

BA (Hons) Leadership and Management Skills for the Workplace

Developing Emotional Intelligence Skills

Component 2 – Individual written report

Muhammad Assama Sajid

1714489

Mindfulness and Emotional Intelligence in Contemporary Organisations

Introduction

Emotional intelligence and mindfulness have become increasingly important in modern organisations because workplaces are no longer only judged by technical performance or productivity. Organisations also need employees and leaders who can communicate well, manage pressure, respond to conflict constructively and create an environment where people feel respected and psychologically safe. In the scenario, the improvement in team morale, communication and conflict resolution suggests that emotional intelligence and mindfulness were not just personal qualities, but practical leadership tools that influenced the wider department.

Emotional intelligence, often referred to as EI, is generally understood as the ability to recognise, understand, manage and use emotions effectively in ourselves and in our relationships with others. Early academic work by Salovey and Mayer described EI as a set of emotional abilities linked to the appraisal, expression and regulation of emotion (Salovey and Mayer, 1990). Goleman later developed this idea in a workplace context, arguing that emotional competencies such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills are important for effective leadership and performance (Goleman, 1998). Mindfulness is closely connected because it involves paying attention to the present moment in a non-judgemental way, which can help individuals pause before reacting and respond more thoughtfully under pressure (Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

This report critically analyses the role of emotional intelligence and mindfulness in organisations. Task 1 focuses on how employees can apply the core components of EI to improve workplace performance, collaboration and well-being. Task 2 considers how EI and mindfulness can help managers recruit, manage and retain a multigenerational workforce, with specific reference to Generation X, Millennials and Generation Z.

Task 1: Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace

Emotional intelligence can improve performance in the workplace because it affects how employees manage themselves and how they interact with others. In many organisations, employees are expected to work under pressure, meet deadlines, manage customer or stakeholder expectations and collaborate across teams. In these situations, technical skills alone are not enough. A person may be highly skilled but still damage team performance if they react defensively, avoid difficult conversations or fail to understand how their behaviour affects others. This is why EI is useful: it helps employees turn emotional awareness into better workplace behaviour.

Goleman's emotional intelligence framework is useful because it breaks EI into five practical areas: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills (Goleman, 1998). Self-awareness means recognising one's own emotions, strengths, weaknesses and triggers. In the workplace, this is important because employees who understand their emotional state

are less likely to allow stress or frustration to control their behaviour. For example, an employee who recognises that they are becoming defensive during feedback can pause, listen and ask questions instead of reacting negatively. This can improve learning and performance because feedback becomes a development opportunity rather than a personal attack.

Self-regulation is also important because it involves managing emotional responses in a professional way. Workplace challenges often involve frustration, disagreement or uncertainty. Employees with strong self-regulation are better able to stay calm and make balanced decisions. This supports well-being because they are less likely to become overwhelmed by pressure. It also supports collaboration because emotionally controlled responses reduce the chance of conflict becoming personal. For example, during a team discussion, an employee may disagree with a colleague's idea but can still respond respectfully by saying, "I can see your point, but I think there may be another option." This type of response keeps communication constructive.

Mayer and Salovey's Ability Model offers a more cognitive understanding of emotional intelligence. Their model includes four branches: perceiving emotions, using emotions to support thinking, understanding emotions and managing emotions (Mayer and Salovey, 1997). This model is useful because it presents EI as a set of mental abilities rather than just personality traits. For example, perceiving emotions helps employees notice when a colleague is stressed or disengaged. Understanding emotions helps them interpret why this might be happening, such as workload pressure or lack of clarity. Managing emotions then allows the employee or manager to respond appropriately. This model is valuable in organisational settings because it links emotion with reasoning and decision-making.

However, the Ability Model can be criticised for being more difficult to apply directly in everyday workplace training. While it is academically strong, some employees may find Goleman's framework easier to understand because the competencies sound more practical. On the other hand, Goleman's model has sometimes been criticised for being broad and mixing emotional intelligence with wider leadership qualities such as motivation and social competence. This means organisations should avoid treating EI as a simple solution to every workplace problem. EI is valuable, but it should be used alongside clear processes, fair management and proper training.

Bar-On's Emotional-Social Intelligence Model adds another useful perspective because it includes emotional and social functioning, such as stress tolerance, interpersonal relationships, adaptability and general mood (Bar-On, 2006). This model is particularly relevant to employee well-being because it recognises that emotional intelligence is not only about how people perform tasks, but also how they cope with pressure and maintain healthy relationships. In a modern workplace, stress tolerance and adaptability are especially important because employees often deal with changing technology, hybrid working, shifting priorities and increased workloads.

Emotional intelligence contributes strongly to effective communication. Communication is not only about what is said, but how it is said and how it is received. Employees with higher EI are more likely to listen actively, notice tone and body language, and adapt their message

depending on the situation. For example, a manager giving feedback to a new employee may need to be more supportive and explanatory, whereas an experienced employee may prefer direct and specific feedback. This does not mean avoiding difficult conversations. Instead, EI allows difficult messages to be delivered with respect and clarity. This improves trust and reduces misunderstandings.

EI is also important for conflict management. Conflict is normal in organisations because employees may have different priorities, personalities and working styles. Without emotional intelligence, conflict can quickly become defensive or personal. With EI, employees can separate the issue from the person. For example, if two colleagues disagree about workload distribution, an emotionally intelligent response would involve listening to both views, acknowledging the pressure each person feels and finding a fair solution. This links to mindfulness because a mindful employee is more likely to pause before reacting and consider the wider impact of their words. Mindfulness can reduce automatic emotional reactions and create space for more thoughtful responses (Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

Leadership is another area where EI is particularly important. Goleman argues that emotional intelligence is a key factor in effective leadership because leaders influence the emotional climate of their teams (Goleman, 1998). A leader who remains calm, fair and approachable can help create a positive working environment. This is especially important in times of pressure or change. For example, if a team is facing a difficult deadline, a leader with low EI may create fear or blame. A leader with high EI is more likely to acknowledge the pressure, clarify priorities and motivate the team. This supports performance because employees are more likely to stay engaged when they feel respected and supported.

EI also supports psychological safety. Psychological safety refers to a workplace environment where employees feel able to speak up, ask questions, admit mistakes and share ideas without fear of embarrassment or punishment (Edmondson, 1999). Emotional intelligence helps create this environment because it encourages leaders to respond with empathy rather than judgement. For example, if an employee admits they are struggling with a task, an emotionally intelligent manager would explore the issue and offer support instead of criticising them. This can improve learning and innovation because employees are more willing to be honest and contribute ideas.

Decision-making can also be improved through emotional intelligence. Traditionally, organisations may view good decision-making as purely rational. However, emotions influence judgement, risk perception and behaviour. EI does not mean making decisions based only on feelings. It means recognising emotional factors and managing them so they do not distort judgement. For example, a manager may feel frustrated with an employee's mistake, but EI allows the manager to avoid making a rushed disciplinary decision and instead investigate the cause. This may reveal a training gap, unclear instruction or workload issue. In this way, EI supports fairer and more evidence-based decisions.

Mindfulness strengthens emotional intelligence because it improves attention and self-regulation. In the workplace, mindfulness can be applied through simple practices such as pausing before meetings, breathing exercises, reflective journaling, active listening and taking short breaks before responding to stressful emails. These practices help employees

become more aware of their emotions and less reactive. Research has linked mindfulness with improved emotional regulation and well-being, which can support better work engagement and resilience (Good et al., 2016).

Despite these benefits, EI and mindfulness should be applied carefully. There is a risk that organisations may use mindfulness as a way of placing responsibility for stress entirely on employees, rather than addressing poor workload planning, unfair targets or weak management. Mindfulness should not be used to make employees tolerate unreasonable pressure. Similarly, EI should not be used to expect employees to hide genuine concerns or always remain positive. A critical approach recognises that EI is most effective when supported by ethical leadership, realistic workloads and an organisational culture that values employee voice.

Overall, emotional intelligence helps employees improve performance, collaboration and well-being by strengthening self-awareness, emotional control, empathy and communication. Mindfulness supports this by helping individuals pause, reflect and respond more constructively. Together, they can improve conflict management, leadership capability, decision-making and psychological safety. However, they should be part of a wider organisational strategy rather than treated as a quick fix.

Task 2: Managing a Multigenerational Workforce

Modern organisations often include employees from different generations, including Generation X, Generation Y or Millennials, and Generation Z. Although individuals should never be reduced to stereotypes, generational research can help managers understand broad differences in expectations, communication styles and workplace values. These differences can affect recruitment, management and retention. Emotional intelligence and mindfulness are useful because they help managers understand people as individuals while also being aware of wider generational patterns.

Generation X is usually associated with people born between the mid-1960s and early 1980s. In the workplace, they are often described as independent, practical and experienced. Many Generation X employees value autonomy, job security, clear expectations and work-life balance. They may also prefer direct communication and may not need constant reassurance from managers. However, it would be too simple to say that all Generation X employees resist change or technology. Many have adapted through major workplace changes, including digital transformation, remote working and organisational restructuring. Their experience can be valuable in mentoring younger employees and providing stability.

Millennials, also known as Generation Y, are usually associated with people born between the early 1980s and mid-to-late 1990s. They are often described as valuing development, feedback, flexibility and meaningful work. Millennials entered the workforce during a time of rapid technological growth and economic uncertainty, which may have shaped their expectations around career progression and work-life balance. They may prefer collaborative working and regular communication from managers. However, managers

should avoid assuming that Millennials are less loyal. In many cases, they may remain committed when they feel that the organisation offers growth, fairness and purpose.

Generation Z is usually associated with people born from the late 1990s onwards. Many Gen Z employees have grown up with digital technology and may be highly comfortable with online communication, social media and fast access to information. They may value flexibility, inclusion, mental health support and authentic leadership. In recruitment, Gen Z candidates may pay close attention to organisational values, diversity and development opportunities. However, some may have less experience of traditional workplace norms, particularly if their early careers were affected by remote learning or hybrid working. This means they may benefit from clear guidance, supportive onboarding and psychologically safe spaces to ask questions.

Generational differences can affect organisational effectiveness in several ways. Communication style is one example. Some Generation X employees may prefer concise emails, phone calls or direct meetings. Millennials may prefer regular feedback and collaborative platforms. Gen Z may be comfortable with instant messaging, digital tools and visual communication. If managers do not understand these differences, misunderstandings can occur. For example, a Gen Z employee may see quick messages as efficient, while an older colleague may see them as too informal. Emotional intelligence helps managers notice these differences and set clear communication norms.

Motivation can also vary across generations. Generation X employees may be motivated by autonomy, trust and recognition of expertise. Millennials may be motivated by development, progression and purpose. Gen Z may be motivated by inclusion, flexibility, feedback and well-being. This does not mean that each generation only cares about one thing, but it shows that a single management style may not work for everyone. An emotionally intelligent manager adapts their approach by understanding what matters to each employee. For example, one employee may value independence, while another may need more regular check-ins to feel confident.

Technology is another important factor. Younger employees may adapt quickly to new platforms, while some older employees may prefer more structured training. However, it is important not to assume that age automatically determines technological ability. Many experienced employees are highly skilled with technology, while some younger employees may still need support with workplace systems. Mindfulness can help managers avoid judgement and assumptions. Instead of reacting with impatience, a mindful manager can ask what support is needed and create a learning culture where employees help each other.

Generational differences can also create conflict. For example, younger employees may want faster progression or more flexibility, while older employees may feel that experience is being undervalued. Similarly, older employees may prefer formal communication, while younger employees may prefer informal and fast communication. These differences can lead to frustration if they are not discussed openly. Emotional intelligence helps managers manage this by encouraging empathy and perspective-taking. Rather than labelling one group as difficult, managers can help employees understand why others may work differently.

Recruitment strategies should also consider generational expectations. For Generation X, organisations may emphasise stability, autonomy, leadership opportunities and respect for experience. For Millennials, they may highlight career development, learning, flexibility and organisational purpose. For Gen Z, they may focus on inclusion, mental health support, ethical values, digital working and clear progression pathways. However, recruitment should remain fair and avoid age-based assumptions. The aim is not to create separate systems for each generation, but to show that the organisation understands diverse needs.

Managing a multigenerational workforce requires inclusive leadership. Inclusive leadership means creating an environment where employees feel valued, respected and able to contribute. EI supports inclusive leadership because it develops empathy, self-awareness and social awareness. For example, a manager may notice that a younger employee is quiet in meetings and invite them to contribute in a supportive way. At the same time, the manager may ensure that experienced employees do not feel ignored during change initiatives. This balance is important because inclusion should not only focus on one group.

Mindfulness also supports inclusion because it helps managers slow down their reactions and become more aware of bias. In a busy workplace, managers may make quick assumptions based on age, communication style or confidence. Mindfulness encourages managers to observe without immediate judgement. For example, instead of assuming that an older employee is resistant to change, a mindful manager might ask whether the employee has concerns about training, workload or the purpose of the change. This can lead to better conversations and more effective change management.

Retention is another key issue. Employees from different generations may leave organisations if they feel unsupported, misunderstood or unable to progress. EI can improve retention by helping managers build stronger relationships with employees. Regular check-ins, constructive feedback, recognition and empathy can make employees feel valued. For Gen Z and Millennials, this may include clear development plans and well-being support. For Generation X, it may include autonomy, respect for experience and opportunities to contribute to strategic decisions. A mindful and emotionally intelligent culture can therefore support engagement across generations.

There are also challenges in applying generational theory. One criticism is that it can create stereotypes and ignore individual differences. Not every Gen Z employee wants constant feedback, and not every Generation X employee prefers independence. Factors such as personality, culture, job role, caring responsibilities and career stage may be just as important as generation. Therefore, managers should use generational knowledge as a guide, not as a fixed rule. EI is useful here because it encourages managers to understand the person in front of them rather than rely on assumptions.

In conclusion, managing a multigenerational workforce requires emotional intelligence, mindfulness and flexible leadership. Generation X, Millennials and Generation Z may have different expectations around communication, motivation, technology and career development, but all employees want respect, fairness and meaningful support. EI helps managers communicate better, manage conflict and understand different perspectives. Mindfulness supports this by reducing judgement, improving self-awareness and helping

leaders respond thoughtfully. When used together, EI and mindfulness can create a more inclusive, productive and psychologically safe workplace.

Overall Conclusion

Emotional intelligence and mindfulness are valuable in contemporary organisations because they improve how employees and leaders manage emotions, relationships and pressure. EI supports performance through self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation and social skills. It improves communication, conflict management, leadership and decision-making. Mindfulness supports EI by helping individuals pause, reflect and respond rather than react automatically.

In a multigenerational workforce, EI and mindfulness help managers avoid stereotypes and create inclusive working environments. Different generations may have different expectations around communication, technology, motivation and development, but emotionally intelligent managers can adapt their leadership style while still treating employees fairly. For senior management, the key recommendation is to embed EI and mindfulness into leadership development, recruitment, onboarding, feedback training and well-being strategies. This would help build a workplace culture that is more emotionally aware, psychologically safe and prepared for future organisational challenges.

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