
Block V - Applications of Emotional Intelligence

Unit 8 Applications of EI in Various Contexts

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UNIT 8 APPLICATIONS OF EI IN VARIOUS CONTEXTS*

Structure

- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Objectives
- 8.3 Significance of Emotional Intelligence (EI)
- 8.4 Application of EI in Educational Settings
 - 8.4.1 Fostering Emotional Intelligence in the Students
 - 8.4.2 Fostering Schools as Emotionally Intelligent Communities
- 8.5 Application of EI at the workplace
- 8.6 Application of EI for Health, Mental Health and Well-being
- 8.7 Application of EI in Interpersonal Relationships and Managing Conflicts
- 8.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 8.9 Key Words
- 8.10 Answers to Self Assessment Questions
- 8.11 Unit End Questions
- 8.12 References
- 8.13 Suggested Readings

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The construct of emotional intelligence (EI) has gained much significance, not only in academic and management domains, but also it has started gaining importance in various other fields such as sports, military, police and other set ups. The main elements of emotional intelligence – self awareness, motivation, self-management, empathy and relationship management – basically are the skills that help us to understand and manage ourselves effectively in different situations. Further these skills also enable us to understand others around us and manage our relationships in different contexts in an effective manner. Thus the EI skills facilitate our effective functioning and adjustment in this world. Emotionally intelligent individuals are able to manage stress, understand things from different perspectives, have a positive attitude, resilient enough to deal with problems or crisis, adopt effective coping strategies and value themselves and others.

Thus such people are an asset in any kind of situation or settings who can help achieve the goals as well as contribute to an atmosphere of balance and harmony. In the present Unit we will discuss about different areas where EI has made significant impact. We will learn about the impact and applications of EI mainly in the domains of education, workplace, health, mental health and well-being, and in managing conflicts.

* Dr. Swati Mukherjee, Scientist 'E', Defence Institute of Psychological Research (DIPR), DRDO, New Delhi

8.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying the Unit, you would be able to:

- know the significance of emotional intelligence (EI) in various contexts;
- describe the application of EI in educational settings;
- describe the application of EI in workplace;
- describe the application of EI in health, mental health and wellbeing; and
- describe the application of EI in interpersonal relationships and managing conflicts.

8.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (EI)

We know that emotional intelligence broadly means having an awareness and understanding of one's own emotions and also of those around you. It also means making use of this understanding for effectively managing our own emotions and for nurturing relationships in a positive manner. Emotional intelligence has the potential to influence our behaviour and its outcomes in myriad of fields, be it our social relationships or professional performance. An emotionally intelligent person is able to understand and manage his/her emotions better, and also foster good interpersonal relationships. Let us see an example. There are two individuals working as sales managers in a company. On a particular day, both of them get scolded by their superior officer for not meeting their targets and for not being able to satisfy the customers. Sales manager 'A' who has higher emotional intelligence, is able to understand the frustration she feels on being scolded. She feels angered by the boss's behaviour, but is able to understand the mistakes she had made. As a result, she is able to manage her anger and channelize it in a constructive manner for improving her performance in the future. Her improved performance and amicable way of dealing with the boss results in better performance appraisals and a likely promotion. On the other hand, the sales manager 'B' who is lower on emotional intelligence, despite being competent on professional aspects of the job, is not able to make use of his professional skills as he is too consumed by his anger towards the boss. He keeps ruminating and is unable to focus on anything else. Even after reaching home he keeps brooding and snaps at his children and wife. His behaviour towards the boss also changes, and he fails to learn from the mistakes. As a result, he loses chances of professional growth and also spoils his workplace relationships.

Thus, it can be seen that knowing and managing one's emotions contributes to our satisfaction and success to a great extent. The importance of emotional intelligence has been realized in various domains since it became popular after Daniel Goleman published his seminal book 'Emotional Intelligence' in 1995. It has been recognized that emotional intelligence is absolutely essential for good decision making, sustaining motivation, taking purposive action and to strive for excellence in various areas of life. Emotional intelligence not only affects performance in school and on work, it also has a deeper impact

on life by influencing the way we handle our interpersonal relationships, manage conflicts with our partners, family members and co-workers. An overall impact of emotional intelligence has also been seen in influencing health outcomes for individuals, and also on feelings of well-being and mental health. In the following sections we discuss applications and impacts of emotional intelligence in the domains of education, work, health, mental health and well-being, and in managing interpersonal relationships and conflict.

8.4 APPLICATION OF EI IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

As Plato said centuries ago, all learning has an emotional base. It is increasingly being realised that emotional development not only leads to better academic performance, but also better social competence and overall development of the student. Schools are learning communities, where the teachers and the students interact within an environment of knowledge sharing and sustained development of the youngsters as productive members of the society. Goal of education is not only to gain knowledge, but also to assimilate and integrate it within yourself, so that you are able to contribute towards the growth and wellbeing of the community. Emotional intelligence is a major contributor towards this goal of education. We discuss implications of EI at three levels within the education sector, viz. students, teachers, and the school organisation.

8.4.1 Fostering Emotional Intelligence in Students

Emotional intelligence has been found to predict better academic performance and social skills (Shanwal, 2004). Also, studies have indicated strong relationship between students' emotional intelligence and their classroom behaviour. Emotionally intelligent children demonstrate high skill in managing one's emotion, demonstrate a sense of subjective well-being and show adaptive resilience in the face of future stressful circumstances (Saarni, 2000). On the other hand, those low in these skills may not be able to develop good interpersonal relationship with their peers, and may also be prone to aggression. In the contemporary times, when the students are not only facing increasing pressure for excelling academically, but also feel pressured to meet and keep up with the standards set up by peer groups and the virtual world, the importance of being emotionally intelligent and fostering emotional competence cannot be overemphasised.

School education systems in the Western countries have been focusing on providing structured support to students for social and emotional learning for past few years. Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) is one such umbrella term that is used to cover a variety of education programmes and curricula that focus upon processes through which individuals learn and apply a set of social, emotional, behavioural and character skills required to succeed in schooling, workplace, relationships and citizenship (Jones & Doolittle, 2017). The SEL framework emphasises four areas: Skills, Context, Development and Outcome. The SEL skills are divided into three domains: (i) Cognitive regulation, (ii) Emotional processes, and (iii) Interpersonal skills. These skills affect the short term and long term outcomes related to academic achievements, interpersonal adjustments and mental health and well-being for the students. The

SEL framework also takes into consideration the context of learning as the context has significant impact on the learning outcomes. The fostering of SEL skills is impacted by immediate environment (e.g. familial environment, peer group, school culture etc.) or the distal environment (e.g. cultural and political context). The following diagram (Figure 8.1: adapted from Jones & Bouffard, 2012) provides an illustration of the SEL framework.

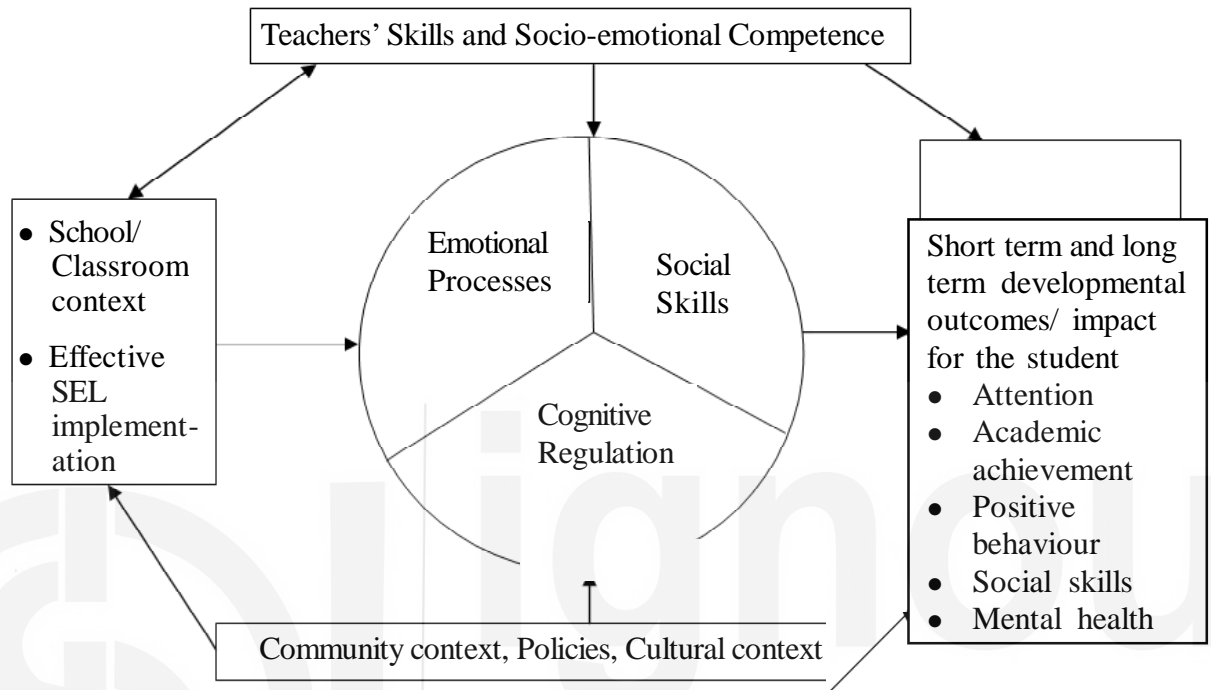


Fig. 8.1: A framework for SEL (Adapted from Jones & Bouffard, 2012)

The above figure shows the interplay of intrapersonal, interpersonal and system level factors in fostering emotional intelligence in educational settings. As is evident, it is not only the student who needs facilitation in developing emotional competence, but the teachers and the overall ethos of the school and the larger context also need to be facilitative. In the next section we discuss the significance of nurturing schools as emotionally intelligent systems.

8.4.2 Fostering Schools as Emotionally Intelligent Communities

School is a learning community. It is a place where transfer of knowledge takes place not only through formal channels, but also through numerous informal channels and activities. Fostering schools as emotionally intelligent community is to create an environment which makes all stakeholders (students, parents, teachers and the school administrators) feel safe, supported, appreciated and connected. Research shows that perceiving, understanding and using emotions is a skill that can be taught and learned. Integrating the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programs at the systemic level has proven beneficial in nurturing emotional intelligence not only among the students but also among the teachers, and in the larger school environment. Integrating the SEL programs into school requires training in emotional intelligence skills for teachers as well as the administrators, followed by relevant support services

(Brackett, Alster, Wolfe, Katulak & Fale, 2007). These researchers emphasise that SEL programs integration at school level must focus on:

- Teaching children to apply social-emotional skills both in and out of school
- Building connections to schools by creating a caring and engaging learning environment.
- Providing developmentally and culturally appropriate instruction
- Enhancing school performance by addressing the cognitive, affective and social dimensions of learning
- Encouraging school-family partnerships
- Including continuous evaluation and improvement.

Self Assessment Questions 1

1. The impact of EI can be seen at which three levels in an education setting?

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2. What is SEL framework?

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8.5 APPLICATION OF EI AT THE WORKPLACE

Interpersonal competencies and social skills are crucial assets for achieving success at work. With the increasing complexity of tasks, collaborations across countries and cultures and increasing business negotiations, emotional intelligence has been recognised as the central pillar of professional success. Two main components of EI that contribute majorly to success at work are empathy and social skill (Rosenthal, 1977). Empathy is the ability to identify others’ emotions and it shapes the way we perceive another person or an event. Empathy not only facilitates interpersonal collaboration, it also reduces the propensity for prejudice, aggression, and violence (Bridgeman, 1981; Feshbach & Feshbach, 1982). Effective use of the social skills is the second component that leads to success at work. Social skills considered important at the workplace primarily concern with managing interpersonal interaction, resolving conflicts, and negotiation. Effective communication, collaboration with others, cooperative efforts to achieve targets, and effective team making abilities are also essential part of social skills (Jones, George, & Hill, 2000).

The following table (Table 8.1, adapted from <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-health/emotional-intelligence-at-work.htm>) describes the four components of EI and their application at the workplace.

Table 8.1: EI in action at Workplace

Component	Description	Application
1. Self-awareness	The ability to recognize your emotions and their impact while using gut feelings to guide your decisions.	Can you quickly sense that something is not as it seems during business meetings or when negotiating something? Usually called “intuition,” this instinctual knowledge is based on emotional intelligence.
2. Self-management	The ability to control your emotions and behaviour and adapt to changing circumstances.	Can you manage your emotions, so that they don’t interfere with your ability to function, rather facilitate you in decision making? Do you know when you need help, and can you ask for it?
3. Social awareness	The ability to sense, understand, and react to the emotions of others and to feel comfortable socially	Can you tell when somebody becomes upset because of your actions? Are you able to see the discomfort through the other person’s smile?
4. Relationship management	The ability to inspire, influence, and connect to others and to manage conflict.	Can you remain calm and focused even when upset or when another person is distressed? Can you defuse conflict with humour or by listen convincingly to another’s point of view?

Source: Adapted from <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-health/emotional-intelligence-at-work.htm>

Self Assessment Questions 2

- Briefly describe the four components of EI and their impact at workplace.
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8.6 APPLICATION OF EI FOR HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

In the face of the evidence that EI can potentially contribute towards day-to-day functioning in various domains, a large body of research has accumulated that claims beneficial impact of EI on health, mental health and well-being. The proponents of EI have claimed that through fostering more constructive and harmonious relationships with other people in society, greater wellbeing and happiness can be achieved, conferring a distinct advantage in everyday life (Goleman, 1995; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Researchers suggest that emotionally intelligent individuals who are better skilled at understanding and managing emotions, and thus capable of more adaptive responding as compared to their counterparts with lower EI, are also healthier than them (Zeidner, Matthews & Roberts, 2012).

In the recent decades the health and illness patterns have undergone a change in most of the societies. Unhealthy lifestyle, chronic stress and complexities associated with health behaviours have given rise to novel health issues and chronic illnesses. Contemporary biopsychosocial models of disease construe health and illness as an amalgam of biological, psychological, and social factors. Recently the role of emotions in the health processes has also been emphasised. Given this conceptualization, EI may serve as a protective factor for healthy outcomes. The following table (Table 8.2, adapted from Zeidner, Matthews & Roberts, 2012) lists the mediating variables that explain the protective role played by EI in ensuring physical health.

Table 8.2: Mediating Variables of EI and Positive Health Outcomes

Mediating Variables
• Greater use of proactive self-care health practices
• More efficient self-regulation towards health-related behaviours
• Fewer unhealthy habits (smoking, drinking, drugs, etc.)
• Better interactions with health care professionals
• More frequent task-oriented coping to deal with health problems
• Greater social support resources that can be relied upon in times of stress or illness.
• Positive emotions and related positive effects of the immune system

A major conceptual pathway that links EI to positive health outcomes passes through the construct of well-being. Both mental health professionals and the primary health workers focus on restoring and promoting sense of wellbeing in the individual. Two kinds of well-being have been recognized by the researchers - hedonic or subjective well-being and eudaimonic or psychological well-being. Hedonic well-being involves the realization of happiness, pleasure attainment and pain avoidance, while eudaimonic well-being refers to the fulfilment or actualization of one's full potential (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Eudaimonic or psychological well-being emphasizes personal growth,

mastery, life purpose and meaning (Ryff & Singer, 2008), and has been associated with indices of physical and mental health (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and is relevant to prevention and health promotion. Literature pertaining to health outcomes of EI show that EI influences well-being by fostering adaptive methods of coping with social challenges, social stress and interpersonal conflicts; promoting the development of supportive social networks; decreasing negative and increasing positive emotions; and enhancing emotional regulation. EI is also conceptually related to the PWB focus on personal growth and self-actualization (Zeidner et al., 2012). Interpersonal and intrapersonal skills that are essential components of EI contribute to positive relationships with others and the capacity for mastery over one’s environment that allow for personal growth, a sense of meaning in life, and self-actualization (Zeidner & Olnick-Shemesh, 2010; Friedman & Kern, 2014).

Self Assessment Questions 3

1. Name the types of well-being given by scholars.

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2. What are the mediating factors leading to positive health outcomes due to EI?

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8.7 APPLICATION OF EI IN INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND MANAGING CONFLICTS

Conflict has been defined as “a process in which one party perceives that its interests are being opposed or negatively affected by another party” (Wall & Callister, 1995). Conflicts can arise in any environment, be it home and family, among friends or in work place relationships. People use different strategies and behavioural styles to deal with and resolve conflicts. The behavioural patterns that individuals employ to deal with conflicts or the conflict management styles (Moberg, 2001) have been differentiated on two dimensions, concern for self and concern for others (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Rahim & Bonoma, 1979). Concern for self refers to the degree to which individual attempts to satisfy his or her concern. Concern for others refers to the degree to which individual attempts to satisfy concern of others. Based on these two dimensions five styles of handling conflict have been identified, viz. integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding and compromising. The following figure (Figure 8.2: Conflict management styles, adapted from Umana, Ogar, & Djobissie, 2019) explains the five styles of conflict management in a concise manner.

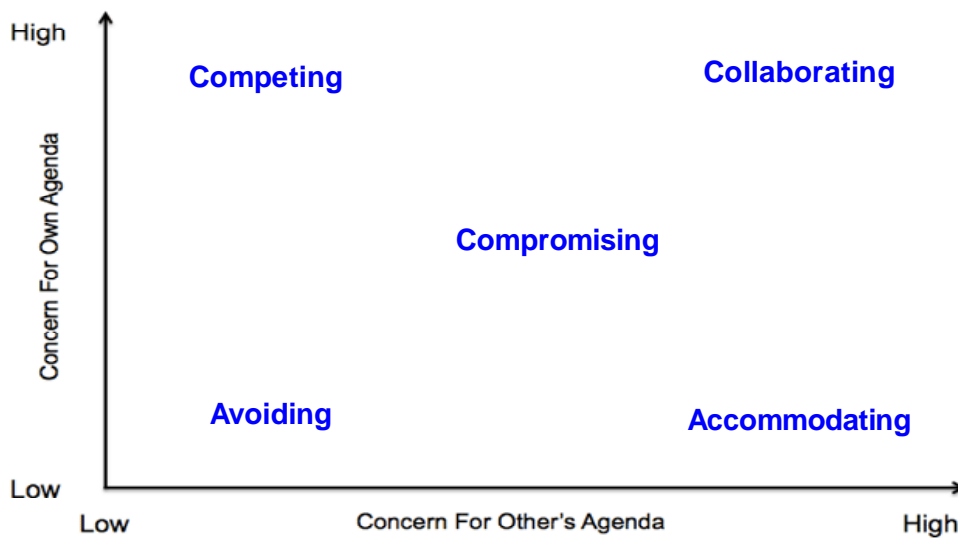


Fig. 8.2: Conflict Management Styles (Adapted from Umana, Ogar, & Djobissie, 2019)

EI is an important component for effectively managing conflicts. The essential skills of EI, recognizing and managing one's own emotions as well as emotions of others enhance the capability of an individual to manage conflicts. EI helps in dealing with interpersonal issues and conflicts in a more constructive manner, resulting in a better choice of conflict management skills. Usage of constructive styles in turn helps foster better social relationships, and reduces probability of further conflict.

Self Assessment Questions 4

1. What is conflict?

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2. What are the five styles of conflict management?

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8.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you learnt about the significance of EI in various domains of day-to-day life, We discussed applications of EI in education and at work. We also learnt the significance of EI in ensuring physical and mental health and well-being. We also learnt the dynamics of managing conflicts and how EI can be of assistance in fostering interpersonal relationships.

8.9 KEYWORDS

SEL : Social emotional Learning framework, a system for promoting emotionally intelligent learning among students and for fostering emotionally intelligent schools.

- Hedonic wellbeing** : Involves the realization of happiness, pleasure attainment and pain avoidance
- Eudaimonic well-being** : refers to the fulfilment or actualization of one's full potential
- Conflict** : A process in which one party perceives that its interests are being opposed or negatively affected by another party.

8.10 ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Self Assessment Questions 1

1. The impact of EI can be seen at three levels, viz students, teachers and the school management.
2. SEL or social emotional Learning framework is a system for promoting emotionally intelligent learning among students and for fostering emotionally intelligent schools.

Self Assessment Questions 2

1. The four components of EI are self awareness, self management, social awareness and relationship management. An individual with high EI functions with awareness of his own and others emotions. With better understanding and management of emotions he is able to develop health workplace relationships, thereby enhancing his chances of success.

Self Assessment Questions 3

1. The types of well-being given by scholars are Hedonic and Eudaimonic.
2. The mediating factors leading to positive health outcomes due to EI are as follows
 - Greater use of proactive self-care health practices
 - More efficient self-regulation towards health-related behaviours
 - Fewer unhealthy habits (smoking, drinking, drugs, etc.)
 - Better interactions with health care professionals
 - More frequent task-oriented coping to deal with health problems
 - Greater social support resources that can be relied upon in times of stress or illness.
 - Positive emotions and related positive effects of the immune system

Self Assessment Questions 4

1. Conflict has been defined as “a process in which one party perceives that its interests are being opposed or negatively affected by another party” (Wall & Callister, 1995).
2. The five styles of conflict management are- integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding and compromising.

8.11 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1. Briefly describe the SEL framework. How does it facilitate use of EI in educational settings?
2. How does EI facilitate better productivity at workplace?
3. How does EI help in ensuring better health of the individual?
4. How is EI helpful in fostering better interpersonal relationships?

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