

# STUDY ON EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE WORKPLACE: FINDINGS FROM A CASE STUDY IN AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

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**Abstract:** The term of emotional intelligence became more known and people truly started to understand what it means, it became one of the most important skills to be searched for in every employee, and also it is the skill that every employee is looking for in their superior or team leader behavior. The purpose of our research is to see how important emotional intelligence is among employees in the automotive industry and how it affects them. We examined in this scientific paper three statements regarding emotional intelligence in connection with different factors/characteristics, using existing studies on this topic. A questionnaire was used to reach and collect data of in scope participants from the automotive industry.

**Keywords:** emotional intelligence, job performance, automotive, emotional intelligence in the workplace.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

A dynamic environment in any human collective that brings a set of personality characteristics, or ensure linking emotions and cognition, is a relatively new perspective even considering its effects on behavioral research. (Diaconescu, et al., 2021). Show thinks that people are made up of emotions (2018) that are positive, such as happiness, or negative, such as anger. Writer and psychologist Daniel Goleman said that „Emotional Intelligence is the ability to sense, understand, value and effectively apply the power of emotions as a source of human energy, information, trust, creativity and influence” (Desti & Shanthi, 2015), all of these contributing to a more creative way of thinking and solving problems.

The way people relate to each other, bringing emotions into interaction refers to emotional intelligence and some studies have shown that higher quality interactions is based on higher emotional intelligence (Treglown & Furnham, 2020; Alexa et al., 2022). More than that, it is important to understand how emotions are perceived, controlled, and evaluated in relationships between people (Desti, 2015; Popescu et al., 2021). Furthermore, emotional intelligence refers to the objective side of how humans are aware of the perception of others about them (Show, 2018), helping to understand the dynamic of relationships. On the other hand, Treglow and Furnham (2020), concluded that emotional intelligence people have a higher ability to influence other people.

Bar-On (1997) summarized emotional intelligence as a whole formed by: five internal components (emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, self-respect, self-actualization and independence), three personal components. (empathy, social responsibility and interpersonal relationships), two compatibility components (problem solving, reality and flexibility assessment quality), two components of tension control (stress tolerance and impulse control),

and two components of general mood (happiness and self-prediction) (Tabatabaei & Afsar, 2013).

Also, Mayer and Salovey explained emotional intelligence through the four-branch model which describes four areas of capacities/skills that collectively sketch the many areas of emotional intelligence (Mayer, 2004) (see Figure 1).

The four branches are:

1. Perceiving emotions – this area refers to a nonverbal reception and expression of emotion;
2. Using emotions to facilitate thought – this area refers to the capacity of emotions to guide the cognitive system and promote thinking;
3. Understanding emotions – this area explain that emotions convey information;
4. Managing emotions;

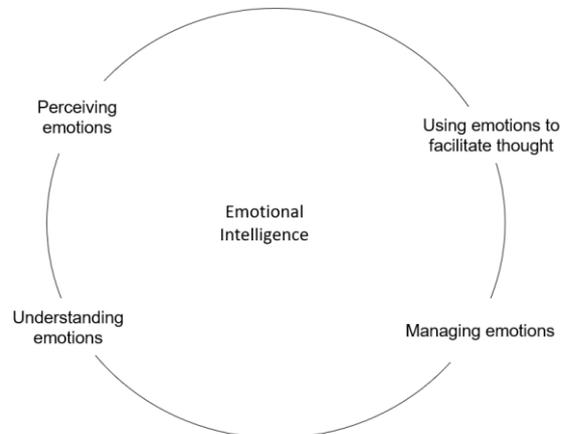


Figure 1. The four branches of Emotional Intelligence

In terms of measurement, there is still controversy about the way emotional intelligence should be measured: by abilities, in characteristics terms or a mix of these both (Miao, Humphrey, & Qian, 2017). However, Miao, Humphrey and Qian (2017) have found that all of these three measures are strongly positively

related to organizational citizenship behavior, employees having better comprehension of organizational norms and rules. On the other hand, the same study reveals that abilities and the mixed measure are negatively related to counterproductive work behavior.

Employee job satisfaction is an indicator of the success of a business organization (Akhter, 2021). Over time, studies tried to define emotional intelligence in the workplace, its role, and how it can be measured, but job-related emotions are still an uncovered subject of study (Sony & Mekoth, 2016; Ban et al., 2022). Weber considers emotions in the workplace a threat that can lead to favoritism (Miao, Humphrey, & Qian, 2017; Sarfraz, et. al., 2021), when there is no balance between emotions and rationality. On the other hand, psychologist Daniel Goleman perceived emotional intelligence as a great indicator of workplace performance, being even more important than technical knowledge (Show, 2018; Sarfraz et al., 2022), existing relevant difference between employees low on emotional intelligence that may do not know how to manage their emotions when confronted with problems, and employees high on emotional intelligence are more equilibrated and aware of their emotions (Miao, Humphrey, & Qian, 2017). In addition, one study revealed how in a workplace people tend to collaborate more and seek out support from the ones they like or are, in some ways of thinking, similar to them (Treglown & Furnham, 2020).

In their study, Krén and Séllei (2021) showed the idea that employees' behavior is influenced by leaders' actions and reactions. Leaders should create a safe environment, motivate, set up and sustain employees' goals, so it is important for leaders to have emotional intelligence in order to have the ability to manage the group's emotions (Krén & Séllei, 2021).

Sony and Mekoth (2016) confirm in their research the existing relationship and positive impact of emotional intelligence on frontline employees – Power utility in India - and their

capability to adapt to various conditions, which leads to job performance and satisfaction.

### 1.1 *Emotional intelligence in the workplace during pandemic of Coronavirus*

In the last three years, the apparition of the pandemic of Coronavirus and its perturbations changed the way people behave and, mostly, the way they work and interact. What before had seemed an exception, now, in many cases, it is a constant – working from home. Organizations were obliged to change their perspective and adapt to these times (Agache, Cisma, Sarfraz, Diaconescu, & Ivaşcu, 2021).

Some studies have shown that emotional intelligence plays an essential role in understanding and managing stress in the professional environment (Sadovyy, Sánchez-Gómez, & Bresó, 2021).

## 2 PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this scientific work is to show, following the obtained results, the importance of emotional intelligence developed at the workplace, this being an important evaluation criterion that helps both employees and the employer "to increase" emotional self-awareness, emotional expression, creativity, increasing tolerance, increasing trust and integrity, improving relationships within and within the organization. It is presented that emotional intelligence is a necessary factor in managing situations that present a high level of stress, but also that this could be more important than technical knowledge.

## 3 METHODOLOGY

The study has a descriptive and causal character. The aim was to describe and highlight the level of awareness among employees in the automotive industry of the importance of

emotional intelligence at work, which is an important indicator of performance. The study establishes the importance of the relationship between emotional intelligence and work productivity.

This research is based on primary and secondary data. The primary data were generated through a questionnaire where 116 employees participated, who work in the automotive field, in Timișoara, Romania.

The answers obtained were analyzed graphically and based on them the results of the study were concluded and measured.

### 3.1 Participants

For this research, we used the questionnaire as a data collection tool, in which a number of 116 respondents active in the automotive field participated, of which 77 were women and 39 were men. The age range is between 18-65 years, most of them are between 18-25 years old. Most of the participants have master's degrees (55 respondents). Most of the respondents are part of the engineering (23 respondents), quality (19 respondents) and procurement (16 respondents) departments (see Table 1).

The questionnaire was distributed through a link within several companies in Timisoara active in the automotive field, our target being to distribute the questionnaire in as many departments as possible.

The data were collected between March and April 2023, the answers being strictly confidential.

### 3.2 Measures

The correlation between emotional intelligence and technical knowledge, the influence of emotional intelligence on mental health and the influence of emotional intelligence on workplace performance was measured using the questionnaire which was applied on 116 employees.

Table 1. The demographic characteristics of the survey

Variable	Respondents active in the automotive field
<b>Gender</b>	
Female	66,4%
Male	33,6%
Other	0%
<b>Age</b>	
18-25	42,2%
26-35	39,7%
36-45	13,8%
46-55	3,4%
56-65	0,9%
<b>Education</b>	
High school	8,6%
Faculty	40,5%
Master	48,3%
<b>Department</b>	
Engineering	19,8%
Quality	16,4%
Logistics	12,9%
Purchasing	13,8%
Human Resources	10,3%
Controlling	6,9%
Other	15%

In order to analyze the level of emotional intelligence within the companies, the applied questionnaire had a total number of 26 questions, of which three questions were designed with the evaluation scale, being of the Likert type. Thus, the respondents could specify their level of agreement or disagreement on a symmetrical scale of agreement-disagreement for a series of statements. The first two questions were designed to identify the level of emotional intelligence of the interviewed persons.

Three questions were designed using the Likert evaluation scale which also contained closed questions where the questioned person had to choose between agreeing or disagreeing with the statement.

### 3.3 Procedures

All participants were informed about the scope of the questionnaire, and also about the confidentiality of their data. The survey was shared online via a link and in the same platform all the feedback was stored.

## 4 HYPOTHESES

### 4.1 *Emotional intelligence is more important than technical knowledge*

Even though over the past few years machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) have grown continuously and improved the world in many ways, people face the fear that their jobs will be “taken”, being pressured to develop new skills in order to differentiate themselves (Beck & Libert, 2017). AI now has as many capabilities as humans have, but what AI can not replicate are emotions such as empathy, motivation (Beck & Libert, 2017) and can not form interpersonal relationships.

In his study on engineering graduates and managers, Joel Alemibola Elegbe (2015) shows that in the first case – engineering graduates – emotional intelligence is seen as not having an important role related to job performance and leadership capability, as they lack knowledge about emotional intelligence. However, regarding the second case, managers have more understanding about emotional intelligence and consider it being more critical in their jobs because they use these soft skills in training, professional development and recruitment.

### 4.2 *Emotional intelligence is an indicator of performance*

In some reviews it is confirmed that emotional intelligence is linked with job performance and satisfaction (Miao, Humphrey, & Qian, 2017), but some controversy exists between gender differences. Authors Dhani and Sharma (2017) found in their IT study case that

even though emotional intelligence is connected with job performance, females are more emotionally intelligent than their male counterparts. On the other hand, in the same study it is demonstrated that men use emotional intelligence in job performance more than women with a difference of almost 5%.

Krén and Séllei (2021) came to the conclusion that emotional intelligence is not 100% related to job performance as a whole, but some components, such as self-management, self-awareness and of awareness of others, are part of the concept of emotional intelligence.

### 4.3 *People with higher emotional intelligence are not so much influenced by challenges and stressful environment*

The study of Sadovyy, Sánchez-Gómez and Bresó (2021) was based on research on role of emotional intelligence in the prevention of employees’ post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) caused by pandemic of COVID-19, which can lead to low work performance. The results demonstrated that employees with higher emotional intelligence have a better capability to cope with the changes, challenges and requirements of the job in order to minimize the influence of COVID-19 pandemic stressful environment (Sadovyy, Sánchez-Gómez, & Bresó, 2021).

## 5 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In our research, we analyze the importance of emotional intelligence used and developed at the workplace, based on those three hypotheses mentioned above.

### 5.1 *Emotional intelligence is more important than technical knowledge*

The first hypothesis questioned the affirmation of Daniel Goleman, who considers

emotional intelligence more important than technical knowledge (Show, 2018). Beck & Libert (2015) on their study that correlates emotional intelligence with AI and Elegbe (2015) which compare fresh engineering graduates with managers in his paper – they do not demonstrate this affirmation, but strongly believe in the importance of emotional intelligence in understanding and use of technical knowledge.

We shared the opinion of Daniel Goleman, as on our direct question, 64 of 116 participants consider that technical knowledge comes after emotional intelligence (see Figure 2), understanding the fact that technical knowledge can be learned and then practiced and thus can become an automation. It shows us that emotional intelligence is a soft skill much more sought after by companies in the automotive field and is a skill used more often than technical ones.

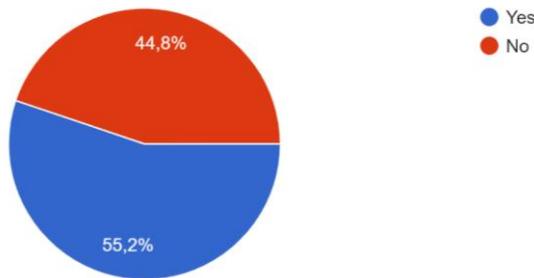


Figure 2. Comparison of importance between the emotional intelligence and technical knowledge

### 5.2 Emotional intelligence is an indicator of performance

The second hypothesis is also based on the statements by Daniel Goleman (Show, 2018), Akther (2021) and Sony & Mekoth (2016) which consider that performance can be based on emotional intelligence. On the other hand, Krén & Séllei (2021) did not find a direct connection between emotional intelligence and job performance.

We have found in our results that, indeed, emotional intelligence contributes to professional development, as 104 participants consider this affirmation valid (see Figure 3). Performance and development are also seen as characteristics of emotional intelligence by 57 of candidates (see Figure 4).

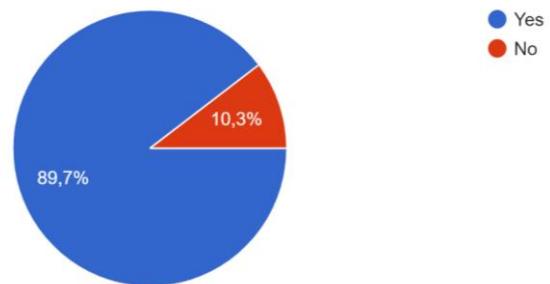


Figure 3. Contribution of emotional intelligence on professional performance/ development

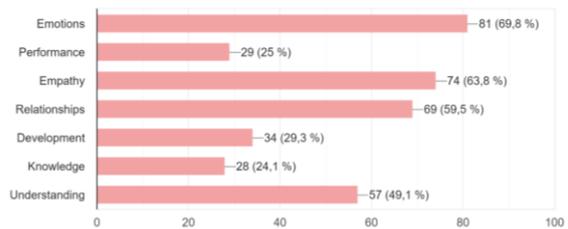


Figure 4. Characteristics of emotional intelligence considered by participants

### 5.3 People with higher emotional intelligence are not so much influenced by challenges and stressful environment

For the third hypothesis existing studies have shown that emotional intelligence has a positive impact and plays an essential role in managing stress and adapting to various conditions and environments (Sony & Mekoth, 2016) (Sadovyy, Sánchez-Gómez, & Bresó, 2021).

One of the most challenging situations facing the whole world was the pandemic of Coronavirus starting with 2020. In our study, half of the emotional intelligence of participants

were affected at work by the situation of the pandemic (see Figure 5).

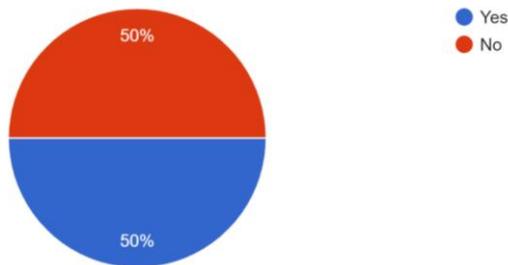


Figure 5. Emotional intelligence affected by pandemic of Coronaviurs

These results are connected to the second graphic when it is shown that pandemic had an average impact on team communication (38 participants affirmed) and the work of 36 candidates was affected due to the social anxiety caused by Coronavirus, but the majority of 38 participants managed to complete their tasks. Nevertheless, in the cases of more than 70 candidates, work related conflicts increased (see Figure 6).

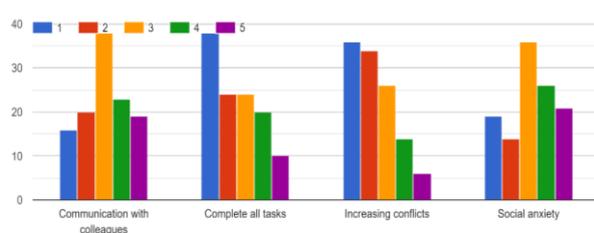


Figure 6. Effects of Coronavirus pandemic on work

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, following the results of our research, all three hypotheses were confirmed, showing that emotional intelligence can be as important as competences and technical skills, being considered a soft skill itself. Companies and managers should focus more on emotional intelligence when they choose to hire a new employee and also to support through different

actions because it is an important indicator of performance.

As future research, we recommend more studies to be done about emotional intelligence correlated with home office, a subject that is more in focus since the context of pandemic of COVID-19, and how it has been affected and expressed.

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