

Emotional Intelligence in Organisations

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Executive Summary

This report critically examines the importance of emotional intelligence (EI) and mindfulness in contemporary organisations. It considers how employees can use emotional intelligence to improve performance, communication, teamwork, conflict management, leadership, decision-making and well-being. The report discusses three major approaches to emotional

intelligence: Goleman's Emotional Intelligence framework, Mayer and Salovey's Ability Model, and Bar-On's Emotional-Social Intelligence Model.

The report argues that emotional intelligence is valuable because modern workplaces require employees to manage emotions, communicate with different people, deal with pressure and resolve disagreements constructively. However, emotional intelligence should not be treated as a replacement for technical knowledge or professional competence. Instead, it should complement these skills.

Mindfulness is also considered because it can help employees become more aware of their thoughts, feelings and reactions. Evidence suggests that workplace mindfulness can reduce stress and improve well-being, although its effects on performance are more mixed.

Therefore, organisations should use mindfulness as part of a wider employee development and well-being strategy rather than viewing it as a complete solution to workplace problems.

The second part examines the management of Generation X, Generation Y (Millennials) and Generation Z. Although these groups are often described as having different values and expectations, academic research warns against assuming that people behave differently simply because they belong to a particular generation. Age, career stage, personality, education, culture and life experience can also influence workplace behaviour.

The report concludes that emotionally intelligent and mindful leadership can support inclusion, psychological safety and employee development across different age groups. Organisations should therefore focus on individual needs while creating fair policies, flexible communication methods and opportunities for employees to learn from one another.

1. Introduction

Contemporary organisations operate in environments characterised by change, technological development, increased diversity and pressure to achieve high performance. Employees are expected not only to have technical knowledge but also to communicate effectively, work with others, manage disagreements and adapt to change. These demands have increased interest in emotional intelligence and mindfulness as important workplace capabilities.

Emotional intelligence refers broadly to the ability to understand and manage emotions and to use emotional information effectively when interacting with other people. The concept became particularly influential in organisations through the work of Goleman, although the earlier work of Mayer and Salovey established emotional intelligence as an area of psychological research (Mayer, Salovey and Caruso, 2004).

Mindfulness involves paying attention to present experiences in an open and non-judgemental way. In the workplace, mindfulness can help employees pause before reacting to difficult situations. This can be particularly useful during conflict, stressful meetings and challenging leadership situations.

This report analyses how emotional intelligence and mindfulness can support organisational performance and employee well-being. It also considers the challenges of managing a workforce containing Generation X, Millennials and Generation Z.

2. Task 1: Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace

2.1 Understanding Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence can be understood in different ways. This is important because there is no single universally accepted model. The three models considered in this report demonstrate different approaches.

Mayer and Salovey's Ability Model views emotional intelligence as a form of ability. It focuses on the individual's capacity to perceive emotions, use emotions to support thinking, understand emotions and manage emotions (Mayer, Salovey and Caruso, 2004). This model is important because it treats emotional intelligence as a psychological ability rather than simply a collection of desirable personality characteristics.

Goleman's model is more closely connected to workplace behaviour. His framework identifies self-awareness, self-management, motivation, empathy and social skills as important elements of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998). His work argues that technical ability and intelligence alone are not enough for effective leadership.

Bar-On's Emotional-Social Intelligence Model is broader. It includes areas such as intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, adaptability, stress management and general mood (Bar-On, 2006). The model therefore considers how individuals deal with themselves, other people and difficult situations.

These models are useful but should not be treated as identical. The Ability Model concentrates more strongly on emotional information processing, while Goleman and Bar-On include a wider range of behavioural and personal competencies. This difference is important when organisations design EI training because measuring someone's ability to understand emotions is not exactly the same as measuring their workplace behaviour.

2.2 Self-Awareness and Workplace Performance

Self-awareness means recognising one's own emotions, strengths, weaknesses, attitudes and behavioural patterns. An emotionally intelligent employee can identify when they are becoming frustrated, anxious or defensive.

For example, an employee who receives critical feedback may initially feel angry. Without self-awareness, they may respond aggressively or become withdrawn. With greater self-awareness, they can recognise the emotional reaction and consider whether the feedback contains useful information.

Self-awareness can therefore improve performance because employees are more able to recognise how their emotional state affects their behaviour. It can also improve leadership. A manager who understands their own communication style is more likely to recognise when their behaviour may be intimidating or unclear.

However, self-awareness does not automatically produce good behaviour. An individual may understand that they are impatient but still behave impatiently. Therefore, self-awareness needs to be combined with self-management.

23 Self-Management and Emotional Regulation

Self-management involves controlling emotional reactions and responding appropriately to workplace situations. It does not mean suppressing emotions. Instead, it means recognising emotions and choosing an appropriate response.

For example, during a disagreement, a manager may feel personally criticised. An immediate emotional response could make the conflict worse. A more effective response would be to pause, listen carefully and respond to the actual issue.

Mindfulness can support this process. A short breathing exercise or moment of reflection can create space between an emotional trigger and a behavioural response. Research has found positive relationships between mindfulness, emotional intelligence and emotional regulation. Mindfulness has also been associated with lower emotional exhaustion.

However, organisations should be careful not to suggest that mindfulness places responsibility for stress entirely on employees. Excessive workloads, poor management, bullying, job insecurity and inadequate resources are organisational issues that cannot be solved simply through meditation.

24 Motivation

Goleman's model also identifies motivation as an important element of emotional intelligence. Employees with strong internal motivation are more likely to remain committed when work becomes difficult.

Managers can support motivation by connecting individual work to organisational goals and recognising employee contributions. For example, explaining how a particular task contributes to customer service or organisational improvement can give employees a greater sense of purpose.

Emotional intelligence also helps managers understand that employees are motivated by different factors. One employee may value promotion, while another may value flexibility, professional development or meaningful work.

The critical point is that managers should not assume that one motivational strategy will work for everyone. Employee motivation is influenced by personal circumstances, career stage and organisational conditions as well as emotional factors.

2.5 Empathy and Communication

Empathy involves understanding another person's feelings and perspective. It is particularly important in communication because employees do not only respond to the words used by managers; they also respond to tone, body language and perceived attitudes.

An empathetic manager listens before making assumptions. For example, if an employee's performance has recently declined, the manager could immediately assume that the employee is unmotivated. An emotionally intelligent approach would involve asking questions and listening to the employee's explanation.

Empathy can therefore improve communication and trust. It is particularly useful in diverse workplaces where employees may have different experiences and perspectives.

However, empathy must be balanced with fairness and organisational responsibility. A manager can understand why an employee has missed deadlines without ignoring the consequences for the wider team. Emotional intelligence should therefore support fair decision-making rather than replacing standards.

2.6 Emotional Intelligence and Conflict Management

Conflict is unavoidable in organisations because employees have different interests, priorities and opinions. Emotional intelligence can help employees manage disagreement without allowing conflict to become personal.

The first step is emotional awareness. Employees need to recognise when they are becoming angry or defensive. The second step is self-control. The third is empathy, which allows individuals to understand the other person's position.

A useful approach is to focus on the problem rather than attacking the person. Instead of saying, "You never communicate properly," an employee could say, "I did not receive the information in time, and this affected the project. How can we improve the process?"

This approach encourages problem-solving rather than blame.

Emotionally intelligent conflict management can also contribute to psychological safety. Psychological safety refers to an environment where employees feel able to speak up, ask questions and admit mistakes without fear of humiliation or punishment (Edmondson, 1999).

Nevertheless, psychological safety should not be confused with an environment where there is no accountability. Employees should be encouraged to speak openly while still being responsible for professional standards.

2.7 Emotional Intelligence and Leadership

Emotional intelligence is particularly relevant to leadership because leaders influence the emotional climate of teams. Goleman (1998) argued that emotionally intelligent leadership is strongly associated with effective leadership.

An emotionally intelligent leader listens to employees, manages their own reactions and considers how decisions will affect others. Such leaders can also communicate difficult messages without unnecessarily damaging relationships.

For example, during organisational change, employees may experience uncertainty and fear. A leader who simply provides instructions may fail to address these emotional concerns. An emotionally intelligent leader can acknowledge uncertainty, explain the reasons for change and provide opportunities for employees to ask questions.

This can increase trust and reduce resistance.

However, EI should not be presented as the only explanation for leadership success. Leadership effectiveness is also influenced by organisational structures, resources, expertise, strategy and power relationships. An emotionally intelligent manager cannot compensate indefinitely for poor organisational systems.

2.8 Emotional Intelligence and Decision-Making

Emotions can influence decision-making. This does not necessarily mean that emotions are harmful. Emotional information can help people recognise risks, understand relationships and identify ethical concerns.

The Ability Model suggests that emotions can influence thinking and can sometimes support effective reasoning (Mayer, Salovey and Caruso, 2004).

Emotional intelligence allows managers to recognise when emotions are influencing their decisions. For example, a manager may dislike an employee personally and therefore unconsciously judge their work more negatively. Self-awareness can help the manager identify this bias.

However, emotional intelligence should be combined with evidence, policies and objective criteria. Decisions about recruitment, promotion and performance should not be based simply on whether a manager feels comfortable with a particular employee.

2.9 Mindfulness and Employee Well-Being

Mindfulness can complement emotional intelligence by improving attention and awareness. Employees who practise mindfulness may become more aware of emotional reactions and less likely to respond automatically.

Research on workplace mindfulness has generally identified positive relationships with well-being and performance, although the evidence is not equally strong across all outcomes. A systematic review of 153 workplace studies found generally positive outcomes but also noted differences in research quality (Lomas et al., 2017).

A later systematic review and meta-analysis of 99 studies found that mindfulness programmes improved task performance compared with passive controls, but the evidence was less convincing when mindfulness was compared with other active interventions. The authors also reported low confidence in the overall evidence (Vainre et al., 2025).

This suggests that organisations should use mindfulness carefully. It can be offered through short reflective exercises, wellbeing programmes, manager training and opportunities for employees to take appropriate breaks. However, mindfulness should not be used to hide organisational problems such as excessive workloads or poor leadership.

3. Task 2: Managing a Multigenerational Workforce

3.1 Understanding Generational Diversity

Many organisations now contain employees at different stages of working life. Generation X is commonly associated with people born approximately from the mid-1960s to around 1980, Generation Y or Millennials with people born approximately from the early 1980s to the mid-1990s, and Generation Z with people born from approximately the late 1990s onwards.

These categories can be useful for discussing broad social and technological experiences. However, managers should not assume that all members of a generation have the same personality, values or communication preferences.

Research has raised serious concerns about using generational labels as a management tool. Parry and Urwin (2011) found that evidence for differences in work values between generations is mixed. Rudolph et al. (2021) also argue that many commonly held beliefs about generations are stereotypes rather than strong scientific findings.

Therefore, the best approach is to recognise possible differences while treating employees as individuals.

3.2 Generation X

Generation X employees are often described as having experienced the transition from traditional workplaces to digital workplaces. Many have considerable professional experience and may value independence, competence and flexibility.

They can bring organisational knowledge, experience and practical judgement. However, it would be inaccurate to assume that every Generation X employee prefers traditional communication or is less comfortable with technology.

Managers can support Generation X employees through autonomy, meaningful responsibilities, opportunities to use their experience and access to continuing professional development.

Emotional intelligence is important because managers should avoid making assumptions based on age. Instead, they should ask employees how they prefer to communicate and what support they require.

3.3 Generation Y: Millennials

Millennials entered employment during a period of increasing digital communication, globalisation and changing career expectations. They are often associated with valuing development, feedback, flexibility and meaningful work.

However, research suggests that these characteristics should not automatically be treated as generational facts. Career stage can explain some differences. Younger employees may naturally want more development and feedback because they are still building experience.

Managers should therefore provide regular feedback, mentoring and career development while ensuring that these opportunities are available fairly to employees of all ages.

Millennials can also benefit from reverse mentoring, where younger employees share knowledge about technology or emerging workplace practices while experienced employees provide organisational and professional knowledge.

3.4 Generation Z

Generation Z is the newest of the three groups considered in this report and has entered employment in a highly digital environment. Research suggests that Gen Z may bring expectations connected with technology, communication and workplace flexibility (Schroth, 2019).

Some Gen Z employees may expect frequent feedback and opportunities to learn. They may also be comfortable with digital communication and technology.

However, managers should not assume that all Gen Z employees want constant digital communication. Individual preferences vary.

The best approach is to provide clear expectations, supportive supervision, learning opportunities and multiple communication channels.

3.5 Communication, Motivation and Technology

Generational diversity can create both opportunities and challenges. Employees may have different expectations about email, instant messaging, meetings, telephone communication and face-to-face conversations.

For example, one employee may prefer a detailed email, while another may prefer a short online message or conversation. Such differences can cause misunderstandings if managers assume that their preferred communication method is universally appropriate.

Technology can also create differences in confidence and experience. Younger employees may have greater exposure to some forms of digital technology, while older employees may have stronger organisational knowledge and experience with established systems.

Instead of treating this as a competition, organisations should encourage knowledge sharing.

Generational diversity can therefore become a strength when employees learn from one another. A systematic review by Woodward and colleagues identified communication, technology, work motivation, values, workplace behaviour and leadership as major themes in research on generational diversity. However, the evidence remains inconsistent.

3.6 Using Emotional Intelligence to Create Inclusion

Emotional intelligence can help managers create an inclusive workplace by encouraging curiosity instead of assumptions.

Self-awareness allows managers to recognise their own age-related assumptions. Empathy helps them understand employees' different perspectives. Social skills support communication and relationship building. Self-management prevents managers from reacting negatively when employees have different working styles.

For example, a manager should not automatically interpret an employee's preference for flexible working as a lack of commitment. Equally, an employee who prefers face-to-face communication should not automatically be considered resistant to change.

Managers should establish common expectations while allowing reasonable flexibility in how employees achieve them.

3.7 Mindfulness and Psychological Safety

Mindfulness can also support an inclusive workplace because it encourages managers to listen carefully before responding. This is particularly important when managing disagreements between employees from different backgrounds or age groups.

A mindful manager can pause before making assumptions, listen to different viewpoints and respond calmly. This behaviour can support psychological safety.

Psychological safety is particularly important for learning because employees are more likely to share concerns, admit mistakes and ask questions when they do not fear negative interpersonal consequences (Edmondson, 1999).

For example, a new Gen Z employee may be reluctant to challenge an experienced manager. An emotionally intelligent and mindful manager can explicitly invite questions and demonstrate that respectful disagreement is acceptable.

4. Implications for Recruitment, Development and Retention

Organisations should avoid recruiting employees based on assumptions about generations. Selection should focus on competence, potential, behaviour, values relevant to the role and evidence of ability.

Emotional intelligence can be assessed through structured interviews, situational judgement exercises and appropriate validated assessment tools. However, organisations should ensure that assessments are reliable and fair.

Employee development should include communication, emotional regulation, conflict management, leadership and mindfulness skills. Managers can be trained to recognise emotional triggers and practise active listening.

Retention can also be improved by creating a workplace where employees feel respected and supported. Different employees may have different preferences regarding flexibility, career progression, learning and recognition. Providing choice where possible can help meet these different needs without creating unfair treatment.

A multigenerational strategy should therefore focus less on "managing generations" and more on managing individual differences within a fair organisational framework.

5. Recommendations

Based on the analysis, the following recommendations are proposed for senior management:

1. Introduce emotional intelligence development for managers. Training should cover self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, communication and conflict management.
2. Integrate mindfulness into wider wellbeing programmes. Short mindfulness activities can be offered voluntarily, but they should not replace action on workload, organisational culture or management problems.
3. Develop psychologically safe teams. Managers should encourage respectful challenge, questions and discussion of mistakes.
4. Avoid generational stereotypes. Recruitment and management decisions should be based on individual evidence rather than assumptions about Generation X, Millennials or Generation Z.
5. Use flexible communication. Organisations should allow appropriate use of face-to-face, email, online meetings and instant communication.
6. Encourage cross-generational mentoring. Experienced employees can share organisational knowledge while younger employees can contribute knowledge of new technologies and emerging practices.
7. Strengthen leadership development. Emotional intelligence should be included alongside technical, strategic and operational leadership skills.
8. Evaluate outcomes. Organisations should measure employee engagement, absence, turnover, conflict levels, psychological safety and performance to determine whether EI and mindfulness interventions are producing meaningful improvements.

6. Conclusion

Emotional intelligence and mindfulness have an important role in contemporary organisations because workplace performance depends on more than technical competence. Employees must communicate effectively, manage emotions, resolve conflict and work with people who have different perspectives.

The three emotional intelligence models considered in this report provide different but complementary perspectives. Mayer and Salovey's Ability Model focuses on emotional information processing, Goleman's framework focuses strongly on workplace competencies, and Bar-On's model provides a wider emotional and social perspective.

Emotional intelligence can improve communication, leadership, conflict management and decision-making. Mindfulness can strengthen awareness and emotional regulation and may support employee well-being. Nevertheless, neither concept should be treated as a simple solution to organisational problems. Strong organisational systems, fair management, appropriate workloads and effective policies remain essential.

The analysis of generations also shows that managers should be careful with stereotypes. Although Generation X, Millennials and Generation Z have grown up during different social and technological periods, there is insufficient evidence to assume that all members of each group have the same workplace expectations.

The most effective approach is therefore inclusive leadership based on individual needs, fair treatment and open communication. Emotional intelligence and mindfulness can help leaders create these conditions by encouraging self-awareness, empathy, calm communication and psychologically safe relationships.

For the organisation, investment in these capabilities can support employee development, leadership effectiveness, collaboration and well-being. Most importantly, these practices should form part of a wider organisational strategy rather than being treated as isolated training programmes.

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