

# Emotional Intelligence Across Career Stages: A Study of Interpersonal Skills and Workplace Performance

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**Abstract:** In modern corporate settings, emotional intelligence (EI) has become a crucial skill affecting interpersonal effectiveness and professional performance. Technical proficiency is still crucial, but employees' capacity to identify, control, and react positively to emotions has a big impact on how they interact with coworkers and perform. This study looks at how emotional intelligence develops and shows up at various levels of professional experience, as well as how it helps people improve their interpersonal abilities. The study uses a mixed-methods approach, gathering primary data from 76 employees via a structured questionnaire. Employees with less than five years of experience (52 respondents) and those with more than five years of experience (24 respondents) were the two groups into which the respondents were divided. Initial emotional reactions, situational emotional intelligence, present emotional intelligence, and self-perceived emotional intelligence were all evaluated in the survey. To facilitate comparison analysis, qualitative replies were methodically transformed into quantitative scores using a predetermined scoring structure. The results show that emotional intelligence does not grow with experience in a linear fashion. While seasoned workers show emotional stability along with less situational flexibility, individuals in the early phases of their careers show more emotional adaptability, stronger situational emotional intelligence, and greater self-perceived emotional confidence. The findings show that learning orientation, exposure to the workplace, job demands, and ongoing reflection—rather than experience alone—all have an impact on the dynamic development of emotional intelligence. In order to maintain interpersonal effectiveness and job success, the study underscores the necessity of experience-specific emotional intelligence development interventions and stresses that emotional intelligence needs constant reinforcement throughout all career stages.

**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence, Interpersonal Skills, Workplace Performance, Situational Emotional Intelligence, Career Stages.

## 1. Introduction

In today's dynamic and collaborative organizational environments, employee performance is no longer determined solely by technical competence or job-specific expertise. Increasingly, organizations recognize that Emotional Intelligence (EI) the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and effectively use emotions plays a critical role in shaping workplace behavior, relationships, and overall performance

outcomes. As workplaces become more diverse, team-oriented, and pressure-driven, the capacity of employees to manage emotions and interact constructively with others has emerged as a vital determinant of organizational success.

Closely linked to emotional intelligence are Interpersonal Skills, which encompass communication, empathy, conflict resolution, collaboration, and relationship management. Strong interpersonal skills enable employees to build trust, handle workplace challenges calmly, and foster positive professional relationships. Conversely, deficits in these skills can lead to misunderstandings, stress, reduced teamwork, and diminished performance. As a result, understanding how emotional intelligence contributes to the development and enhancement of interpersonal skills has become an important area of research in organizational behavior and human resource management.

This research seeks to explore the relationship between emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills and examine how this relationship influences workplace performance. The study is based on a structured survey conducted among employees with varying levels of professional experience, aiming to capture real-world perceptions of emotional awareness, self-regulation, and interpersonal effectiveness within organizational settings.

The survey data were collected from a total sample of 76 employees, divided into two experience-based groups: employees with more than five years of work experience and those with less than five years of experience. Responses from employees with more than five years of experience (52 respondents) provide insights into how emotional intelligence develops and manifests over time in the workplace, while responses from employees with less than five years of experience (24 respondents) help assess initial levels of emotional intelligence and interpersonal skill development during early career stages

This comparative approach allows the study to examine whether and how interpersonal skills can be strengthened over time through emotional intelligence.

Preliminary observations from the survey responses suggest varying levels of self-perceived emotional control, satisfaction with interpersonal interactions, and awareness of emotional

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responses in workplace situations. Many respondents reported high levels of satisfaction with their emotional handling and interpersonal behavior, while others acknowledged areas for improvement, such as better stress management, emotional regulation, and communication. These patterns indicate that emotional intelligence is not static but can evolve with experience, self-reflection, and organizational exposure.

By focusing on employees' perceptions of their emotional intelligence and interpersonal effectiveness, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how emotional competencies influence workplace relationships and performance. The findings are expected to be valuable for organizations, managers, and human resource professionals seeking to design training programs, leadership development initiatives, and supportive work cultures that enhance emotional intelligence and, in turn, strengthen interpersonal skills and overall organizational performance.

#### *A. Research Objectives and Questions*

##### *1) Objectives of the study*

- To investigate how emotional intelligence can improve employees' interpersonal abilities.
- To assess the emotional intelligence of workers with varying degrees of job experience.
- To examine how emotional intelligence evolves from early to later stages of a career.
- To evaluate how situational emotional intelligence affects performance at work.
- To comprehend how workers of all experience levels view their own emotional intelligence.

##### *2) Questions for Research*

- Does professional experience lead to the development of emotional intelligence?
- What impact does emotional intelligence have on interpersonal skills at work?
- Do individuals with less experience and those with more experience have different situational emotional intelligence?
- At various phases of their careers, how do workers view their own emotional intelligence?

#### *B. Scope of the Study*

The current study's focus is limited to analyzing emotional intelligence and how it might improve employees' interpersonal abilities in work environments. The study focuses on the application of emotional intelligence in interpersonal workplace interactions as a multifaceted construct that includes emotional awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and situational emotional reaction.

In order to better understand how emotional intelligence develops during professional phases, the study compares workers in two experience categories: those with less than five years of work experience and those with more than five years of experience. It is restricted to situational responses and employee self-reported perceptions gathered using a standardized questionnaire. In order to preserve a generalized organizational perspective, the research does not concentrate on

any particular industry, organization, or geographic area.

The results are meant to give managers, employees, and human resource experts useful information for creating programs that enhance interpersonal performance at work and improve emotional intelligence.

#### *C. Need and Significance of the Study*

In the contemporary workplace, organizations operate in environments characterized by rapid change, high performance expectations, diverse workforces, and continuous interpersonal interaction. While technical knowledge and job-specific competencies remain essential, they are no longer sufficient to ensure sustained employee effectiveness or organizational success. This reality underscores the growing need to examine Emotional Intelligence as a critical workplace competency and its role in strengthening Interpersonal Skills that directly influence employee behavior and outcomes.

##### *1) Need for the Study*

One of the primary needs for this study arises from the increasing interpersonal demands placed on employees across all levels of organizations. Employees are expected to collaborate across teams, manage conflicts constructively, communicate effectively with diverse stakeholders, and perform under pressure. In such contexts, the ability to recognize and manage one's own emotions, as well as understand the emotions of others, becomes essential. Despite this, emotional intelligence is often overlooked in formal performance assessments and training frameworks, which tend to prioritize technical or cognitive skills.

The survey findings indicate noticeable variations in employees' self-perceived emotional regulation, stress handling, and satisfaction with interpersonal interactions. While many respondents reported high levels of satisfaction, a significant number also acknowledged challenges such as difficulty managing stress, emotional reactions, or interpersonal approaches in certain situations.

This highlights a clear need to systematically study emotional intelligence as a factor that can explain differences in interpersonal effectiveness among employees.

Another important need for this study lies in understanding emotional intelligence across different experience levels. Employees with less than five years of experience are still in the formative stages of their professional development, while those with more than five years of experience have had greater exposure to workplace dynamics, conflicts, and emotional demands. By examining both groups, the study addresses whether interpersonal skills improve over time through emotional intelligence and whether these competencies can be consciously developed rather than assumed to emerge naturally with experience. This insight is particularly valuable for organizations aiming to invest in early-career training and long-term employee development.

##### *2) Significance of the Study*

The significance of this study is multifaceted, offering value at individual, organizational, and academic levels. At the individual level, the research emphasizes the importance of emotional self-awareness, emotional control, and empathy in

enhancing interpersonal relationships at work. By identifying how emotional intelligence contributes to better communication, calmer responses, and improved relationship management, the study encourages employees to view emotional intelligence as a learnable and improvable skill rather than an inherent trait.

From an organizational perspective, the study holds strong relevance for improving Workplace Performance. Employees with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to collaborate effectively, handle workplace stress, reduce conflicts, and contribute to a positive work environment. The survey responses, which include reflections on satisfaction, stress management, and interpersonal behavior, suggest that emotional intelligence has a direct and indirect impact on performance, engagement, and job satisfaction.

Understanding this relationship enables organizations to design targeted interventions such as emotional intelligence training, leadership development programs, and supportive workplace cultures that enhance overall productivity.

The study is also significant for human resource management and leadership practices. By providing empirical insights into how emotional intelligence supports interpersonal skill development, the research supports the inclusion of emotional competencies in recruitment, performance appraisal, and promotion criteria. Leaders equipped with high emotional intelligence are better positioned to motivate teams, manage conflicts, and foster trust, thereby strengthening organizational cohesion and effectiveness.

Academically, this research contributes to the growing body of literature linking emotional intelligence, interpersonal skills, and workplace performance. By using primary survey data and comparing employees across experience levels, the study adds contextual and practical evidence to theoretical frameworks in organizational behavior. It also opens avenues for future research on emotional intelligence development, longitudinal changes in interpersonal skills, and the effectiveness of emotional intelligence interventions in the workplace.

In summary, the need for this study stems from the evolving demands of modern workplaces and the increasing recognition of emotional intelligence as a key performance driver. Its significance lies in its potential to inform employees, organizations, and researchers about how emotional intelligence enhances interpersonal skills and ultimately contributes to sustainable workplace performance.

#### *D. Concept of Research*

Emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills have emerged as two of the most influential human capabilities in modern organizational life, shaping how employees think, feel, behave, and perform at work. Understanding these concepts in an integrated manner is essential to appreciate their relevance to workplace effectiveness and the rationale behind the present research.

Emotional Intelligence refers to an individual's ability to recognize, understand, manage, and effectively use emotions in oneself and in others. It involves emotional awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social understanding. In

the workplace, emotional intelligence enables employees to remain composed under pressure, respond thoughtfully rather than impulsively, manage stress, and adapt to changing situations. Employees with high emotional intelligence are better equipped to understand their emotional triggers, regulate negative emotions such as anger or anxiety, and maintain a balanced emotional state that supports rational decision-making. Equally important, emotional intelligence allows individuals to perceive and interpret the emotions of colleagues, supervisors, and clients, fostering empathy and emotional sensitivity. This emotional awareness forms the foundation for positive workplace relationships, as it enables employees to respond appropriately to others' needs, concerns, and perspectives.

Building upon emotional intelligence are Interpersonal Skills, which represent the practical application of emotional understanding in social and professional interactions. Interpersonal skills include effective communication, active listening, teamwork, conflict resolution, persuasion, trust-building, and relationship management. While emotional intelligence is largely an internal capability related to emotional awareness and regulation, interpersonal skills are outward-facing behaviors that determine how employees interact with others. Strong interpersonal skills help employees collaborate efficiently, resolve disagreements constructively, and maintain respectful and productive working relationships. In contrast, poor interpersonal skills—often rooted in low emotional awareness or weak emotional regulation—can result in miscommunication, conflict, stress, and reduced team effectiveness.

The connection between emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills becomes especially significant in workplace settings, where employees are constantly engaged in interactions that influence performance outcomes. Emotional intelligence acts as the underlying mechanism that enables interpersonal skills to function effectively. For example, empathy enhances communication, emotional self-control supports conflict management, and emotional awareness improves teamwork and leadership. Without emotional intelligence, interpersonal skills may remain superficial or inconsistent, particularly in high-stress or emotionally charged situations.

This research, titled "The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Enhancing Interpersonal Skills Among Employees: A Workplace Performance Perspective," comes into play at the intersection of these two constructs within organizational environments. The study seeks to understand how emotional intelligence contributes to the development and strengthening of interpersonal skills among employees and how this relationship ultimately impacts workplace performance. By examining employees with different levels of work experience, the research explores whether emotional intelligence evolves over time and whether interpersonal skills can be consciously developed rather than being fixed traits. Survey responses reveal varying degrees of emotional control, satisfaction with interpersonal interactions, and awareness of emotional behavior, indicating that emotional intelligence significantly

shapes how employees perceive and manage workplace relationships.

Overall, this research clarifies that emotional intelligence is the internal emotional capacity that enables effective interpersonal behavior, while interpersonal skills are the external expression of that capacity in workplace interactions. Together, they form a critical foundation for employee effectiveness, collaboration, and performance. By investigating their relationship in a real organizational context, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of how emotional competencies translate into interpersonal effectiveness and contribute to sustainable workplace performance.

## 2. Literature Review

### A. Concept and Evolution of Emotional Intelligence

The concept of Emotional Intelligence has gained significant attention in organizational and psychological research over the past few decades. Early academic discussions framed emotional intelligence as the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and regulate emotions in oneself and others. Subsequent theoretical models expanded this view by identifying key dimensions such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Researchers have consistently emphasized that emotional intelligence complements cognitive intelligence by addressing the emotional and social demands of professional environments.

In organizational contexts, emotional intelligence is widely recognized as a crucial determinant of employee effectiveness. Studies have demonstrated that emotionally intelligent employees are better able to cope with stress, adapt to organizational change, and maintain emotional balance in high-pressure situations. This emotional regulation enables more rational decision-making and reduces the likelihood of conflict escalation, thereby supporting both individual and organizational performance. As workplaces increasingly emphasize collaboration and adaptability, emotional intelligence has emerged as a core competency for sustainable performance.

### B. Emotional Intelligence and Workplace Performance

A substantial body of empirical research has examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and workplace performance. Prior studies consistently report a positive association between emotional intelligence and job performance, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee engagement. Emotionally intelligent individuals tend to display higher motivation, better problem-solving abilities, and greater resilience, all of which contribute to enhanced performance outcomes.

Research has also highlighted emotional intelligence as a predictor of leadership effectiveness. Leaders with high emotional intelligence are more capable of managing team emotions, providing constructive feedback, and fostering a positive work climate. These emotionally intelligent behaviors promote trust and cooperation, which are essential for achieving organizational goals. Furthermore, emotional intelligence has

been linked to reduced burnout and improved psychological well-being, reinforcing its role as a protective factor in demanding work environments.

### C. Interpersonal Skills in the Workplace

Interpersonal Skills refer to the abilities that enable individuals to interact effectively with others in professional settings. These skills include communication, active listening, empathy, teamwork, conflict resolution, and relationship management. Interpersonal skills are critical in workplaces where coordination, collaboration, and social interaction are integral to daily tasks.

Previous research indicates that strong interpersonal skills enhance team cohesion, improve information exchange, and reduce workplace conflict. Employees who demonstrate effective interpersonal skills are more likely to build trust, maintain positive professional relationships, and contribute to a supportive work environment. Conversely, poor interpersonal skills have been associated with misunderstandings, interpersonal tension, and reduced team effectiveness, ultimately affecting organizational productivity.

### D. Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Interpersonal Skills

A growing stream of literature has explored the link between emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills, suggesting that emotional intelligence serves as the underlying foundation for effective interpersonal behavior. Emotional intelligence enables individuals to recognize emotional cues, empathize with others, and regulate emotional responses during interactions. These capabilities directly influence how individuals communicate, collaborate, and manage conflicts.

Empirical studies have shown that employees with higher emotional intelligence exhibit superior interpersonal communication, greater empathy, and more constructive conflict-handling styles. Emotional awareness and self-regulation, in particular, have been identified as key predictors of interpersonal competence. This evidence supports the view that interpersonal skills are not independent traits but behavioral manifestations of emotional intelligence in workplace interactions.

### E. Emotional Intelligence, Interpersonal Skills, and Organizational Outcomes

Several researchers have proposed that interpersonal skills mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational performance. Emotional intelligence influences how employees perceive and manage emotions, while interpersonal skills determine how these emotional capabilities are translated into observable workplace behaviors. Effective interpersonal interactions foster collaboration, reduce conflict, and enhance team performance, thereby strengthening overall organizational outcomes.

Studies conducted in team-based and service-oriented environments have demonstrated that emotionally intelligent employees contribute to higher customer satisfaction, improved teamwork, and stronger organizational commitment. These findings highlight the strategic importance of emotional

intelligence and interpersonal skills as drivers of both individual and collective performance.

#### *F. Development of Emotional Intelligence and Interpersonal Skills*

Recent literature emphasizes that emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills are not fixed attributes but can be developed through training and experience. Research on emotional intelligence interventions indicates that targeted training programs focusing on emotional awareness, empathy, and self-regulation can significantly enhance employees' interpersonal effectiveness. Such developmental approaches have been shown to improve communication quality, conflict resolution abilities, and stress management.

Experience-based learning in the workplace also plays a critical role in the development of emotional intelligence. Employees with greater work experience tend to demonstrate higher emotional maturity, improved interpersonal judgment, and better emotional control. However, scholars note that experience alone may not be sufficient, underscoring the importance of structured emotional intelligence development initiatives.

#### *G. Research Gaps and Relevance to the Present Study*

Despite extensive research on emotional intelligence and workplace performance, several gaps remain. First, limited studies have explicitly examined how emotional intelligence contributes to interpersonal skill development across different levels of work experience. Second, many studies focus on emotional intelligence or interpersonal skills independently, rather than examining their combined influence on workplace performance. Third, there is a need for more empirical research using primary data to capture employees' self-perceptions of emotional intelligence and interpersonal effectiveness in real organizational contexts.

The present study addresses these gaps by examining the role of emotional intelligence in enhancing interpersonal skills among employees from a workplace performance perspective. By comparing employees with varying levels of work experience and analyzing their emotional and interpersonal responses, the study contributes to a more integrated understanding of how emotional intelligence translates into interpersonal competence and organizational effectiveness.

#### *H. Summary*

In summary, existing literature establishes emotional intelligence as a vital psychological construct that significantly influences interpersonal skills and workplace performance. Emotional intelligence enhances employees' ability to manage emotions, interact effectively with others, and adapt to organizational demands. Interpersonal skills act as the behavioral channel through which emotional intelligence impacts performance outcomes. The present research builds on these theoretical and empirical foundations by exploring the dynamic relationship between emotional intelligence, interpersonal skills, and workplace performance in a contemporary organizational setting.

### **3. Research Methodology and Data Analysis**

#### *A. Research Design*

The current study uses a descriptive and analytical research approach to investigate how emotional intelligence can improve employees' interpersonal abilities at various phases of their careers. In order to record both measurable emotional intelligence patterns and emotional impressions in work environments, a mixed-methods technique was employed. A structured questionnaire intended to evaluate many aspects of emotional intelligence, such as emotional awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, conflict management, and situational emotional reaction, was used to gather primary data. The study compares how people at various career phases develop and apply emotional intelligence.

#### *B. Survey Design and Structure*

The present study employed a structured questionnaire-based survey to examine emotional intelligence (EI) development and emotional regulation in workplace settings across different stages of professional experience. To capture variations in emotional awareness, response patterns, and interpersonal handling overtime, the survey was divided into two distinct forms based on years of work experience:

- From A: Employees with less than 5 years of experience
- From B: Employees with more than 5 years of experience

This bifurcation allowed the study to compare early-career emotional responses with those of more experienced professionals, thereby highlighting the evolution of emotional intelligence with workplace exposure.

Both forms contained a combination of:

- Demographic questions
- Scenario-based multiple-choice questions
- Self-assessment Likert-scale statements
- Reflective situational evaluation questions

The survey instrument was designed to assess key components of emotional intelligence, including self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, social awareness, conflict management, and stress handling. While Form A emphasized current emotional responses and early-career experiences, Form B captured retrospective emotional behavior from earlier career stages along with present emotional handling, enabling analysis of emotional intelligence development over time.

The detailed survey instruments used for employees with less than five years of experience (Form A) and those with more than five years of experience (Form B) are provided in Annexure I and Annexure II respectively.

#### *C. Overview of Data Collection and Sample Size*

The study is based on primary data collected from 76 employees across various organizational roles. The respondents were categorized as follows:

- Employees with less than five years of experience: 52 respondents

- Employees with more than five years of experience: 24 respondents

The sample included both managerial and non-managerial employees, allowing emotional intelligence to be examined across hierarchical levels. Participation was voluntary, and responses were collected anonymously to encourage honest self-reflection and minimize response bias.

The questionnaire included scenario-based multiple-choice questions, reflective situational questions, and self-assessment items, all designed to measure key dimensions of emotional intelligence such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and social adaptability.

Although the responses were predominantly qualitative, a carefully defined scoring rubric was applied to convert them into quantitative values, enabling systematic statistical analysis and comparison across experience groups. Each response option was assigned a numerical score based on its alignment with emotionally intelligent behavior, ensuring consistency and minimizing interpretive bias.

The consolidated final EI scoring sheet served as the basis for all subsequent analysis.

#### *D. Mapping Survey Questions to Emotional Intelligence Dimensions*

For analytical clarity, the survey questions were grouped based on the emotional intelligence dimensions they were intended to measure.

- Questions Q3–Q6 assessed Initial Emotional Intelligence, capturing early emotional responses to disagreement, deadlines, feedback, and interpretation of colleagues' behaviour.
- Questions Q7–Q10 measured Current Emotional Intelligence, focusing on present-day emotional regulation, empathy, and interpersonal handling.
- Questions Q11–Q21 assessed Situational Emotional Intelligence, examining emotional responses, decision-making, and performance outcomes in emotionally demanding workplace situations.

The complete wording of all survey questions corresponding to these question numbers is provided in Annexure I and Annexure II.

#### *E. Analytical Framework and Scoring Methodology*

Although the survey included reflective and qualitative elements, a structured scoring framework was applied to convert responses into quantitative values for systematic analysis. Each response option was assigned a numerical score based on its alignment with emotionally intelligent behaviour.

Scores were standardized across both experience groups to ensure comparability. Emotional intelligence was analyzed across four dimensions:

- Initial Emotional Intelligence
- Current Emotional Intelligence
- Emotional Intelligence Growth
- Situational Emotional Intelligence

The detailed scoring logic and conversion framework are provided in Annexure III.

#### *F. Initial Emotional Intelligence Scores (Questions Q3–Q6)*

##### *1) Rationale and Scoring Structure*

The Initial Emotional Intelligence (Initial EI) score was designed to assess respondents' early-career emotional responses, either during the first years of employment (for Part A) or retrospectively during earlier career stages (for Part B).

The Initial EI score was calculated using responses to Questions Q3 to Q6, which examined how participants initially handled:

- Disagreement with ideas
- Tight deadlines and work pressure
- Mistakes and corrective feedback
- Interpretation of colleagues' tone and behavior

Each of these four questions was scored on a five-point scale, where:

- 1 represented emotionally reactive, avoidant, or defensive responses
- 5 represented emotionally aware, reflective, and regulated responses

Thus, for each respondent:

- Minimum possible Initial EI score: 4
- Maximum possible Initial EI score: 20

##### *2) Initial EI Scores – Part A (Less Than 5 Years of Experience)*

For Part A, comprising 52 respondents, the theoretical score range was as follows:

- Minimum possible total score:  
 $52 \times 4 = 208$
- Maximum possible total score:  
 $52 \times 20 = 1040$

After applying the scoring framework to all Part A responses, the observed Initial EI results were:

- Total Initial EI score (Part A): 772
- Average Initial EI score per respondent: 14.85 out of 20

When broken down per question:

- Average score per question: approximately 3.7 out of 5

This indicates that employees with less than five years of experience generally exhibit a moderate level of emotional intelligence during early career stages. While many respondents demonstrated emerging emotional awareness particularly in managing deadlines and professional expectations lower scores were observed in areas related to handling criticism and interpreting others' emotional cues, suggesting heightened emotional sensitivity and uncertainty in initial workplace interactions.

##### *3) Initial EI Scores – Part B (More Than 5 Years of Experience)*

For Part B, consisting of 24 respondents, Initial EI scores were derived from retrospective responses describing emotional behavior earlier in their careers.

The theoretical score range for Part B was:

- Minimum possible total score:  
 $24 \times 4 = 96$
- Maximum possible total score:  
 $24 \times 20 = 480$

The Initial EI scores for Part B reflect how experienced employees perceived their earlier emotional responses, allowing comparison with current EI levels in later analysis. As expected, the retrospective nature of these responses often revealed lower emotional regulation and confidence during early career stages, reinforcing the developmental nature of emotional intelligence over time.

#### 4) *Interpretation of Initial EI Findings Across Experience Groups*

The Initial EI analysis highlights three key observations:

1. Early-career emotional intelligence is moderate but inconsistent, particularly among less experienced employees.
2. Both groups indicate greater emotional reactivity and uncertainty during initial professional years, especially in response to criticism and interpersonal tension.
3. The results support the premise that emotional intelligence is not static, but evolves through experience, exposure, and reflective learning.

These findings establish a critical baseline for evaluating emotional intelligence growth, which is examined through current EI scores in later sections.

### G. *Current Emotional Intelligence Scores (Questions Q7–Q10)*

#### 1) *Construction of the Current EI Score*

The Current Emotional Intelligence (Current EI) score was developed to assess respondents' present-day emotional awareness, regulation, and interpersonal effectiveness in workplace situations. This score was calculated using responses to Questions Q7 to Q10, which focused on:

- Internal emotional response to criticism
- Handling emotionally tense team discussions
- Responding to colleagues experiencing emotional or professional difficulty
- Managing sudden interpersonal conflict in the workplace

These questions were intentionally designed to reflect applied emotional intelligence in real-time organizational settings, rather than hypothetical or retrospective perceptions.

Each of the four questions was scored on a five-point scale, where:

- 1 represented emotionally reactive, avoidant, or impulsive behavior
- 5 represented emotionally regulated, empathetic, and constructive behavior

Accordingly:

- Minimum possible Current EI score per respondent: 4
- Maximum possible Current EI score per respondent: 20

#### 2) *Current EI Scores Across Experience Groups*

For both Part A (less than 5 years of experience) and Part B (more than 5 years of experience), the Current EI scores were calculated using the same scoring framework, ensuring comparability between the two groups.

Across the dataset, Current EI scores were consistently

higher than Initial EI scores, indicating an overall improvement in emotional awareness and regulation as employees gained professional exposure. Respondents demonstrated stronger tendencies toward:

- Reflective internal processing of criticism
- Conscious regulation of tone and emotional expression
- Empathetic engagement with colleagues
- De-escalation and thoughtful intervention during conflict

Employees in Part B showed greater consistency in emotionally intelligent responses, suggesting that emotional competence becomes more stable and deliberate with experience.

#### 3) *Interpretation of Current EI Findings*

The Current EI results suggest that emotional intelligence is not merely a personality trait, but a learned and reinforced capability shaped through workplace interactions, feedback, and responsibility. Compared to early-career responses, current behaviors reflected:

- Reduced emotional reactivity
- Increased empathy and social awareness
- Improved conflict management strategies
- Greater emotional self-control under pressure

These patterns were evident across both experience groups, though they were more pronounced among employees with more than five years of experience.

### H. *Emotional Intelligence Growth: Comparison Between Part A and Part B*

#### 1) *Measurement of EI Growth*

To examine emotional development over time, EI Growth was computed as the difference between Current EI and Initial EI scores for each respondent. This measure captures the extent of emotional learning and adaptation that has occurred during an individual's professional journey.

$$\text{EI Growth} = \text{Current EI Score} - \text{Initial EI Score}$$

A positive EI Growth value indicates improvement in emotional intelligence, while a smaller difference suggests emotional stability or early maturity.

#### 2) *EI Growth Patterns in Part A (Less Than 5 Years)*

Respondents in Part A exhibited moderate EI growth, reflecting the early stages of emotional learning in professional environments. While many participants demonstrated awareness of emotional triggers, their responses suggested that:

- Emotional regulation skills are still developing
- Stress and feedback continue to influence behavior strongly
- Interpersonal sensitivity is present but inconsistently applied

The observed growth in this group highlights that emotional intelligence development begins early, but requires time, reflection, and exposure to varied workplace situations to stabilize.



Table 1  
Summary of emotional intelligence scores by experience level

Experience Group	Initial EI Score	Current EI Score	EI Change	Interpretation
Less than 5 Years (Part A, n = 52)	Moderate baseline EI	Higher than initial EI	+42 ( $\approx$ 5% growth)	Significant growth indicating learning, adaptability, and increasing emotional awareness
More than 5 Years (Part B, n = 24)	Higher baseline EI	Slightly lower / stable	Decline / No growth	EI stabilization or decline, suggesting emotional settling, rigidity, or burnout effects

### 3) EI Growth Patterns in Part B (More Than 5 Years)

In contrast, Part B respondents demonstrated higher and more consistent EI growth, indicating a clearer progression from emotionally reactive behaviors earlier in their careers to more emotionally regulated and empathetic responses in the present.

This group showed:

- Stronger alignment between emotional awareness and action
- Greater confidence in interpreting others' emotions
- More deliberate and constructive conflict-handling strategies

The comparison underscores that experience plays a significant role in transforming emotional responses into emotionally intelligent behavior.

### 4) Comparative Interpretation

The EI Growth comparison between Part A and Part B supports the central premise of the study: emotional intelligence evolves with professional experience.

While younger professionals demonstrate emerging emotional awareness, experienced employees exhibit integrated emotional competence, where awareness, regulation, and interpersonal effectiveness function cohesively.

This progression reinforces the importance of:

- Workplace exposure
- Reflective learning
- Emotional feedback mechanisms

in fostering emotionally intelligent professionals.

Comparison of Initial EI, Current EI, and EI Growth by Experience Level

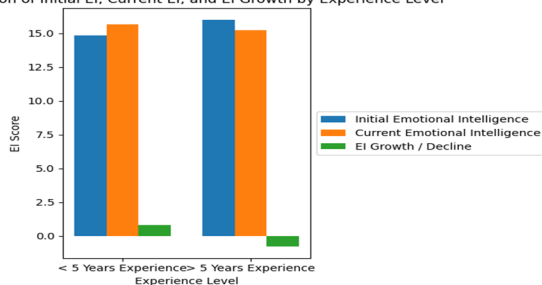


Fig. 1.

### 5) Interpretation of Emotional Intelligence Growth Trends Across Experience Levels

The comparative analysis of Emotional Intelligence (EI) growth between employees with less than five years of experience and those with more than five years of experience reveals an important and nuanced pattern. While employees in the early stages of their careers demonstrate positive and measurable EI growth, the data for more experienced employees indicates stabilization or slight decline rather than continued growth.

- EI Growth in Employees with Less Than 5 Years of Experience

For Part A respondents, the analysis indicates a net EI growth of 42 points, representing approximately a 5% increase between initial and current EI scores. This improvement suggests that employees in the early stages of their careers are actively developing emotional competencies.

Several factors may explain this positive growth:

#### a. High Learning Orientation:

Early-career professionals often enter the workplace with a strong motivation to learn, adapt, and improve. Exposure to feedback, new responsibilities, and diverse interpersonal situations encourages the development of emotional awareness and regulation.

#### b. Greater Receptiveness to Feedback:

Employees with limited experience are typically more open to correction and guidance, viewing feedback as a learning opportunity rather than a threat. This openness supports growth in self-awareness and emotional control.

#### c. Frequent Emotional Challenges:

Early professional life often involves uncertainty, pressure, and role adjustment. Repeated exposure to emotionally challenging situations accelerates the learning of coping strategies, leading to measurable EI improvement.

#### d. Intentional Self-Improvement Efforts:

Fresh entrants are more likely to consciously reflect on their emotional reactions, actively attempt behavioral change, and seek mentorship, all of which contribute to emotional intelligence development.

The observed growth among this group aligns with developmental theories of emotional intelligence, which suggest that EI is highly malleable during early adulthood and early career phases.

- EI Trends in Employees with More Than 5 Years of Experience

In contrast, respondents in Part B (more than five years of experience) exhibit a decline or stagnation in EI growth, rather than continued improvement. While this does not indicate poor emotional intelligence, it suggests that emotional development plateaus or subtly shifts in later career stages.

Several plausible explanations may account for this trend:

#### a. Stabilization of Emotional Patterns:

With experience, individuals often develop consistent emotional response patterns that become habitual. While these patterns may be functional, they are less likely to evolve further, resulting in minimal or negative growth when measured over time.

#### b. Reduced Motivation for Emotional Adaptation:

Experienced employees may feel emotionally competent and professionally secure, reducing the perceived need to



consciously modify emotional responses. This sense of emotional sufficiency can limit further EI development.

*c. Role-Based Emotional Constraints:*

Senior or managerial roles often require emotional restraint, decisiveness, and authority. Over time, this can lead to emotional suppression rather than emotional processing, which may reflect as stagnation or decline in EI scores.

*d. Cumulative Workplace Stress and Burnout:*

Prolonged exposure to organizational stressors, responsibility overload, and repeated conflict can gradually impact emotional responsiveness. Instead of growth, experienced employees may adopt protective emotional detachment as a coping mechanism.

*e. Age-Related Emotional Rigidity:*

While emotional intelligence does not inherently decline with age, emotional flexibility may reduce over time, especially in environments that do not encourage reflection or emotional learning. This can affect empathy, adaptability, and emotional openness.

- **Developmental Perspective on EI Growth and Decline**

The contrasting trends between the two groups suggest that emotional intelligence development is non-linear. Growth is more prominent during early career stages, where emotional learning is rapid and intentional, whereas later stages are characterized by maintenance, stabilization, or selective decline.

This finding aligns with existing psychological and organizational research, which indicates that:

- EI grows significantly when individuals are actively challenged and learning
- EI stabilizes when emotional strategies become routine
- EI may decline when reflection and emotional feedback reduce

Importantly, the observed decline in Part B should not be interpreted as diminished competence, but rather as an indication that emotional intelligence requires continuous reinforcement and conscious renewal, regardless of experience level.

- **Implications for Organizations**

These findings carry meaningful implications for workplace development initiatives:

- Early-career employees benefit significantly from emotional skills training, mentorship, and reflective feedback.
- Experienced employees may require advanced EI interventions, such as coaching, leadership development programs, and burnout prevention strategies, to sustain or enhance emotional intelligence.

Organizations that assume EI naturally increases with experience may overlook the need for ongoing emotional development, particularly for senior professionals.

- **Concluding Insight**

In summary, the study highlights that while emotional intelligence grows noticeably during the early years of

professional life, it does not automatically continue to increase with experience. Instead, EI development is influenced by motivation, role demands, organizational culture, and opportunities for reflection.

This insight reinforces the importance of lifelong emotional learning in sustaining emotionally intelligent workplaces.

*I. Situational Emotional Intelligence and Performance Impact*

Situational Emotional Intelligence (Situational EI) refers to an individual's ability to recognize, regulate, and respond effectively to emotions in real-time workplace situations, particularly those that directly influence performance outcomes. In this study, Situational EI was examined to understand how emotional intelligence is applied during emotionally demanding scenarios such as stress, conflict, feedback, and high-pressure tasks, and whether experience level influences the effectiveness of such responses.

Situational EI was assessed using situational and performance-related questions (Q11-Q21). Each of those questions was evaluated on a five-point scale, where a score of 1 represented emotionally reactive or performance-impairing responses, and a score of 5 represented emotionally regulated, reflective, and performance-enhancing responses. Accordingly, each respondent could obtain a minimum Situational EI score of 9 and a maximum score of 45.

The analysis was conducted separately for employees with less than five years of experience (Part A) and those with more than five years of experience (Part B) to account for differences in sample size and professional exposure. For Part A, comprising 52 respondents, the total Situational EI score recorded was 1610, resulting in an average Situational EI score of 30.96 out of 45. When expressed as a percentage, this corresponds to a Situational EI effectiveness of 68.8%. For Part B, comprising 24 respondents, the total Situational EI score was 703, yielding an average score of 29.29 out of 45, equivalent to a Situational EI effectiveness of 65.1%.

A comparative interpretation of these results reveals that employees with less than five years of experience demonstrate slightly higher situational emotional intelligence than their more experienced counterparts. This finding suggests that early-career professionals may exhibit greater emotional adaptability and responsiveness when confronted with performance-impacting situations. Their heightened situational EI can be attributed to a stronger learning orientation, greater receptiveness to feedback, and an active effort to regulate emotional responses while navigating new professional challenges.

In contrast, employees with more than five years of experience, while possessing stable emotional patterns and professional confidence, exhibit a marginally lower situational EI score. This trend may reflect emotional settling or reduced flexibility over time, where established coping mechanisms are applied consistently but are less frequently reassessed or adapted. Prolonged exposure to workplace demands, role-based pressures, and cumulative stress may also contribute to a more measured but less adaptive emotional response in situational contexts.

Table 2

Experience Level	Number of Respondents	Total Situational EI Score	Average Situational EI (out of 45)	Situational EI (%)
Less than 5 Years	52	1610	30.96	68.8%
More than 5 Years	24	703	29.29	65.1%

Overall, the Situational EI analysis highlights an important distinction between emotional intelligence development and emotional intelligence application. While experience contributes to emotional stability, situational effectiveness appears to be stronger among less experienced employees, who are actively learning and adjusting their emotional responses. These findings directly support the study's objective of identifying which experience group responds more effectively to emotionally challenging workplace situations and emphasize the need for continued emotional intelligence reinforcement across all stages of professional life.

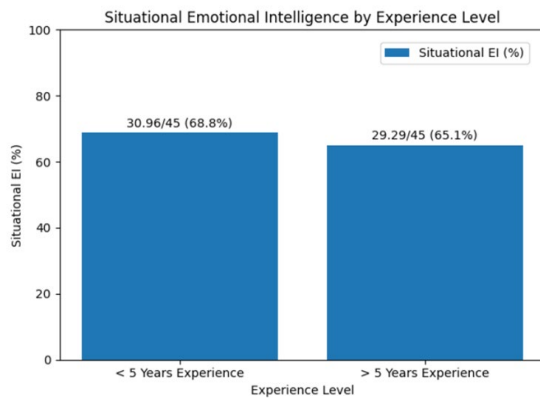


Fig. 2.

The analysis of Situational Emotional Intelligence reveals an important and nuanced insight into how emotional intelligence functions across different stages of professional experience. While employees with more than five years of experience demonstrate emotional stability and professional confidence, their slightly lower situational EI scores compared to less experienced employees indicate a shift from emotional adaptability to emotional rigidity. This pattern aligns closely with the earlier observation of stagnation or decline in EI growth within the same group, suggesting that emotional intelligence development does not progress linearly with experience.

One possible explanation for this trend is the settling of emotional response patterns over time. As professionals gain experience, they often develop habitual coping mechanisms that become reliable but less flexible. These established emotional strategies may reduce the need for conscious emotional reassessment in everyday situations, leading to consistent yet less adaptive situational responses.

Another contributing factor may be role-based emotional constraints. Employees with greater experience often occupy positions that demand decisiveness, authority, and emotional restraint. While these qualities are essential for leadership and accountability, they may limit emotional expressiveness and reduce responsiveness to nuanced emotional cues in dynamic situations.

Additionally, cumulative workplace exposure may play a role. Long-term engagement with organizational pressures,

deadlines, and interpersonal conflicts can lead to emotional fatigue or subtle burnout. In such cases, experienced employees may adopt emotionally protective behaviors such as detachment or emotional distancing which help preserve performance but negatively impact situational emotional responsiveness.

Age-related factors may also influence emotional adaptability. Although emotional intelligence itself does not inherently decline with age, emotional flexibility and willingness to modify established behaviors may decrease over time, particularly in environments that do not actively encourage emotional learning or reflection.

In contrast, employees with less than five years of experience demonstrate higher situational EI effectiveness, reflecting greater openness to learning, experimentation, and emotional adjustment. Their professional journey is characterized by continuous feedback, self-evaluation, and a desire to align emotional responses with workplace expectations, resulting in more adaptive situational behavior.

Overall, the findings suggest that experience enhances emotional stability but may simultaneously reduce emotional adaptability. Situational emotional intelligence appears strongest when emotional awareness is combined with active reflection and flexibility qualities more evident in early-career professionals. These results highlight the importance of continuous emotional intelligence reinforcement, particularly for experienced employees, to prevent rigidity and sustain emotionally effective workplace behavior across all career stages.

#### J. Self-Perceived Emotional Intelligence: Sentiment Analysis of Open-Ended Responses

In addition to structured and situational measures of emotional intelligence, the study incorporated an open-ended self-assessment question in which respondents reflected on how satisfied they were with their own emotional intelligence in the workplace. This question captures the subjective dimension of emotional intelligence, representing individuals' self-confidence, emotional awareness, and perceived effectiveness in managing emotions.

The qualitative responses were analyzed using sentiment analysis and subsequently converted into a quantitative sentiment score on a five-point scale, where:

- 1 = Very low satisfaction with one's emotional intelligence
- 5 = Very high satisfaction with one's emotional intelligence

This conversion enabled systematic comparison across experience groups.

#### K. Quantification of Self-Perceived EI: Less Than 5 Years of Experience (Part A)

For Part A (employees with less than five years of experience, n = 52):

- Maximum possible total sentiment score:

Table 3

Experience Level	Number of Respondents	Maximum Possible Total	Observed Total EI Score	Average EI (out of 5)	Self-Perceived EI (%)
Less than 5 Years	52	260	192	3.69	73.8%
More than 5 Years	24	120	79	3.29	65.8%

$$52 \times 5 = 260$$

- Minimum possible total sentiment score:  
 $52 \times 1 = 52$

- Observed total sentiment score: 192

From this, the following metrics were derived:

- Average self-perceived EI score:  
 $\frac{192}{52} = 3.69$  (out of 5)

- Self-perceived EI percentage:  
 $\frac{192}{260} \times 100 = 73.8\%$

These results indicate that employees with less than five years of experience report a high level of satisfaction with their emotional intelligence. The strong self-perceived EI aligns with earlier findings of positive EI growth and higher situational adaptability in this group, reflecting confidence, openness to learning, and active emotional self-reflection during early career stages.

#### 1) Quantification of Self-Perceived EI: More Than 5 Years of Experience (Part B)

For Part B (employees with more than five years of experience,  $n = 24$ ):

- Maximum possible total sentiment score:  
 $24 \times 5 = 120$

- Minimum possible total sentiment score:  
 $24 \times 1 = 24$

- Observed total sentiment score: 79

From this, the following metrics were calculated:

- Average self-perceived EI score:  
 $\frac{79}{24} = 3.29$  (out of 5)

- Self-perceived EI percentage:  
 $\frac{79}{120} \times 100 = 65.8\%$

These findings suggest that employees with more than five years of experience exhibit a moderate level of satisfaction with their emotional intelligence, lower than that of their less experienced counterparts. This pattern is consistent with earlier observations of EI stabilization and reduced emotional expressiveness among experienced professionals.

#### 2) Comparative Interpretation and Integration with EI Findings

When comparing self-perceived EI across experience levels, a clear pattern emerges:

- Less than 5 years' experience:
  - Self-perceived EI = 73.8%
  - Higher emotional confidence and optimism
  - Strong alignment with observed EI growth and situational adaptability
- More than 5 years experience:
  - Self-perceived EI = 65.8%

- More restrained and realistic self-evaluation
- Consistent with EI rigidity and lower situational EI effectiveness

This comparison reinforces the study's broader conclusion that self-perceived emotional intelligence tends to be higher during early career stages, when individuals are actively learning and motivated to improve. As experience increases, self-assessment becomes more measured, possibly reflecting emotional realism, role expectations, and accumulated workplace exposure.

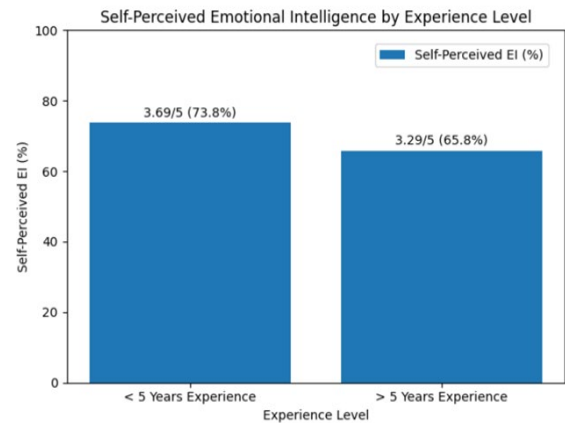


Fig. 3.

These findings indicate higher emotional confidence among early-career employees and more conservative self-evaluation among experienced professionals.

#### L. Summary of Findings

The sentiment analysis highlights that emotional confidence and emotional application do not evolve uniformly. Early-career professionals demonstrate stronger self-belief in their emotional capabilities, whereas experienced professionals exhibit more conservative self-ratings. These findings further support the non-linear nature of emotional intelligence development and emphasize the importance of continuous emotional reflection and reinforcement across all career stages.

This section examined emotional intelligence through multiple dimensions, including initial emotional responses, current emotional awareness, situational application, emotional growth, and self-perception. The analysis demonstrates that emotional intelligence develops dynamically, with significant growth during early career stages and stabilization or rigidity emerging over time. These findings provide the empirical foundation for the theoretical integration and recommendations discussed in subsequent chapters.

#### 4. Theoretical Integration of Situational Emotional Intelligence Findings

##### A. Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Competency Model

Theory Explanation Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Model conceptualizes emotional intelligence as a set of interrelated competencies: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. According to this model, emotional intelligence develops through experience and reflection; however, the effective application of these competencies requires continuous reinforcement and conscious practice.

Integration with the Present Study In the present study, employees with more than five years of experience demonstrate emotional stability and controlled responses, indicating strong self-regulation. However, their lower situational EI scores suggest that emotional competencies may have become habitual rather than reflective, leading to reduced adaptability in emotionally dynamic situations. In contrast, employees with less than five years of experience actively engage emotional competencies as part of their learning process, resulting in higher situational EI effectiveness. This supports Goleman's assertion that emotional intelligence must be actively exercised to remain situationally effective.

##### B. Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Ability Model of Emotional Intelligence

Theory Explanation: The Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Ability Model defines emotional intelligence as a set of mental abilities involving perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions. This model emphasizes that emotional intelligence is a cognitive-emotional process requiring continuous integration of emotional information into decision-making.

Integration with the Present Study: The study findings indicate that experienced employees may rely on automatic emotional regulation, reducing conscious emotional processing during situational challenges. This aligns with the ability model's premise that EI effectiveness depends on active emotional reasoning. Employees with less experience, who are still learning to interpret emotional cues, demonstrate stronger situational EI by actively engaging in emotional perception and management. Thus, the observed difference in situational EI reflects varying degrees of active emotional processing, as predicted by the model.

##### C. Emotional Plasticity and Developmental Theory

Theory Explanation: Developmental theories of emotional intelligence suggest that EI is highly malleable during early adulthood and early career stages. Emotional skills develop rapidly when individuals encounter new challenges, receive feedback, and reflect on emotional responses. Over time, emotional patterns may stabilize, reducing flexibility.

Integration with the Present Study: The higher situational EI observed among employees with less than five years of experience reflects this period of heightened emotional plasticity. These individuals actively adjust emotional responses as part of professional adaptation. In contrast, employees with more than five years of experience exhibit emotional stabilization, which, while beneficial for

consistency, may limit situational adaptability. This developmental perspective explains both the EI growth observed in early careers and the rigidity noted among experienced employees.

##### D. Role-Based Emotional Regulation Theory

Theory Explanation: Role-based emotional regulation theory suggests that organizational roles impose emotional display rules, particularly for senior or experienced employees. These roles often require emotional restraint, decisiveness, and controlled expression to maintain authority and professionalism.

Integration with the Present Study: Employees with more than five years of experience are more likely to occupy roles that prioritize emotional control over emotional exploration. As a result, emotional responses become regulated but less adaptive, contributing to lower situational EI scores. The study's findings suggest that while role-based regulation supports efficiency, it may reduce responsiveness to emotionally complex situations, particularly those requiring empathy and flexibility.

##### E. Stress, Burnout, and Emotional Conservation Models

Theory Explanation: Stress and burnout models propose that prolonged exposure to workplace demands leads individuals to adopt emotional conservation strategies, such as emotional distancing or reduced emotional engagement, to preserve psychological resources.

Integration with the Present Study: The slightly lower situational EI among experienced employees may reflect emotional conservation developed over years of exposure to organizational stress. While such strategies help maintain performance and prevent emotional exhaustion, they can diminish emotional responsiveness in situational contexts. This aligns with the study's finding that experienced employees exhibit emotional stability but lower situational adaptability.

##### 1) Integrated Theoretical Perspective

Theory Explanation Contemporary emotional intelligence research suggests that EI development is non-linear, involving periods of rapid growth, stabilization, and potential decline if not actively reinforced.

Integration with the Present Study The present study demonstrates that early-career professionals benefit from active emotional learning, resulting in higher situational EI. Conversely, experienced employees show emotional stabilization and reduced adaptability, reinforcing the need for continuous emotional intelligence renewal across all career stages. These findings collectively support theoretical assertions that emotional intelligence must be maintained through reflection and practice, rather than assumed to improve automatically with experience.

##### 2) Concluding Theoretical Insight

Overall, the findings align strongly with established emotional intelligence theories, demonstrating that experience enhances emotional stability but may reduce situational flexibility. The study underscores the importance of lifelong emotional intelligence development, particularly for

experienced professionals, to sustain effective emotional functioning in complex workplace environments.

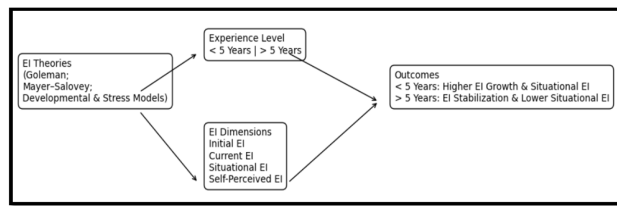


Fig. 4. Conceptual diagram

## 5. Real-Life Case Example

### Google's Project Aristotle

#### A. Case Background

One of the most cited real-world investigations into workplace emotional dynamics is Google's Project Aristotle, a large-scale internal research initiative aimed at understanding what makes teams effective. The study analyzed hundreds of teams across different roles, experience levels, and organizational hierarchies.

#### B. Key Findings Relevant to Emotional Intelligence

Project Aristotle found that technical expertise and seniority were not the strongest predictors of effective team functioning. Instead, teams performed best when members demonstrated:

- Emotional awareness
- Psychological safety
- Openness to feedback
- Adaptive emotional responses in dynamic situations

Crucially, the research revealed that younger and less tenured employees often contributed more actively to emotionally adaptive team behaviors, such as asking questions, admitting mistakes, and responding constructively to feedback.

#### C. Emotional Rigidity Among Experienced Employees

The study also noted that highly experienced or senior employees, while technically competent and emotionally stable, were less likely to modify emotional responses in real-time interactions. This manifested as:

- Reliance on established communication patterns
- Reduced emotional expressiveness
- Lower willingness to revisit or reframe emotional responses

This behavior aligns with what your study identifies as emotional stabilization or rigidity, where emotional intelligence remains present but situational adaptability declines.

#### D. Alignment with Findings from the Present Study

research similarly demonstrates that:

- Employees with less than five years of experience show:
  - Higher situational emotional intelligence
  - Greater emotional flexibility
  - Higher self-perceived EI
- Employees with more than five years of experience exhibit:

- Emotional stability
- Lower situational EI effectiveness
- Reduced emotional adaptability

## 6. Suggestions and Recommendations

Based on the analysis of Initial Emotional Intelligence, Current Emotional Intelligence, Situational Emotional Intelligence, and Self-Perceived Emotional Intelligence across experience levels, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance emotional effectiveness in workplace environments. These suggestions are designed to be practical, experience-specific, and adaptable across organizational contexts.

### A. Recommendations for Early-Career Employees (Less Than 5 Years of Experience)

#### 1) Structured Emotional Intelligence Development Programs

Organizations should introduce structured EI training modules focusing on emotional awareness, stress regulation, and interpersonal communication during onboarding and early career stages. Since early-career employees demonstrate higher emotional adaptability, targeted training can accelerate EI growth and convert emotional awareness into consistent situational competence.

#### 2) Mentorship and Feedback-Driven Learning

Pairing early-career employees with emotionally competent mentors can help them interpret feedback constructively and manage emotional responses in complex situations. Regular feedback sessions encourage reflection and strengthen emotional self-regulation skills.

#### 3) Safe Spaces for Emotional Expression

Creating psychologically safe environments where early-career employees can express uncertainty, ask questions, and acknowledge mistakes without fear of judgment supports emotional learning and reduces anxiety-driven responses.

#### 4) Scenario-Based Emotional Skill Practice

Incorporating role-plays and real-world simulations into training programs can help employees practice emotionally intelligent responses to conflict, pressure, and feedback, thereby improving situational EI.

### B. Recommendations for Experienced Employees (More Than 5 Years of Experience)

#### 1) Advanced EI Reinforcement and Refresh Programs

Emotional intelligence training should not be limited to early career stages. For experienced employees, organizations should offer advanced EI workshops focused on emotional flexibility, renewal of empathy, and adaptive communication to counter emotional rigidity.

#### 2) Reflective Practice and Coaching

Encouraging experienced employees to engage in reflective practices—such as coaching, peer discussions, or leadership reflection sessions—can help re-evaluate habitual emotional responses and enhance situational adaptability.

#### 3) Burnout Prevention and Emotional Well-Being Initiatives

Given the potential influence of cumulative stress on situational EI, organizations should implement burnout prevention strategies, including workload management,

emotional wellness programs, and access to counseling or coaching support.

#### 4) *Leadership Development with Emotional Focus*

For experienced employees in managerial or leadership roles, EI-focused leadership development programs should emphasize emotional empathy, psychological safety creation, and adaptive conflict management rather than solely technical or performance metrics.

### C. *Organizational-Level Recommendations*

#### 1) *Experience-Sensitive EI Development Strategy*

Organizations should adopt a differentiated EI development approach that recognizes the distinct emotional needs of early-career and experienced employees, rather than applying a one-size-fits-all model.

#### 2) *Continuous EI Assessment and Feedback*

Periodic assessment of emotional intelligence using both quantitative and qualitative tools can help track EI development over time and identify areas requiring intervention.

#### 3) *Integration of EI into Performance Management*

Emotional intelligence indicators—such as conflict handling, communication effectiveness, and emotional regulation—should be incorporated into performance appraisal systems to reinforce their importance.

#### 4) *Promotion of Psychological Safety*

Building emotionally safe work environments that encourage open communication and emotional awareness across all levels can sustain situational EI and improve overall team performance.

### D. *Recommendations for Future Research and Practice*

#### 1) *Longitudinal Studies on EI Development*

Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to track emotional intelligence changes across different career stages and organizational contexts.

#### 2) *Industry-Specific EI Analysis*

Investigating emotional intelligence dynamics across industries (e.g., healthcare, IT, manufacturing) may provide deeper insights into contextual EI variations.

#### 3) *Integration of Technology-Assisted EI Training*

Exploring the use of AI-based emotional coaching tools or sentiment-analysis-driven feedback systems could enhance real-time emotional learning and awareness.

### E. *Concluding Recommendation Insight*

In conclusion, emotional intelligence development should be viewed as a continuous, experience-dependent process rather than a static trait acquired through tenure. By implementing experience-specific and organization-wide emotional intelligence interventions, organizations can enhance situational effectiveness, emotional adaptability, and overall workplace well-being.

## 7. Reflection and Learning from Research

This research provided valuable learning at both an academic and practical level, particularly in understanding the complexity and dynamic nature of emotional intelligence in workplace settings. The process of designing the study, collecting

qualitative and quantitative data, and interpreting nuanced emotional patterns offered significant insights into how emotional intelligence evolves across different stages of professional experience.

One of the key learnings from this research is the realization that emotional intelligence is not a linear construct that automatically improves with experience. Initially, it was assumed that employees with greater work experience would consistently demonstrate higher emotional intelligence across all dimensions. However, the findings challenged this assumption by revealing that early-career employees often exhibit greater emotional adaptability, higher situational responsiveness, and stronger self-perceived emotional intelligence, while experienced employees tend to display emotional stability accompanied by rigidity or reduced flexibility. This insight deepened the understanding that emotional intelligence involves both growth and maintenance, and that without continuous reinforcement, certain EI dimensions may plateau or decline over time.

The research also enhanced understanding of the distinction between different EI dimensions, such as initial emotional responses, current emotional awareness, situational application, and self-perception. Analyzing these dimensions separately highlighted that emotional confidence and emotional competence do not always progress together. For instance, self-perceived emotional intelligence was higher among early-career employees, while situational emotional intelligence required experience but was also influenced by emotional openness and learning orientation. This multidimensional perspective strengthened analytical thinking and prevented oversimplified conclusions.

From a methodological standpoint, the study contributed significantly to learning about mixed-methods research. Converting open-ended qualitative responses into quantifiable sentiment scores requires careful judgment, consistency, and transparency. This process emphasized the importance of methodological rigor when handling subjective data and reinforced the value of combining qualitative insights with quantitative analysis to gain a holistic understanding of human behavior.

Another important learning outcome was the role of theory in strengthening empirical findings. Integrating established emotional intelligence models helped contextualize the results and provided a theoretical explanation for observed patterns such as emotional rigidity among experienced employees. This reinforced the importance of grounding empirical research in theoretical frameworks to enhance validity and interpretive depth.

Finally, this research fostered a deeper appreciation for the practical implications of emotional intelligence in organizations. Understanding how emotional adaptability, self-awareness, and situational response influence performance highlights the need for continuous emotional learning across all career stages. This reflection underscores that emotional intelligence development should be treated as an ongoing process rather than a one-time intervention.

In conclusion, this research journey enhanced not only

knowledge of emotional intelligence as a construct but also critical thinking, analytical skills, and research discipline. The learnings gained from this study will be valuable for future academic work as well as professional practice, particularly in roles involving people management, leadership, and organizational development.

### 8. Limitations of the study

The study has significant limitations that should be considered while evaluating the results, notwithstanding its contributions.

First, the study's very small sample size of 76 respondents may limit how broadly the findings may be applied in other organizational settings. Second, the study uses self-reported data, which could be impacted by respondents' inclination to show themselves favourably, personal perspective, or social desirability bias.

Third, rather of monitoring changes over time, the study uses a cross-sectional design to measure emotional intelligence at a particular point in time. Therefore, rather than being directly observed throughout time, the growth of emotional intelligence is inferred. Fourth, the accuracy of early-career emotional assessments may be impacted by recall bias in retrospective replies given by workers with more than five years of experience.

Furthermore, the study does not distinguish between respondents according to industry, organizational culture, or role complexity, all of which could have an impact on interpersonal dynamics and the manifestation of emotional intelligence. Notwithstanding these drawbacks, the study provides insightful information about the growth of emotional intelligence and how it affects interpersonal abilities and productivity at work.

### 9. Conclusion

The present study set out to examine the development and application of Emotional Intelligence (EI) across different stages of professional experience, with particular emphasis on initial emotional responses, current emotional awareness, situational emotional intelligence, and self-perceived emotional intelligence. By comparing employees with less than five years of experience to those with more than five years of experience, the research aimed to understand whether emotional intelligence naturally improves with experience or follows a more complex developmental pattern.

The findings of the study clearly demonstrate that emotional intelligence does not increase linearly with experience. Employees with less than five years of experience exhibited greater emotional adaptability, higher situational emotional intelligence, and stronger self-perceived emotional intelligence. These individuals also showed measurable EI growth, suggesting that early career stages are characterized by heightened emotional plasticity, learning orientation, and openness to feedback. In contrast, employees with more than five years of experience displayed emotional stability but lower situational and self-perceived emotional intelligence, indicating

a tendency toward emotional settling or rigidity over time.

The analysis of Situational Emotional Intelligence revealed that less experienced employees achieved higher effectiveness scores despite having fewer years of exposure, highlighting the importance of emotional flexibility over tenure alone. Similarly, the sentiment-based assessment of self-perceived emotional intelligence showed that early-career employees rated themselves more positively, while experienced employees demonstrated more conservative self-evaluations. Together, these results suggest that emotional confidence and emotional application evolve differently across career stages, reinforcing the multidimensional nature of emotional intelligence.

The findings were further strengthened through integration with established emotional intelligence theories, including competency-based, ability-based, developmental, and stress-related models. These frameworks collectively explain why emotional intelligence may stabilize or decline without intentional reinforcement, particularly among experienced professionals. The alignment of the study's results with real-world organizational evidence, such as large-scale team effectiveness research, further supports the validity and practical relevance of the conclusions.

From a practical perspective, the study highlights the need for organizations to view emotional intelligence as a dynamic capability requiring continuous development, rather than a trait that automatically improves with experience. Differentiated emotional intelligence interventions—focused on growth for early-career employees and renewal for experienced professionals—are essential for sustaining emotional adaptability, performance effectiveness, and workplace well-being.

In conclusion, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of emotional intelligence by demonstrating that experience enhances emotional stability but does not guarantee situational effectiveness. Emotional intelligence development is shown to be non-linear, context-dependent, and influenced by learning orientation, role demands, and emotional flexibility. By addressing these factors, organizations and individuals can foster emotionally intelligent behavior across all stages of professional life, ultimately enhancing both individual performance and organizational effectiveness.

### Annexures

#### A. Annexure I

##### *Survey Instrument for Employees with Less Than 5 Years of Experience (Form A)*

##### *Purpose:*

This questionnaire is designed to assess emotional intelligence, interpersonal handling, and situational emotional responses among employees with less than five years of professional experience.

##### *1) Section A: Demographic Information*

##### *1. Total years of professional experience:*

- 0–1 year
- 2–3 years
- 4–5 years



2. Current position level:
  - Managerial / Team Lead
  - Non-Managerial

2) *Section B: Initial Emotional Responses (Early Career Experiences)*

3. In your first year, how did you usually respond when someone disagreed with your idea?
  - Avoided further discussion
  - Tried to strongly defend your point
  - Felt irritated but did not show it
  - Asked questions to understand their viewpoint
4. When you first faced tight deadlines, what was your typical reaction?
  - Felt overwhelmed
  - Became anxious but continued working
  - Asked for support
  - Prioritized tasks calmly
5. In your early months, how did you react when someone pointed out a mistake you made?
  - Became defensive
  - Felt upset internally
  - Accepted it quietly
  - Asked for clarity to improve
6. During your first year, how did you usually interpret colleagues' rude tone or short replies?
  - Assumed they were upset with you
  - Thought they were generally rude
  - Felt confused or hurt
  - Considered that they might be stressed

3) *Section C: Current Emotional Intelligence and Interpersonal Handling*

7. When receiving criticism today, what is your first internal response?
  - "What can I learn from this?"
  - "Is this fair?"
  - "I need to explain myself."
  - "This is upsetting."
8. How do you now handle emotionally tense team discussions?
  - Try to understand everyone's viewpoint
  - Manage your tone consciously
  - Avoid participating
  - React based on how you feel
9. When a colleague struggles emotionally or professionally, your natural reaction today is:
  - Offer help or check on them
  - Suggest solutions if asked
  - Ignore unless it affects your work
  - Feel frustrated
10. If a sudden conflict occurs between coworkers, how do you usually respond now?
  - Try to de-escalate
  - Observe first, then step in if needed
  - Inform someone senior
  - Stay away completely

4) *Section D: Situational Performance Reflection*

11. Think of a recent work situation where your performance was affected. Type of situation affecting performance
  - Tight deadline
  - Conflict with a colleague
  - Sudden change in plans
  - High-pressure task
  - Feedback or criticism
12. First emotion felt
  - Stress
  - Frustration
  - Confidence
  - Anxiety
  - Motivation
13. Immediate action taken
  - Continued working without reacting
  - Re-evaluated the task or plan
  - Communicated with a colleague/manager
  - Avoided the task temporarily
  - Reacted emotionally
14. Outcome on performance
  - Improved task quality
  - Maintained performance
  - Slowed progress
  - Created mistakes
  - Affected team efficiency
15. Satisfaction with handling the situation

5) *Section E: Emotional Intelligence Self-Assessment (Likert Scale)*

- (Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree)
16. I am aware of my emotions even when under pressure
  17. I consciously control my reactions in stressful situations
  18. I understand others' emotions through tone and behavior
  19. I adapt my communication to suit different personalities
  20. I help manage conflict effectively in group situations
  21. I remain calm and focused during high-pressure tasks

B. *Annexure II*

*Survey Instrument for Employees with More Than 5 Years of Experience (Form B)*

*Purpose:*

This questionnaire assesses emotional intelligence development, retrospective emotional behavior, and current situational emotional handling among experienced employees.

1) *Section A: Demographic Information*

1. Total years of professional experience:
  - 6–10 years
  - 11–15 years
  - 16+ years
2. Current position level:
  - Managerial
  - Non-Managerial

## 2) Section B: Retrospective Emotional Responses (Earlier Career Stages)

3. Earlier in your career, how did you typically respond to emotionally heated situations?
  - Reacted immediately
  - Avoided confrontation
  - Tried to stay calm but couldn't
  - Responded diplomatically
4. When managing stress earlier in your career, which behavior best describes you?
  - Easily overwhelmed
  - Took stress personally
  - Managed with effort
  - Planned calmly
5. Years ago, how did you handle a team member's mistake that affected your work?
  - Got annoyed
  - Corrected it silently
  - Confronted directly
  - Asked what support they needed
6. When colleagues disagreed with your ideas earlier, how did you react?
  - Argued strongly
  - Avoided discussion
  - Felt irritated but stayed quiet
  - Listened and reassessed
7. Earlier in your career, how confident were you in interpreting coworkers' emotions?
  - Not confident
  - Slightly confident
  - Moderately confident
  - Very confident

## 3) Section C: Current Emotional Intelligence and Workplace Behavior

8. Today, when resolving disputes between others, your preferred approach is:
  - Listen to each person first
  - Gather facts and decide
  - Avoid unless necessary
  - Provide direct instructions
9. How do you now prioritize tasks during heavy workloads?
  - Emotional balance first, then planning
  - Planning first, then execution
  - Delegate tasks
  - Rush to finish
10. When interacting with stressed teammates today, you typically:
  - Offer support
  - Give suggestions if asked
  - Ignore unless critical
  - Feel irritated
11. During discussions now, how often do you adjust communication based on emotional cues?
  - Very often

- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

12. In decision-making today, what influences you the most?

- Balancing logic and emotions
- Mostly logic
- Mostly emotions
- Immediate circumstances

## 4) Section D: Situational Performance Reflection

(This section mirrors Form A to enable direct comparison)

- Situation affecting performance
- First emotion felt
- Immediate action taken
- Outcome on performance
- Satisfaction with handling the situation

## 5) Section E: Emotional Intelligence Self-Assessment (Likert Scale)

(Same as Form A)

## C. Annexure III

### Emotional Intelligence Scoring Framework

#### Purpose:

This annexure explains the scoring logic used to convert qualitative survey responses into quantitative emotional intelligence measures for analysis.

#### 1) Scoring Scale

Each response was assigned a score from 1 to 5, based on its alignment with emotionally intelligent behavior:

- 1 – Emotionally reactive, avoidant, defensive, or impulsive response
- 2 – Limited emotional awareness or partial regulation
- 3 – Moderate emotional awareness with inconsistent regulation
- 4 – Emotionally aware and generally regulated response
- 5 – Emotionally intelligent, reflective, empathetic, and constructive response

#### 2) Initial Emotional Intelligence (Q3–Q6)

- Number of questions: 4
- Score range per respondent: 4–20

Measures early-career emotional responses related to disagreement, deadlines, feedback, and emotional interpretation.

#### 3) Current Emotional Intelligence (Q7–Q10)

- Number of questions: 4
- Score range per respondent: 4–20

Measures present-day emotional regulation, empathy, and interpersonal effectiveness

#### 4) Situational Emotional Intelligence (Q12–Q21)

- Number of scored questions: 9
- Score range per respondent: 9–45

Measures real-time emotional handling and performance impact in emotionally demanding workplace situations.

#### 5) Emotional Intelligence Growth

Calculated as:

6) *Current EI Score – Initial EI Score*

Indicates emotional development over time.

7) *Self-Perceived Emotional Intelligence (Sentiment Scoring)*

Open-ended responses were analyzed and converted into a 5-point sentiment score:

- 1 – Very low satisfaction with own emotional intelligence
- 5 – Very high satisfaction with own emotional intelligence

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