldman, as cited in Deery, Iversion, and Walsh, 2010). In relation to this, Holman, as cited in Wegge, Vogt & Wecking (2007), found that since agents are supposed to be always friendly to customers, and because their performance is usually controlled by the

organization (e.g. by making test calls), deviations from this norm will easily be detected. Hence, strong requirements to hide or downplay negative emotions and to fake positive emotions during work are present in call center work (Wegge, Vogt, and Wecking, 2007).

Aritzeta, Swailes and Senior (2007) explained that Emotional Intelligence, a multi-dimensional construct that links emotion and cognition with the aim of improving human interactions in their activities, has been linked to improved workplace behavior (as cited in Allam, 2011).

Emotional intelligence (EI) has been claimed to correctly predict a variety of successful behaviors of a human being in the workplace (Goleman, 1998; Sergio, Dungca, & Ormita, 2015; Sergio & Marcano, 2013). Some researchers suggested that EI is necessary for recruitment policies and decisions in various organizational activities. Various studies show a correlation between high levels of EI and high levels of performance (Sergio, 2011; Sergio, et al., 2015; Sergio & Marcano, 2013). People with high EI more grounded, more resilient and are more satisfied at work. Indeed individuals with higher than average EI display strong self-awareness and high levels of interpersonal skills. They display empathy, are adaptable and able to cope with pressure, and generally experience less stress and better health and well-being than low scorers (Sergio, 2011; Sergio et al., 2015; Sergio & Marcano, 2013).

Another variable of the study is the work/family conflict (WFC) that has been defined by Greenhaus and Beutell as a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect (as cited in Hargis, Kotrba, Zhdanova & Baltes, 2011). WFC generally refers to the extent to which work- and family-related responsibilities interfere with each other (Grzywacz, Arcury, Marín, Carillo, Burke, Coates, & Quandt, 2007).

With regard to work values, Root and Wooten (2008) pointed out that various reasons such as societal pressures, changing values, and demographic trends in the workplace are leading fathers to take a more active role in parenting. A father is no longer just a breadwinner and disciplinarian, but is also involved in child-rearing activities. Fathers also provide more emotional support to their children, engaging in hands-on interactions, and participating in such

daily care responsibilities as diaper-changing and grooming. According to Yeung (2001), a large proportion of their time with their children is spent on leisure activities (as cited in Root & Wooten, 2008). As fathers spend more time on parenting, the more they encounter WFC. In addition, their participation in parenting activities may be seriously challenged by rigid work schedules, particularly non-traditional ones (Presser, 2003, as cited in Root & Wooten, 2008).

With the background information above, the researchers also aimed to establish baseline literature on the interplay of emotional intelligence on WFC and work values.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Emotional Intelligence vis-à-vis Work-Family Conflict

The importance of emotions in workplace has been established by many scholars. Emmerling and Goleman (2003) investigated the roots of emotional intelligence in organizational environment in classical management theory and practice to understand the abilities of human being. Over three decades of psychological assessment intervention and research has justified the importance of taking social and emotional competencies into consideration when attempting to predict occupational effectiveness. Goleman (1998) concluded that interventions targeted at EI-based competencies are effective and tend to enhance such desired outcomes as self-awareness and rapport.

In terms of the association between WFC and EI, Dasgupta and Mukherjee (2011) indicated that EI bears a negative relationship with WFC, specifying that EI tones down the perception of the role conflict and thereby reduces the stress produced by it.

Similarly, Lenaghan, Buda and Eisner (2007) found that EI is negatively correlated with WFC, and WFC is negatively correlated with well-being. However, since EI is positively correlated with well-being, it acts as a protector variable in **the impact of WFC on one's well-being**. Those with high EI and low WFC reported the highest well-being while those with low EI and high WFC reported the lowest well-being. Those with low EI and low WFC yielded similar well-being as those with high EI and high WFC. Therefore, possessing high EI is important when facing WFC.

To further strengthen these findings, Panorama and Jdaitawi (2011) claimed that EI can aid in stress management, particularly with WFC because EI can be considered as an individual's personal resource when faced with stress. "Since WFC is a form of stress, it follows that EI may act as a mechanism to decrease WFC induced stress" (p. 273).

With the foregoing review of related literature, the alternative hypothesis below is formulated.

*H1:* There is a significant relationship between the emotional intelligence and work-family conflict of the CSRs.

### Emotional Intelligence vis-à-vis Work Values

Goleman (1998) has set out a theoretical framework of emotional intelligence (EI) that reflects how an individual's potential for mastering the skills of Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, and Relationship Management translates into on-the-job success. This model is based on EI competencies that have been identified in internal research at hundreds of corporations, educational institutions, and organizations as distinguishing outstanding performers. Focusing on EI as a theory of performance, the model examines at the physiological evidence underlying EI theory, reviews a number of studies of the drivers of workplace performance, and looks at the factors that distinguish the best individuals from the average ones.

On the another hand, the theory and research on work values by Roe and Ester (1999) proceed largely from the premise that it is derived from people's basic value systems which help them navigate through the multiple spheres of their lives. According to Rokeach's (1973) definition, a value is an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence. Furthermore, Rokeach defined beliefs about preferable modes of conduct 'instrumental values' and beliefs about preferable end-states 'terminal values'. In a value system, individuals rank-order their instrumental and terminal values along a continuum of importance. Work values on the other hand are more specific than general life values as they apply to a specific life domain. As such, according to Šverko (1989), work values influence the importance of work in

the life of the individual.

The theories previously cited point to the internal (emotional) state driven outwardly as one deals with people in any organization. The manifestation of behavior (e.g., internal and external values system) is treated as a separate circumstance. Linking the two theoretical constructs would establish baseline literature on emotional intelligence and work values. In this light, the researchers postulated the alternative hypothesis:

*H2:* There is a significant relationship between the emotional intelligence and work values of the CSRs.

### METHODOLOGY

A total of 437 purposively selected CSRs in Dubai and the Philippines representing different nationalities namely Middle East (Egyptian, Emirati, Syrian, Palestinian, Jordanian, Omani, and Iraqi), Iran, Pakistan, Russia, India and the Philippines were included in this study.

The research instruments used to gather demographic characteristics, emotional competence and work-family conflict data included: the Demographic Profile Sheet, Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI) the Work-Family Conflict (WFC) Scale, and Work Values Inventory. The Demographic Profile Sheet measured items such as age, gender, civil status, work schedule and nationality. The ECI measured 18 competencies (identified by Dr. Daniel Goleman), which were organized into four clusters: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. *Self-Awareness* refers to knowing one's internal states, preferences, resources, and intuitions. This cluster measured the following three competencies: emotional awareness, accurate self-assessment and self-confidence. *Self-Management* refers to managing ones' internal states, impulses, and resources. This cluster measured the following six competencies: emotional self-control, transparency, adaptability, achievement, initiative, optimism. *Social Awareness* refers to how people handle relationships and awareness of others' feelings, needs, and concerns. This cluster measured the following three competencies: empathy, organizational awareness, and service orientation. *Relationship Management* refers to the skill or adeptness at inducing desirable responses in others. This cluster measured the

following six competencies: developing others, inspirational leadership, change catalyst, influence, conflict management, teamwork and collaboration.

On another hand, The Work-Family Conflict Scale, developed by Dawn S. Carlson, K. Michele Kacmar and Larry J. Williams, measured three (3) forms of work-family conflict: *Time Based conflict*, which occurs when time devoted to one role makes it difficult to participate in another role; *Strain Based conflict*, where strain experienced in one role intrudes into and interferes with participation in another role; *Behavioral Based conflict*, where specific behaviors required in one role are incompatible with behavioral expectations in another role. This scale also has two directions: (a) *Work Interference with Family (WIF)* or conflict due to work interfering with family and (b) *Family Interference with Work (FIW)* or conflict due to family interfering with work.

The revised Work Values Inventory developed by Dr. Donald Super measured 15 work values scales—Altruism, Variety, Creativity, Way of Life, Security, Associates, Aesthetic, Prestige, Management, Achievement, Surroundings, Social Relations, Economic Reasons, Intellectual Stimulation, and Independence.

Descriptive statistics were employed to provide **quantitative descriptions of the respondents'** demographic characteristics, such as frequency and percentages distribution and the profile of the respondents in terms of data on emotional competence, work-family conflict, and work values. **To determine respondents' differences**, when grouped according to their demographic

characteristics on these variables, the t-test independent and one-way ANOVA were used **accordingly**. **Pearson's r** was utilized to determine the correlation between emotional intelligence and work-family conflict, as well as the correlation between emotional intelligence and work values.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of this study aims to provide baseline literature on the role of emotional competence on work-family conflict among CSRs.

### The Demographic Profile of the CSRs

CSRs are mostly female (69.8%), single (68%) and with ages ranging from 20 to 29 (78.5%) years old. More than 50% of the respondents represent the United Arab Emirates. Most of the respondents follow real time work schedule (53.8%).

### Correlation between Emotional Competence and Work-Family Conflict

Table 1 illustrates the correlation between emotional competence and work-family conflict. **Self-management or the ability to manage one's** internal states, impulses, and resources has a negligible and negative relationship with WFC, in all its forms and in both of its directions. The result suggests that as CSRs are not able to recognize their emotions and its impact on them. Furthermore, recognizing the strengths and limitations they have and their self-worth, the more they will not be able to handle stress that comes from the need to balance the demands from their family and work.

**Table 1.** Correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Work/Family Conflict

Emotional Competence	WFC					
	Time Based WIF	Time Based FIW	Strain Based WIF	Strain Based FIW	Behavior Based WIF	Behavior Based FIW
Self-awareness	.009	-.022	-.035	-.041	-.035	-.067
	.859	.644	.465	.389	.460	.160
Self-management	-.069	-.121	-.142	-.135	-.083	-.129
	.148	.012	.003	.005	.084	.007
Social awareness	-.065	.123	.075	.005	-.035	-.037
	.175	.010	.117	.910	.467	.445
Rel. Mgt	.016	.024	.099	.058	.034	-.049
	.742	.618	.039	.228	.480	.302
Overall	-.031	.003	.004	-.031	-.034	-.088
	.516	.948	.925	.518	.474	.066

Social Awareness, or how people handle **relationships and awareness of others' feelings** and needs, has a negligible but positive relationship with WFC, particularly with time based FIW. The research indicates that the more a call center worker can show empathy, recognize the emotions of their work group, as well as anticipate, recognize and meet the needs of the customers, the more the worker will be able to experience WFC because of the role of consciousness. This is because all call center work is a form of emotional labor and it is a highly stressful job. Moreover, if CSRs absorb the negative emotions of their co-workers, in addition to experiencing emotional dissonance from their encounters with rude customers, then they become more vulnerable to WFC.

Relationship Management, which concerns the skill or adeptness at inducing desirable responses in others, also possesses a negligible and positive relationship with WFC, particularly with SBWIF. This is because a CSR whose work is stressful in so many ways still needs to show **practice teamwork and concern for others' needs as they** pursue their collective goals, manage change and resolve conflicts. These same elements give them additional strain at work. Thus, a high EI is likely to help deal with WFC. Hence, the alternative hypothesis (e.g., there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and work/family conflict among CSRs) is accepted.

In general, previous studies proved that a negative correlation exists between emotional intelligence and work-family conflict. Dasgupta and Mukherjee (2011) and Lenaghan et al. (2007) both found that a negative relationship exist between EI and WFC. Likewise, Lenaghan et al., as well as Panorama and Jdaitawi (2011), discovered that EI can moderate WFC since EI can be considered as a personal resource against stressful situations and WFC is a form of stress.

### **Correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Work Values**

Table 2 displays the correlation between emotional competence and work values. The first emotional intelligence cluster, which is Self-Awareness has a negative relationship with all areas of work values. This means that the CSRs are not able to recognize their emotions and their impact on them. This follows that with the strengths and limitations they have and their self-worth, the more they will not be able to value their work in all its dimensions.

The second emotional intelligence cluster is Self-Management. This cluster has a significant relationship with some areas of work values such as Management, Achievement, Supervisory Relations, Way of Life, Independence, and Altruism. The result implies that the more that the CSRs are in control of their emotions, the better they can perform on their jobs and the more efficient they can function as a supervisor or manager in the workplace. Moreover, as an implication, CSRs have to manage their emotions because of the nature of their stressful work. They have to control their temper when encountering irate callers and this may result in emotional dissonance.

The third emotional intelligence cluster is Social Awareness. There is significant relationship with work values, specifically with Achievement, Supervisory Relations, Way of Life, Security, Aesthetics, and Independence. This result showcases that the more call center workers can show empathy, recognize the emotions of their work group, as well as anticipate, recognize and meet the needs of the customers, the more they will be able to value work through leadership without restraint.

The fourth emotional intelligence cluster is Relationship Management. This skill also possesses a significant relationship with work values, particularly with Management, Achievement, and Supervisory Relations. This is **because the CSRs' work is stressful in so many ways** and they need to show teamwork, collaboration, leadership, and to meet targets through collective efforts, manage change, and resolve conflicts. Thus, a high EI is likely to help elevate work values.

It can be gleaned from the data in T 2 that the overall emotional intelligence clusters and dimensions significantly relate to work values such as Management, Achievement, Supervisory Relations, Way of Life, and Independence. These findings prove that the higher the work values pertaining to the interest to lead and exercise autonomy, the more developed EI skills are. This result is supported by Sergio (2015) that the respondents can manage their own emotions and can relate well with people around them, recognizing common rules as essential to their individual roles, and be able to contribute without being directed. Hence, the alternative hypothesis there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and work values

among CSRs is accepted.

The results are supported by Bradzil and Slaski's (2003) divulged that people with high EI are more grounded, more resilient, and more

satisfied at work. In addition, they display empathy, are adaptable, and able to cope with pressure and generally experience less stress and better health and well-being than low scorers.

**Table 2.** Correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Work Values

Work Values		Emotional Intelligence				
		Self Awareness	Self Management	Social Awareness	Relationship Management	ECI Overall
Creativity	<i>r</i>	0.029	0.048	0.089	0.089	0.082
	<i>p</i>	0.544	0.313	0.064	0.064	0.089
Management	<i>r</i>	0.056	0.114	0.057	0.119	0.111
	<i>p</i>	0.244	0.017	0.237	0.013	0.021
Achievement	<i>r</i>	0.05	0.107	0.12	0.125	0.128
	<i>p</i>	0.294	0.025	0.012	0.009	0.007
Surroundings	<i>r</i>	-0.011	-0.044	-0.02	-0.049	-0.04
	<i>p</i>	0.814	0.36	0.672	0.311	0.402
Sup. Relationship	<i>r</i>	0.074	0.127	0.194	0.1	0.155
	<i>p</i>	0.123	0.008	0	0.037	0.001
Way of life	<i>r</i>	0.076	0.113	0.108	0.037	0.103
	<i>p</i>	0.114	0.018	0.024	0.442	0.031
Security	<i>r</i>	0.02	0.072	0.096	0.053	0.075
	<i>p</i>	0.68	0.133	0.044	0.27	0.116
Associates	<i>r</i>	-0.073	-0.012	0	-0.014	-0.033
	<i>p</i>	0.128	0.795	0.993	0.773	0.489
Aesthetics	<i>r</i>	-0.048	0.083	0.122	0.086	0.075
	<i>p</i>	0.315	0.083	0.011	0.072	0.118
Prestige	<i>r</i>	0.01	0.076	0.077	0.059	0.069
	<i>p</i>	0.83	0.111	0.106	0.215	0.148
Independence	<i>r</i>	0.062	0.119	0.103	0.069	0.11
	<i>p</i>	0.195	0.012	0.031	0.148	0.021
Variety	<i>r</i>	0.025	0.126	0.082	0.03	0.08
	<i>p</i>	0.606	0.008	0.088	0.528	0.096
Economic return	<i>r</i>	0	0.018	0.008	0.057	0.027
	<i>p</i>	1	0.713	0.866	0.238	0.568
Altruism	<i>r</i>	0.012	0.108	0.087	0.05	0.079
	<i>p</i>	0.802	0.024	0.069	0.296	0.099
Intellectual stimulation	<i>r</i>	-0.015	0.037	-0.023	-0.016	-0.007
	<i>p</i>	0.752	0.445	0.625	0.736	0.884

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that emotional competence plays an important role in handling the demands of work and family among CSRs.

Based on the findings of the study, it can be

concluded that emotional intelligence plays an important role in specific areas of work values (Management, Achievement, Supervisory Relations, Way of Life, and Independence) among CSRs.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the foregoing findings and conclusions, the recommendations below are presented to help improve the call center organizations towards organizational change.

The researchers believe that the organizations involved in the study are constantly changing practices depending on their response to market conditions, process improvements, among others and these have an impact on the internal **customers' work-family** conflicts. The emotional competencies required in coping with conflicts that involve in work and family remains to be a concern. The major results of the study have led to the three-dimensional programs that can help organizations involved in the study cope with change:

1. *Soft Skills Training Program*. As the results showcase that most CSRs are not able to recognize their emotions and its impact on them, there is a need for Soft Skills Training Program, particularly the Self-Awareness, Self Management, Social Awareness, and Relationship Management Programs. This set of training programs may be a series of seminar-workshops that enhance emotional competence, particularly personal competence. The strategic purpose of such a program is to provide the employees in the organization with the right soft skills, tools, and techniques required for them to perform their role effectively as the changes in multicultural environment of CSRs are being implemented.

2. *Communications Program*. The CSRs from the Middle East, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, India, and the Philippines have something in common: The constant use of communication technology as part of globalization. Any change management efforts will be futile if the organization fails to employ the carefully structured communication mechanisms to inform internal customers about certain development efforts. Knowing that these CSRs interact with external and internal customers, communication is always viewed as a vital component to the overall change management program. Detailed resources are highly recommended for organizations in this study as they manage change. For instance, communications tool kits for managers and team head shall be made available for both physical and online facilities.

3. *Closing the Loop Management Program*. By “closing the loop”, the call center organizations involved in this study actively monitor feedback on the planned changes. The first dimension (Soft Skills Training Program) is the core of implementation whilst the second dimension (Communications Program) supports the entire organizational intervention. The identification of resistance, validated surveys to describe effectiveness during implementation, and ways to combat all sorts barriers encountered are some of the efficient ways to effectuate change in the organizations involved in this study.

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