

Investigating moderating role of emotional intelligence among counterproductive work behavior, work interference and negative emotions in development sector of Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

This study reveals the worth of Emotional Intelligence (EI) to act as a moderator in undertaking the worst effects of Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB) influenced by negative emotions and work interference. Contract based employees of the non-profit organizations in development sector of Pakistan were targeted. The responses were obtained in time lags of two weeks to overcome the issues of cross-sectional data and self-serving bias. The 258 fully responded questionnaires by the targeted employees were analyzed in SPSS. The results emphasized that negative emotions and work interference predicts CWB and EI act as a moderator in this relationship. Employees having low EI engaged more in CWB confirming the predictive relationship. It is recommended that the management needs to underline the significance of EI at all levels of the organization for desirable behaviors at workplace. Implications were deliberated to overcome CWB through high and low levels of EI.

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1. Introduction

Conventionally, organizational efficiency is determined by the execution of assigned duties and responsibilities by the employees (Neuman & Baron, 1997) which is mainly termed as in-role performance (Morrison, 1994). In late 80's, the concept of extra role performance emerged (Organ, 1988) which describes voluntary behavior of employees. In the meantime, distinct non-discretionary behaviors were observed which damages not only the employees' working but time by time these behaviors affect the development of the organization (Spector, 2002; Fox & Spector, 1999). The distinct non-voluntary behaviors mainly known as counterproductive work behavior (CWB) keeps on preventing employees to engage in helping others, execute empathic abilities and handling interpersonal conflicts (McShane & Von Glinow, 2005). Interpersonal conflict occurs when individuals in the organizations show resistance among themselves due to non-involvement in decision making, typical perceptual set clashes work interference and negative emotions (Wilmot & Hocker, 2001). Tillett (2001) explains that it is essential to recognize that almost all conflicts have both visible, manifest aspects and invisible, un-manifest aspects which leads towards certain behavior patterns to affect organizations' working. The way features of interpersonal conflict e.g.; work inference and negative emotions were handled may engage employees in counterproductive work activities such as spreading unconstructive rumors, sabotaging and turnover (Deutsch, 1990; Ogungbamila, 2006). The work interference among employees may prevent them to work efficiently and negative emotions may affect their performance. Therefore, in order to revive effective working of employees, Emotional intelligence (EI) seems to support in tackling the effects of unfair treatment and negative emotions

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(Moorman, 1991) for better performance. By being capable of managing own emotions and understanding other's ones, managers can foster innovation. EI empowers us to be acquainted with and shelve negative emotions that block innovation, and provide us access to positive feelings that can boost performance.

The counterproductive work behaviors (CWB) acts as a main factor for determining the performance of the organization because it reverses the operations of the organization and affects profit margin imperfectly (Fox et al., 2001). The underdeveloped countries need to focus on such factors which are counterproductive for organization, as any dissatisfaction, conflict or unfair treatment at workplace may push employees for revenge (Zellars et al., 2002), which eventually affects production of the organization. Therefore, deliberation is required to apply emotional intelligence at workplace in handling CWB. The appropriate work interference aspects and balance of negative feelings seems to overcome CWB through emotional intelligence for voluntary behaviors, which eventually lead towards the organizational well-being (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Consequently, the moderating effect of emotional intelligence to overcome CWB by managing work interference and negative emotions is addressed in this study in non-profit organizations. The non-profit organizations particularly in underdeveloped countries like Pakistan operates to provide better living standards to the society without focusing on profit gains. They are considered as silent providers, with the interest of the public and private wellbeing at heart. They seek services of competent people to respond natural disasters by implementing practical solutions, mainly followed under various funded projects. Jobs in the development sector are well paid but generally on contract or voluntary basis and strength of permanent employees is low in this sector. Therefore, managing employees' performance is more necessary (Shahzad et al., 2011) for achieving goals of non-profit organizations. Such an ambition to perform better in limited time mostly engage employees in negative emotions and work interference and their voluntary behaviors is kept on fluctuating and it eventually get noticed when employees are found to deliver harmful behaviors at workplace. Accordingly, this study is focused on counterproductive work behaviors of employees which were influenced by negative emotions and work interference and could be dealt by applying emotional intelligence at workplace.

2. Literature review

2.1 Work Interference

Work interference generally refers to as the upright conflict, as differences in position and authority among individuals do exist in the organizations (Robins, 1983). The competition among employees and lack of clarity of responsibilities to be performed create more difficulty in managing work interference. The frustrated employees try to compete with peers by interfering in their work activities and depict destructive behaviors (Hellriegel et al., 2001). The certainty of work interference does rise due to individual differences that forum conflicts at all levels. Differences in age, gender, attitudes, beliefs, values, experiences and training etc. contribute to the way people predict and handle work interference in best possible way. Therefore, interference needs to be dealt wisely at all levels and appropriate degree of emotions is required to tackle work interference, so that it may not lead of counterproductive work behaviors (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). In the light of above said following hypothesis is investigated:

H1: Work interference is positively associated with counterproductive work behavior.

2.2 Negative Emotions

Negative emotions formed where personal clashes arrives at a stage of disgrace and effects the organizational working by exhibiting negative behaviors. Employees limit the opportunity to share information because in conflict mainly due to negative emotions they focus on one another, rather than solving problems (Peterson & Behfar, 2003). An employee if beaten by discouraging words through supervisor due to non-accomplishment of task stimulates the negative consequences (Myers et al., 1985) and rooted negative emotions at workplace. In many cases the potential for conflict comes from the structure of the organization itself. As organizations get bigger and more complex, they inevitably develop functions and roles, which simply build potential for conflict and stimulate negative emotions (Yang & Diefendorff, 2009). Thus, the potential for negative emotions may increase which may feed counterproductive work behaviors. In the light of above said following hypothesis is investigated:

H2: Negative emotions is positively associated with counterproductive work behavior.

2.3 Moderating Role of Emotional Intelligence between Work interference and Counterproductive Work Behavior

The actions of employees would influence their thinking and feelings to be conscious at workplace; on the other hand, emotional intelligence facilitates feelings and thinking through recognition and regulation of emotions in self and others (Ashkanasy et al., 2000). Therefore, appropriate behaviors can be managed by applying moderating features of EI which results in positive thinking and feelings for the benefit of all concerned. EI affects feelings and behaviors (Patton, 1997) which helps the individuals to understand the intensity of conflicts to control their destructive behaviors. Individuals having high level of EI can handle the problems more wisely as compare to the individuals having low EI. The negative emotions and work interference forms of interpersonal conflict can be assessed and managed by individuals who have more intensity about their

own level of EI (Tjiong, 2000). The ability to handle the emotions emphasized to engage less in CWB but people having low EI lacks in developing such ability. In the light of above said following hypothesis is investigated:

H3: Emotional intelligence (EI) moderates the relationship between work interference and counterproductive work behavior such that the relationship is weaker with high EI.

2.3 Moderating Role of Emotional Intelligence between Negative Emotions and Counterproductive Work Behavior

Emotional intelligence helps in generating awareness about self and others in management of emotions and provides tactics to utilize it fully for positive behaviors by understanding worst effects of distinct forms of interpersonal conflict (Mayer & Ciarrochi, 2006). Employees' recognize emotions in others from many sources such as verbal language and non-verbal language especially facial expressions. Thus, negative emotions can be depicted by any sources of interaction among employees. High EI make individuals to realize the situation of other by assuming him/her self in that situation, where as individuals with low EI instantly act in negative manner and then think about its consequences. High EI influence more self-management which results in good behavior (Mayer & Salovey, 1999) and provide strength in organizational growth. Low EI stimulates individuals for keep focusing on conflicts and harmful acts but high EI results in other way around. In the light of above said following hypothesis is investigated:

H4: Emotional intelligence (EI) positively moderates the relationship between negative emotions and counterproductive work behavior such that the relationship is stronger with low EI.

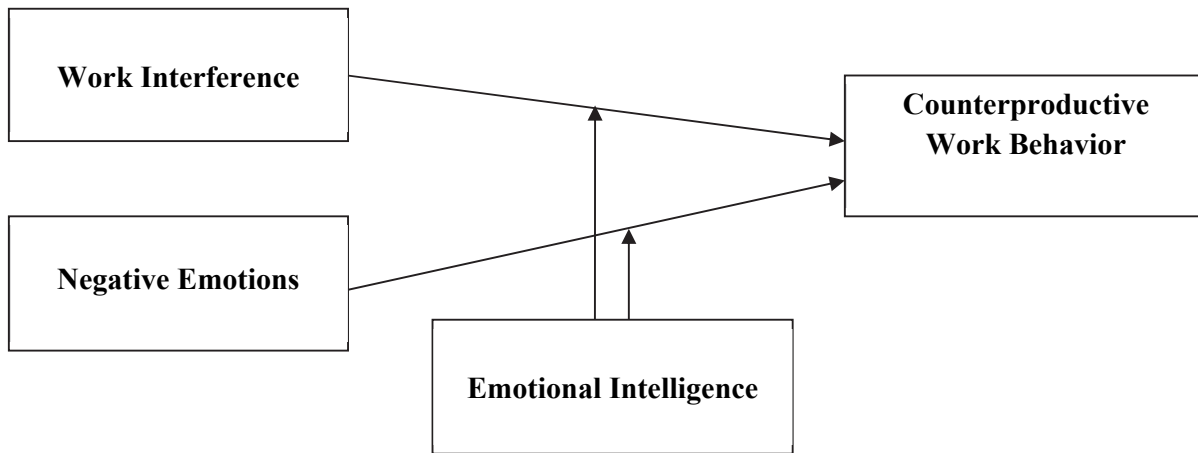


Fig. 1. Research Model

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The quantitative approach was pursued through relational survey design as it is considered to be the suitable way because data is collected from sample and after appropriate analysis of respondents' perception; estimation is formed about the entire population (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000).

3.2 Population

The population for this research study was contract-based employees working in renowned National and International NGOs comprises in development sector of Pakistan i.e.; Oxfam, The citizen foundation, Care foundation, UNDP and WFP etc.

3.3 Sample

The non-probability sampling technique was applied through judgmental sampling (Wiersma & Jurs, 2005) to target specific contract-based employees to uphold the scope of research study, among all other employees working in the development sector. The support of respective HR department across targeted NGOs was obtained to access middle level contract-based employees; which leads to seek their consent to participate in the research study to fill questionnaires.

3.4 Instruments

The questionnaires were adopted and adapted as per scope of this study to meet the contextual gap of developed and under-developed countries. Therefore, Counterproductive Work Behavior was measured using 10 items developed by Kelloway et al., (2002). Emotional intelligence was measured using 33 items developed by Schutte et al. (1998). Work interference was

measured using 03 items developed by Schieman et al. (2009) and negative emotions were measured using 08 items extended by Wall and Callister (1995). The responses were obtained on five-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree).

3.5 Data Collection

The self-administered questionnaires were briefed to contractual employees working at middle management level who tend to manage their reporting to higher management and accommodate their subordinates at lower management level for better outcomes. The questionnaires were filled in two-time lags of two weeks in accordance with the recommendation of Carmeli et al., (2010) study to enable better occurrence of cause and effect relationship among concerned variables and to overcome self-serving bias. Therefore, in the first-time lag respondents were encouraged to fill questions regarding work interference, negative emotions (independent variables) and counterproductive work behavior (dependent variable). During second time lag questions regarding emotional intelligence were filled by the same respondents in perspective of moderation between said independent and dependent variables. The respondents were requested to mention their year of birth on the questionnaires in order to insure consistency of same respondents' feedback across two-time lags. The respondents were approached during their relaxing hours e.g.; afternoon breaks, lunch/hi-tea timing and gathering etc. Apart from targeted respondents, few employees participated voluntarily to fill questionnaires in order to seek knowledge about the variables used in this study. Such volunteer participation was granted, subject to the verification of middle level contract-based employment status by the respective HR department. Out of 350 targeted employees, 258 employees were fully responded all aspects of the questionnaire yielding a response rate of 73.7%, which shows an adequate sample size.

4. Findings

4.1 Demographics

The demographics of respondents were not entirely used in this study as contextual based demographic differences most likely affects' respondents' feedback (Allworth & Hesketh, 1999). Therefore, one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare counterproductive work behavior across demographic variables. The results revealed insignificant differences in CWB across qualification ($F= .61, p > .05$), gender ($F= .41, p > .05$), age ($F= .37, p > .05$), and significant differences across marital status ($F= .55, p < .05$) and organizational tenure ($F= .71, p < .05$). Simultaneously, demographics were treated as control variables to uphold the scope of research study, accordingly. The frequency distributions of respondent's demographics are as under:

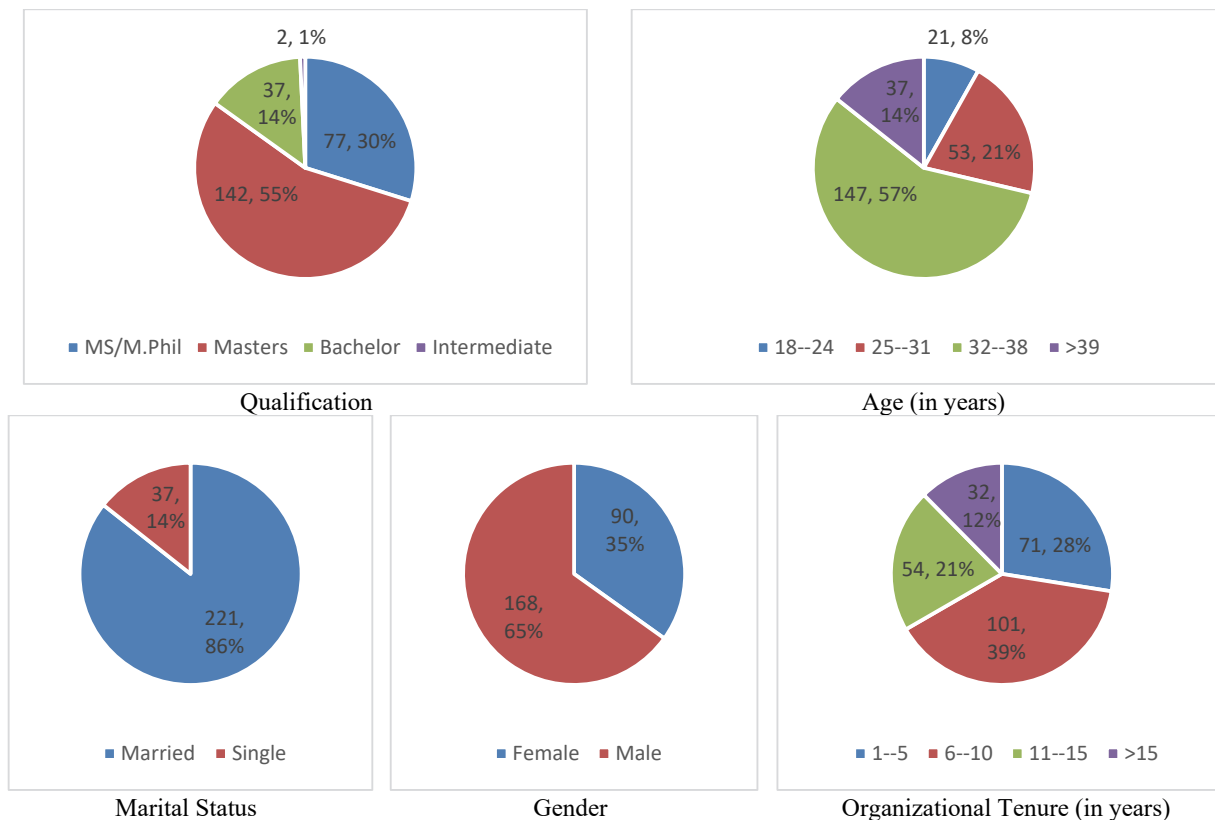


Fig. 2. Personal Characteristics of the participants

Table 1
Correlation and Reliability Analysis

	1	2	3	4
1. Counterproductive work behavior	1 (0.768)			
2. Work interference	.299*	1 (0.731)		
3. Negative emotions	.363**	.200*	1 (0.721)	
4. Emotional intelligence	.269*	.303*	.316*	1 (0.77)

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 1 shows the association among variables through correlation analysis which is in line with proposed hypothesis of the study. The values in parenthesis indicates reliability of respective variables which is sufficient to establish consistency of measures against each variable. The reliability analysis was conducted by calculating Cronbach Alpha.

Table 2
Multiple Regression Analysis

Predictors	Counterproductive work behavior		
	β	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1			
Control Variables		.012	
Step 2			
WI	.165***		
NE	.281**	0.26	0.246**

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

WI = Work Interference; NE = Negative Emotions

Table 2 shows that demographics were controlled in the first step and then independents variables were regressed on dependent variable indicating confirmation of first and second hypothesis with 26% total affects the dependent variable.

Table 3
Multiple Regression Analysis

Predictors	Counterproductive work behavior		
	β	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1			
Control Variables		.012	
Step 2			
WI	.166***		
NE	.393**		
Step 3			
EI \times WI	.308**		
EI \times NE	.201*	0.312	.054**

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

WI = Work Interference; NE = Negative Emotions; CWB = Counterproductive Work Behavior; EI = Emotional Intelligence

Table 3 shows that demographics were controlled in the first step, then independents variables along-with moderator were regressed on dependent variable and then interaction terms were regressed, indicating confirmation of third and fourth hypothesis with 31% interaction affect the dependent variable, highlighting 5% change in total affect other than moderator.

5. Discussion

The results of this study as mentioned in Table 2 depicts that work interference was significantly and positively predicts counterproductive work behavior, confirming hypothesis H1. Work interference prevails in all organizations at all levels but its effects are different particularly in under developed country where non-profit organizations are used to run its operations at their own. The pinching external factors faced by employees develops struggle for status, competition and aggression which arouse the work interference to be harmful for non-profit organizations. The individuals struggle to gain resources and eventually loss certain resources which form a cycle of resources gain and lost (Hobfoll & Freedy, 1993). Thus, conservation of resource theory (Hobfoll, 1989) stimulates to uphold work interference with those employees who gain resources and resulted into certain counterproductive behaviors. Moreover, the biasness among international and national staff, mainly due to the foreign funded projects, develops CWB during work interference (Borwankar & Velamuri, 2009). Even the autonomous teams developed to carry out field areas assessments to serve poor people get affected during work interference practices due to portfolios biases among international and national staff members. Our country comprises of collectivist societies (Hofstede,

1991) and people prefer to learn from the experiences of other instead of being individualistic and learn and monitor their own experiences (Shahzad et al., 2011). Therefore, most of the times in groups and out groups' employees were considered while evaluating performance. Collectivist group of people do appraise their employers and used tactics to survive by having work interference at major levels from where they can seek benefits for themselves. Individualist group of people mainly focus on working which can provide development for all and have work interference for the benefit of the organization. The CWB was exhibited mainly when collectivist and individualist groups of people compete among one other by having different interpretations of work interference in development sector where time frame to perform well is mostly limited. This environment also inculcates aggression and competition where work interference forms multiple shapes of CWB.

The results indicate that a negative emotion significantly and positively predicts counterproductive work behavior (Table 2), confirming hypothesis H2. Most of the employees at development sector joined this profession for civil services pursued in this sector as they would like to be a part of such reputed international NGO's in particular and local NGO's in general. The external factors do contribute to develop and manage negative emotions at workplace as mostly such kind of emotions are linked with prejudicial attitude, frustration and fear (Wall & Callister, 1995). Contract based employees in development sector were of the view that they were hired on short term basis so mainly believes in Theory X concept which describes that generally people at workplace do not like to work hard and take responsibility until they are forced to do so by rewards or punishments (McGregor, 1957). Moreover, such employees were least motivated to perform enthusiastic work, especially when they perceive that their contract will to be terminated after specific time. Therefore, when contract of employees were not renewed then they fall in deviant workplace behavior and effects the working environment of the organization either intentionally or unintentionally. Similarly, if employees perceive any unfair or illegal practices, they may go to labor courts for protection of their rights and ultimately repute of an organization damages. The deviant behavior develops a prejudicial attitude and commitment level of employees starts falling and they just focus on ways to harm the organization in either ways of putting hurdles in coworkers' working, apprising employers by developing personal relations and seek to get credit of someone else working, etc. Therefore, when consequences of certain harmful behaviors are positive for individuals who rely on self-centered benefits then they keep on repeating CWB with multiple angles.

Results mentioned in Table 3 show that moderation of EI exists, as high level of EI weaken the association between work interference and CWB, confirming hypothesis H3. The finding of this study to serve EI as moderation between work interference and CWB is supported with outcomes obtained by Deshpande (2005), who argued that CWB was considered to be unethical for people having high EI. Moreover, Khalid et al. (2009) explained that harmful behaviors inferred from CWB was avoided by people who have strong level of EI. Employees having high level of EI in the development sector can instill strong interpersonal and intrapersonal abilities to deal and tackle with people and to mold them as per prevailing circumstances. The employees with high EI can utilize this ability for effective relationships with their peers instead of indulging in destructive behaviors in the dynamic development sector. Thus, high emotional intelligence not only creates a pleasant working atmosphere but also helps the employees pass better life and most importantly, it supports the organization to achieve its goals.

As per Table 3 results, it is explored that low level of EI moderation tends to have high CWB during the execution of negative emotions, confirming hypothesis H4. EI helps to support or deteriorate the association between factors of negative emotions and CWB because with appropriate level of EI people will be able to handle their own and others' emotions (Goleman, 1998). The finding is supported by emotion centered model of voluntary work (Spector & Fox, 2005) as emotions complement voluntary behaviors for not being destructive. Accordingly, people with high EI can recognize and regulate emotions as per circumstances and tend to engage less in CWB but people with low EI are mostly unaware of their own strength and weaknesses and have a tendency to engaged in high CWB. Distinct levels of emotions are common at workplace settings (Carmeli, 2003), particularly in dynamic development sector, which generate different behaviors and guide employees to maintain high or low levels of EI. As Emotional intelligence plays a moderating role among work interference, negative emotions and CWB, and high EI are considered to be the key of successive career; then it is recommended that organizations should inculcate EI practices in the human resource management functions. Hiring the new talent with high EI can certainly help an organization to stand out from its competitors. The promotions and performance evaluation practices should be linked with emotional intelligence criterions (Goleman, 1995) and unbiased decisions need to be quoted to control effects of CWB. The productivity of the organizations can be increased if the work force willingly does their tasks (Khalid et al., 2009) and seek more opportunities to prove their competencies and this could be possible by investing in emotional intelligence training programs.

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