

## **WORK CULTURE AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: ADOPTION AND ADAPTATION, PREMISES AND PERSPECTIVES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The study explores the concept of work culture and emotional intelligence: adoption and adaptation, premises, and perspectives. The objectives of the study were to determine the relationship between work timings/flexibility and emotional intelligence; examine the relationship between leadership style and emotional intelligence. The above was discussed with a focus on the adoption and adaptation of work culture and emotional intelligence, premises, and perspectives of work culture and emotional intelligence. A relevant theory such as social exchange theory was adopted as the theoretical foundation of the study. The established study averred that work culture enhances the emotional intelligence of organizations. It was concluded that the study has shown that healthy work culture in organizations promotes the emotional intelligence of employees as they contribute immensely to the growth and development of an organization. Consequently, the study recommends that work timings/flexibility should be consistently designed to suit and manage employees' stress and other psychological or job-related issues to enhance their emotional intelligence in the workplace; Management of organizations should be proactive and contingent on the use of leadership styles to elicit the best emotions required for the job among employees in the organization.*

***Keywords: Work Culture, Work Timings/Flexibility, Leadership Style, and Emotional Intelligence.***

### **INTRODUCTION**

The potential tangible benefits of emotional intelligence for the business world are vast. They include more innovation and creativity in the workplace and better physical and mental health (and thus reduced sick days and healthcare costs), healthier and more satisfactory workplace relationships, boosts in efficiency and productivity (Zulfiqar et al., 2020).

In light of the above, for the individual, this means being both more successful and more satisfied. Benefits for the organization include improved morale and higher levels of employee engagement (Al-Shqairat et al., 2020). Further benefits include having happier employees who work harder, having a personal stake in what they do, and facilitating world-class performance. In essence, it is possible that emotional intelligence, when extended throughout a company, can act as a factor that aligns individual satisfaction and success with success and profits for the company, according to Yoke (2018). It is believed that employee emotional intelligence could depend on the workplace's work culture enshrined by management.

Thus, as used in this study, work culture is the total of beliefs, thought processes, attitudes of the employees, ideologies, and principles of the organization. Through work, culture management can chart out ways to tackle work processes among workers to get the best out of them for the growth and survival of the organization. Thus, work culture is the cumulative effect that leadership practices, employee behavior, workplace amenities, and organizational policies create on a worker/internal stakeholder. It can be measured as either positive or negative work culture (Chiradeep, 2021). The work culture of every organization has an assay on the emotions of employees which could shape it intelligently or unintelligently during the organization's operations and performance. However, this study conceptualizes work culture in terms of work timings/flexibility and leadership style.

Deciding the timing and flexibility of activities matter in the lives of employees in the workplace as improper management of same could mar processes, operations, and performance. Work timing and flexibility emphasize for management to be able and willing to adapt to changing circumstances when it comes to how work gets done (Almomani et al., 2019). Work timing and flexibility meet the needs of both the business and its workers. Leadership constitutes a lot in the emotional intelligence of the employees in the workplace.

A style of leadership is a method of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people (Kotter, 2001; Meng & Boyd, 2017). It determines the leader's characteristic behaviors when directing, motivating, guiding, and managing groups of people. Great leaders can inspire political movements and social change. Among others, leadership styles include autocratic, democratic, delegative, transformational, and transactional leadership styles are very important in an organization as employee emotions are also tied to them.

As the workplace is a business setting with a mandate, it must crave for healthy work culture. The work culture helps in shaping the emotional intelligence of employees even as they contribute to the growth and development of the organization. Some scholars see work culture as a contributor to emotional intelligence (Pizer & Hartel, 2005; Luke et al., 2011). However, others asserted that work culture does not have a positive contribution to the emotional intelligence of employees (Beyer & Nino, 2014). This has generated an argument, hence the conduct of this study.

### **Objectives**

The study seeks to achieve the following objective:

1. To determine the relationship between work timings/flexibility and the emotional intelligence of employees.
2. To examine the relationship between leadership style and the emotional intelligence of employees.

### **Conceptual Review**

The following concepts were briefly discussed to reflect their contextual meaning in this study:

#### **Concept of Work Culture**

Work culture is a concept that deals with the study of beliefs, thought processes, and attitudes of the employees; Ideologies, and principles of the organization (Prachi, 2022). It is the cumulative effect that leadership practices, employee behavior, workplace amenities, and organizational policies create on a worker/internal stakeholder. It can be measured as either positive or negative work culture (Chiradeep, 2021). It is the work culture that decides the way employees interact with each other and how an organization function.

Companies often use the terms corporate culture and work culture interchangeably, but there are subtle differences between the two concepts. Corporate culture refers to the shared set of values, goals, and operational principles active at your organization. It is determined at a strategic level and primarily relates to the external-facing impacts of culture. We have all heard about work culture and its ability to shape your organization's success curve. But are you paying attention to the culture of your workplace specifically? Work culture is acted out daily, influenced by your managers, leaders, frontline employees, and partners/vendors. It is often an intangible concept, but one that has an immense effect on employee experiences (Luke, 2021; Rexhepi & Berisha, 2017). A low attrition rate and high retention often are signs of good work culture. A strong recruitment model and brand name may help attract top-tier talent (perceived as the employer brand) but your work culture is what will retain them.

Work culture plays an important role in extracting the best out of employees and making them stick to the organization for a longer duration. The organization must offer a positive ambiance to the employees for them to concentrate on their work rather than interfering in each other's work (Van Wingerden et al., 2017). An organization is said to have a strong work culture when the employees follow the organization's rules and regulations and adhere to the existing guidelines.

However, there are certain organizations where employees are reluctant to follow the instructions and are made to work only by strict procedures. Such organizations have a weak culture.

### **Characteristics of a Healthy Work Culture**

Prachi (2022) asserted the following as characteristics of healthy work culture:

1. A healthy work culture leads to satisfied employees and increased productivity.
2. Employees must be cordial with each other. One must respect his fellow worker. Backbiting is considered strictly unprofessional and must be avoided for healthy work culture. One gains nothing out of conflicts and nasty politics at work.
3. Each employee should be treated as one. Partiality leads to demotivated employees and eventually an unhealthy work culture. Employees should be judged only by their work and nothing else. Personal relationships should take a backseat in the workplace. Don't favor anyone just because he is your relative.
4. Appreciating the top performers is important. Praise the employees to expect good work from them every time. Give them a pat on their back. Let them feel indispensable to their organization. Don't criticize the ones who have not performed well, instead ask them to pull up their socks for the next time. Give them one more opportunity rather than firing them immediately.
5. Encourage discussions at the workplace. Employees must discuss issues among themselves to reach better conclusions. Each one should have the liberty to express his views. The team leaders and managers must interact with the subordinates frequently. Transparency is essential at all levels for better relationships among employees and healthy work culture. Manipulating information and data tampering is a strict no-no at the workplace. Let information flow in its desired form.
6. Organizations must have employee-friendly policies and practical guidelines. Expecting an employee to work till late at night on his birthday is simply impractical. Rules and regulations should be made to benefit the employees. Employees must maintain the decorum of the organization. Discipline is important in the workplace.
7. The "Hitler approach" does not fit in the current scenario. Bosses should be more like mentors to the employees. The team leaders should be a source of inspiration for the subordinates. The superiors are expected to provide a sense of direction to the employees and guide them whenever needed. The team members should have easy access to their boss's cabin.
8. Promote team-building activities to bind the employees together. Conduct training programs, workshops, seminars, and presentations to upgrade the existing skills of the employees. Prepare them for the tough times. They should be ready under any odd circumstances or change in the work culture

However, within the context of this study, work culture is dimensionalized through work timings/flexibility and leadership style.

**Work timings/flexibility:** This is the first thing an employee will notice when they join the company. How many days and how long do they work? How many breaks do they take? These details can vary from company to company and from country to country (Chiradeep, 2020). For instance, American work culture typically mandates a 9-to-5 workday, with a 30 min – 1-hour lunch break in between. This gives you a maximum of 40 work hours a week, beyond which any effort will fall into overtime. On the other hand, French work culture could imply a 9-to-6 workday (depending on the region in France), with a 2-hour-long lunch break in between and much larger guaranteed paid leave. As per the typical French work culture, employees are encouraged to take frequent breaks in line with the country's 35 work hours per week mandate (Meng & Boyd, 2017). On the other hand, many companies see the benefit in not setting any break time and may be flexible in and out of time. With the rise in work-from-home culture during and post-covid, flexible

work timings are gaining ground as it is less practical to monitor remote employees so closely, and instead, choose to focus on work delivery timelines.

More so, Chiradeep (2020) averred that a survey of 4,000+ U.S. employees found that 59% found flexibility to be a "right," and not a benefit. Specifically, 72% of Gen Zers believe flexibility to be more important than health benefits and employee discounts. So, the level of flexibility in your workplace has a lot to do with its positive or negative perception among employees. A flexible work culture would allow employees to choose their schedules, without having to furnish justifications other than timely and quality delivery of work. But this will depend entirely on your unique definition of work culture – there are companies like Zapier who are 100% remote, as well as IBM, which typically frowns upon remote work.

### **Leadership Style**

A leadership style is a leader's method of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people (Kotter, 2001; Meng & Boyd, 2017). A leadership style refers to a leader's characteristic behaviors when directing, motivating, guiding, and managing groups of people. Great leaders can inspire political movements and social change. They can also motivate others to perform, create, and innovate (Cherry et al., 2022). Various authors have proposed identifying many different leadership styles as exhibited by leaders in business or other fields (Legood et al., 2021). Among others, leadership styles include autocratic, democratic, delegative, transformational, and transactional leadership styles.

Autocratic leaders provide clear expectations for what needs to be done when it should be done, and how it should be done. This style of leadership is strongly focused on both command by the leader and control of the followers. There is also a clear division between the leader and the members (Bass, 2009). Authoritarian leaders make decisions independently, with little or no input from the rest of the group.

Democratic leadership is typically the most effective leadership style. Democratic leaders offer guidance to group members, but they also participate in the group and allow input from other group members. In Lewin's study, children in this group were less productive than the members of the authoritarian group, but their contributions were of a higher quality. Participative leaders encourage group members to participate but retain the final say in the decision-making process. Group members feel engaged in the process and are more motivated and creative. Democratic leaders tend to make followers feel like they are an important part of the team, which helps foster commitment to the goals of the group (Cherry et al., 2022).

Delegative leaders offer little or no guidance to group members and leave the decision-making up to group members. While this style can be useful in situations involving highly qualified experts, it often leads to poorly defined roles and a lack of motivation. Lewin in Cherry et al. (2022) noted that laissez-faire leadership tended to result in groups that lacked direction and members who blamed each other for mistakes, refused to accept personal responsibility, made less progress, and produced less work

Transformational leadership is often identified as the single most effective style. This style was first described during the late 1970s and later expanded upon by researcher Bernard M. Bass. Transformational leaders can motivate and inspire followers and direct positive changes in groups. These leaders tend to be emotionally intelligent, energetic, and passionate (Legood et al., 2021). They are not only committed to helping the organization achieve its goals, but also to helping group members fulfill their potential.

The transactional leadership style views the leader-follower relationship as a transaction. By accepting a position as a member of the group, the individual has agreed to obey the leader. In most situations, this involves the employer-employee relationship, and the transaction focuses on the follower completing required tasks in exchange for monetary compensation (Rexhepi & Berisha, 2017). One of the main advantages of this leadership style is that it creates clearly defined

roles. People know what they are required to do and what they will be receiving in exchange. This style allows leaders to offer a great deal of supervision and direction if needed.

In light of the above, Chiradeep (2020) stated that this is probably the biggest determining factor for any workplace's culture. A manager who gets their hands dirty and takes part in daily tasks vs. a manager who gives employees the autonomy to take charge while leading from a high level will lead to two very different types of work culture. But no matter the leadership style, managers must keep each employee's personality and needs in mind when guiding a team. You can develop their capabilities through one-on-one coaching, equipping them to deliver superior work experiences.

### **Emotional Intelligence**

The concept of emotional intelligence has a crucial function to perform in thoughts and perceptions, according to Brunetto (2012). He also defined the capacity to comprehend feelings and take appropriate actions as emotional intelligence. During the formation of awareness of emotions and feelings of an employee, he clarified three essential aspects, knowing the emotions and feelings of others and performing positive things to recognize these feelings. Galvin (2014) disagreed that emotional intelligence requires a single potential for self-awareness, regulating impulses, internal motivation, knowing other individuals, caring about one's interactions and feelings, isolating them, and using this knowledge to guide one's personal and other strategies. Medina et al. (2017) suggest that the emotional intelligence of every organization strengthens the project manager's perception of their feelings and even those of his employees. It identifies these feelings and manages them for the good of the organization and its employees. Also, emotional intelligence incorporates recognition and guidance of emotions. It also incorporates changes to workers and that the association's programs aim to develop the employee's capacity to effectively perform their position and everyday function to accomplish the desired objective.

However, Baczynska in Saham et al. (2021) noticed that emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in employee success, especially managers in their businesses, who have to be highly emotionally intelligent. In various emotional contexts, conclusions will vary. Emotional intelligence is useful in decision-making and functioning conditions for workers. Numerous reports reinforce the theory that in people with more persuasive social abilities and more significant jobs, the progress rate is more reliable (Meng et al., 2017), work efficiency is enhanced, and companies with higher incomes are managed. Emotional intelligence increases the analytical capacity and the success of the team members. The research on emotional intelligence found a secure connection between emotional intelligence, interpersonal success, and management styles.

Psychologist Daniel Goleman is known for developing the five components of emotional intelligence at work in the 1990s (Indeed Editorial Team, 2019). The following are those components, along with examples of how they are used in the workplace:

1. **Self-awareness:** Self-awareness is the ability to identify your emotions and emotional triggers. Being aware of your feelings helps you understand how others might perceive your emotions. You might use self-awareness at work to understand how you are viewed by your coworkers, clients, or managers.
2. **Self-regulation:** Self-regulation is the ability to control and adjust your emotions to create a more positive effect. Being in control of your feelings is essential in any situation because your emotions strongly affect other people. You might control your emotions on the job by adjusting your feelings to keep a professional appearance in front of clients (Indeed Editorial Team, 2019).
3. **Motivation:** Motivation is the urge and desire to do something, and it relates to emotional intelligence because your desires can promote different feelings toward something. For example, having a desire to complete all your daily tasks successfully might be displayed as intrinsic motivation to your employer and a way of fulfilling your own inner needs and goals.

4. **Empathy:** Empathy is the ability to identify and understand the feelings of another person. Understanding the feelings of others allows you to handle workplace situations more effectively. For instance, when a coworker is showing signs of dismay, you can react with empathy to alleviate a situation that might have become worse (Indeed Editorial Team, 2019; Galvin et al., 2014).
5. **Social skills:** Social skills are the tools used to communicate and interact with other people. Having stronger social skills like effective communication and respect allows you to listen, speak and resolve conflicts more effectively. Social skills can be used in the workplace to develop your career and are essential tools for leaders.

### **Importance of Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace**

Emotional intelligence is important at work so you can perceive, reason with, understand, and manage the emotions of yourself and others. Being able to handle emotions gives you the ability to guide and help people, and it can help you be happier and more successful. According to Indeed Editorial Team (2019), a few reasons why emotional intelligence is important in the workplace include helping workers to:

1. **Understand nonverbal communication:** You have the chance to fix a situation before it becomes a problem. For example, if you notice a coworker displaying some nonverbal signs of sadness, you might take them aside to offer empathy.
2. **Be self-aware of personal emotions:** You can use this skill to adjust your behavior before it becomes an issue for a client or coworker (Meng & Boyd, 2017). For example, if you know you had a rough night, you might attempt to change your behavior the following workday by shifting your focus toward more positive feelings.
3. **Improve efficiencies:** When you are empathetic and understand other people's emotions, you can easily make decisions and complete tasks more efficiently.
4. **Further your career:** Emotional intelligence and leadership skills go hand in hand. Actively displaying abilities such as patience, active listening, positivity, and empathy can help you advance to a leadership role or earn a title promotion or raise.
5. **Encourage others to develop strong interpersonal skills:** Emotions are contagious, and displaying explicit motivation, empathy, responsibility, and teamwork could encourage your team to follow along

Although culture has been proven to be a powerful force in organizations that shapes people's thoughts, behaviors, and emotions (Pizer & Hartel in Luke, 2011), the scholarly discourse has largely ignored the role of emotions in organizational culture (Beyer & Nino in Luke, 2011). Recently it has been argued that the power of culture is largely due to the emotional needs of individuals (Pizer & Hartel, 2005). As De Dreu and colleagues (De Dreu, et al., 2002) succinctly stated, emotions are processes that result from the social context in which they are elicited and that, in turn, influence this social context. Indeed, culture provides a social medium within which members can identify and form emotional bonds with each other to satisfy the needs for belonging (De Dreu, et al., 2002), identity, and social integration (Ashforth in Luke et al., 2011). The cultural forms which allow members to deal with emotional needs can be seen through different rituals, rights, and norms of interaction. Researchers agree that culture manages emotion: with cultural norms allowing individuals to experience and express emotions both internally and externally. Research on the relevance of emotions in the workplace has recently focused on the construct of emotional intelligence (EI), this construct may offer a viable method of exploring how the emotional abilities of teams and individuals contribute to workplace outcomes.

### **Work Culture and Emotional Intelligence: Adoption and Adaptation**

Dale Carnegie in Linjuan (2018) stated that when dealing with people, remember you are not dealing with creatures of logic, but with creatures of emotion. In an increasingly tech-driven

business environment, many discussions have centered on new technology, innovation, and the resultant efficiency and productivity in the workplace. Conversations seem to have drifted slightly away from the "soft" aspect, what is underneath the "hard" assets, or the "wine" in the bottle: people and emotions. People create a culture and are influenced by culture. Like it or not, employees experience and somewhat show emotions at work. Thus, management must always seek ways to adopt and adapt to a culture that would breed positive emotions among employees in the workplace (Barsade & O'Neill, 2016).

In a strong work culture, for instance, a culture of joy, employees can not only genuinely experience happiness, delight, and excitement at work; they also feel the emotions that their coworkers experience (because emotions are contagious) and internalize these emotions as their own. When this occurs high emotional intelligence is enhanced in the workplace. Katy in Al-Shqairat et al. (2020) stated that good work culture showed a positive emotional intelligence of employees as they exhibit good work qualities for the growth and development of the organization.

### **Work Culture and Emotional Intelligence: Premises and Perspectives**

Among others, work culture is important to a company as it strives for better and effectual operations and performance of the organization (Naava, 2016). Premising work culture in the organization should be visible for all to comprehend. The significance of this is to support communication and increase openness and transparency among employees to promote their emotional intelligence while carrying out their tasks and responsibilities for the organization. Also, premising a positive work culture is a gateway to enhancing emotional intelligence among employees. Ivan (2022) noticed that a positive work culture prioritizes the well-being of employees, offers support at all levels within the organization, and has policies in place that encourage respect, trust, empathy, and support. Thus, a promising work culture that enhances the emotional intelligence of employees must be dealt with takes (perspectives) that are needful and useful to both managers and employees of the organization. Thus, we view work culture from a modernist perspective and a postmodernist perspective

The modernist perspective of culture assumes culture can be understood and is based on truths and knowledge which can be controlled and could be used as an aiding tool for the management of an organization. Thus, this has a say in the emotional intelligence of the employees. However, post-modernist theorists challenge the narrative as they rely heavily on metaphor which Julia Kristeva explained and developed the idea of intertextuality (Abdul, 2015). From a postmodernist perspective, intertextuality is concerned with the interdependence and interconnectedness of text and its drawn meaning and understanding which forms the culture of the organization. Post-modernist theorists suggest that intertextuality shapes the culture of an organization through the interpretation of texts, signs, symbols, identities, etc. and all these are interwoven in work processes which of course can affect either positively or negatively the emotional intelligence of employees in the organization (Abdul, 2015; Luke et al., 2011).

### **Relationship between Work Culture and Emotional Intelligence**

The relationship between workplace culture and emotion is discussed under the following headings:

#### **Work Timings/Flexibility and Emotional Intelligence**

The notification of employees about their company to an extent determines their emotional intelligence in the workplace. When employees know the days and how long they are expected to work, they tend to identify their emotions towards work processes. Being aware of their time schedules helps them to be self-aware at work to manage their coworkers, clients, or managers. Employees' workplace breaks also help them control and adjust their emotions to create a more positive effect (Chiradeep, 2020).

More so, with the rise in work-from-home culture during and post-covid, flexible work timings are gaining ground as it is less practical to monitor remote employees so closely, and instead, choose

to focus on work delivery timelines. This promotes employees' urge and desire to do something, and it relates to emotional intelligence because their desires can promote different feelings toward something (Luke et al., 2011; Abdul, 2015). A flexible work culture would allow employees to choose their schedules, without having to furnish justifications other than timely and quality delivery of work as it also helps employees to identify and understand the feelings of another person. Understanding the feelings of others allows you to handle workplace situations more effectively. For instance, when a coworker is showing signs of dismay, you can react with empathy to alleviate a situation that might have become worse.

### **Leadership Style and Emotional Intelligence**

Good leadership promotes employees' intelligence in the workplace. Through good leadership, employees can effectively self-regulate and self-motivate through a difficult, uncertain time thus enhancing work performance. Through good leadership, employees can engage effectively with others (Meng & Boyd, 2017; Rexhepi & Berisha, 2017; Van Wingerden et al., 2017). They see other staff as people, not just producers of outcomes. They also put in the extra effort needed to check in with themselves to manage how they come across in their interactions with others.

Good leadership helps create "psychological safety" among employees in the workplace as leaders connect with staff through empathy which fosters increased engagement. This, in turn, improves focus and productivity. Further, with their excellent communication skills, good leaders can listen to the people who are working virtually and better understand what they are thinking and feeling which of course promotes the management of their emotions in the workplace for greater productivity (Saham et al., 2022). It is important to note that managers must keep each employee's personality and needs in mind when guiding a team (Chiradeep, 2020).

### **Theoretical Foundation**

The theoretical foundation of this study is mainly anchored on the upper echelons theory a management theory published by Donald C. Hambrick and P. Mason in 1984. The basic crux of the theory is tied to the managerial background characteristic of the top management team.

### **Assumptions of Upper Echelon Theory**

This upper echelon theory assumes that managerial choices are mostly not made on a rational basis, because humans are (to a large extent) influenced by their natural cognitive limitations. Behavioral aspects such as bounded rationality (Simon in Andre, 2016), selective perceptions, or various aspiration levels influence the strategic choices made by top management team members and, in turn, company performance. The theory only focuses on the upper echelons of organizations (which is the top management team) and the team-level analysis. More so, as managers have only a limited field of vision, they cannot perceive the whole complexity of a specific situation. Due to selective perceptions, the information-processing capacity of a manager is bounded and only certain parts of information can be noticed which are subsequently interpreted, based on a manager's set of 'givens' (Carpenter et al., 2016).

The justification for the above theory in the current study cannot be overemphasized because of the leverage it gives to management to make strategic decisions tied to the organization's work culture which of course are largely determined by their natural cognitive limitations and visions aspirations. This implies that the management of organizations has values and aspirations, and these values are being articulated in their work culture which shapes the emotional intelligence of employees as well as the operations and performance of the organization. Thus, when management enshrines a healthy work culture such as good work timings/flexibility and leadership style, employees tend to do all they can to ensure that their emotions are intelligently managed for their maximal performance individually and collectively, all for the growth and development of the organization.

**SUMMARY**

The study has shown that a healthy work culture of organizations promotes the emotional intelligence of employees as they contribute immensely to the growth and development of an organization. While both higher levels of work culture such as work timings/flexibility and leadership style, employees can understand their emotions and that of others even as they manage themselves and others for effective processes and performance of the organization.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the summary of the study, the following suggestions are advanced:

1. Work timings/flexibility should be consistently designed to suit and manage employees' stress and other psychological or job-related issues to enhance their emotional intelligence in the workplace.
2. Management of organizations should be proactive and contingent in the use of leadership styles to elicit the best emotions required for the job among employees in the organization.

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