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Impact of adoption of yoga way of life on the emotional intelligence of managers

Hasmukh Adhia [a], **H.R. Nagendra** [b], **B. Mahadevan** [c,*]

[a] *12, Judges Bungalows, Judges Bungalow Road, Bodakdev, Ahmedabad, India*
[b] *Swami Vivekanand Yoga Anusandhan Samsthan, Gavipuram Circle, Kempegowda Nagar, Bangalore, India*
[c] *Operations Management, Indian Institute of Management Bangalore, Bannerghatta Road, Bangalore 560076, India*
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Abstract The popular perception that a high intelligence quotient (IQ) is not necessarily a good predictor of professional and personal success has led to a growing interest in understanding the role of emotional intelligence (EI) in improving the performance of business managers. This paper studies the impact of the yoga way of life on EI using data collected from 60 managers in a business enterprise and reports enhanced EI as a result of the practice of yoga. The results indicate the importance of yoga as an integral element in improving managerial performance in organisations and the need to further explore this construct in greater detail.
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Introduction

One of the important preoccupations of top management is the improvement of managerial performance. Over the last several decades management researchers have developed constructs to identify the factors that influence managerial performance, and have sought to provide a framework to explain performance. In this context, there is a popular perception that individuals of seemingly average intelligence often do well in their professional and personal lives, whereas people with high IQ often struggle with life's challenges. Therefore, it would be useful to question the assumption that general intelligence is a sufficiently good predictor of success in life. Earlier researchers have suggested that other attributes may be better determinants (Goleman, 1995; Sternberg, 1993, 1996; Tapia, 2001).

There is a vast repository of knowledge and accumulated experience in India on the role of yoga as a way of life in enabling individuals to lead successful and satisfied lives (see for example Becker, 2000; Srinivas, 1994). More specifically, the *Bhagavad Gita*, which explicates on yoga, sees that yoga begets high efficiency in work (Swami Ranganathananda, 2000), opening up possibilities of connections with managerial performance.

This paper builds on the thread suggested above, utilising the concept of emotional intelligence (EI) defined by earlier researchers to measure managerial performance, and explores the yoga way of life as a potential tool to influence the EI of individuals in a study conducted with managers of a large organisation. To the best of our

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +90 80 26993275; fax: +90 80 26584050.
E-mail address: mahadev@iimb.ernet.in (B. Mahadevan).
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knowledge there has been no previous attempt in this direction.

The paper is organised as follows: In the next section we introduce the concept of EI and motivate the use of this construct by discussing the key findings from earlier research. An introduction to the yoga way of life and its usefulness in improving EI in particular, and managerial performance and satisfaction levels in general follows in the next section. The details of the empirical work carried out as part of this study, and the results, key findings, and their implications are discussed in the later sections.

Our study suggests that the yoga way of life could be a potential contributor to improving the performance of managers, and improving their satisfaction levels. Although the results are based on a single study with a sample of 60 managers from one enterprise, the results are encouraging. Our study motivates further research into this aspect in multiple settings, and the generalisation of the results obtained in the study.

Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) is 'a form of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate between them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action' (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p 5). Goleman (2000) identifies five components of EI—self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skill (Exhibit 1). An alternative framework as defined by the Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence (2004) is presented in Exhibit 2.

In a later work Mayer and Salovey defined EI as the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth (Mayer & Salovey, 1997, p 5). Their definition of EI refers to the underlying intelligence factors that they feel are necessary in order to develop emotional competence (EC) skills. While the definition of EI is useful for making a distinction between general intelligence and emotional intelligence, the concept of EC is relevant if we have to talk about using EI for organisational success. The EC framework identifies two main categories—personal competence and social competence—with three clusters in the first category and two in the second. Exhibit 2 shows the major dimensions that form the basis of the framework.

A comparison of the dimensions considered by Goleman (1998) and the framework offered by the Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence (2004) reveals many similarities, and Goleman's influence on the latter is evident. An analysis of these definitions and characteristics of EI leads us to conclude that EI is different from traditional views of intelligence based on cognitive factors suggesting a different kind of aptitude that is founded entirely on non-cognitive aspects of behaviour (Goleman, 2000).

Goleman's research, conducted in 200 large, global companies reveals that EI—especially at the highest levels of a company—is the sine qua non for leadership (Goleman, 2000). A person can have first class training, an incisive mind, and a large supply of good ideas, but without EI it is unlikely that s/he will make a great leader. Goleman (1998) reports that emotional quotient (EQ) is twice as important as technical skills and intelligence quotient (IQ) for success in jobs at all levels, more so at the highest level in a company. Goleman suggests that the difference between star performers and average ones in senior leadership positions can be attributed more to EQ factors than to cognitive abilities. Emotional quotient has a champion in none other than Mahatma Gandhi who opined, 'I know that ultimately one is guided not by the intellect, but by the heart. The heart accepts a conclusion for which the intellect subsequently finds reasoning… Man often finds reason

Exhibit 1 The five components of emotional intelligence at work.

	Definition	Hallmarks
Self-awareness	The ability to recognise and understand one's moods, emotions and drives, as well as their effect on others	Self-confidence Realistic self assessment Self deprecating sense of humour
Self-regulation	The ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods; comfort with ambiguity A propensity to suspend judgment—to think before acting	Trustworthiness and integrity Openness to change
Motivation	A passion to work for reasons that go beyond money or status A propensity to pursue goals with energy and persistence	Strong drive to achieve Optimism, even in the face of failure Organisational commitment
Empathy	The ability to understand the emotional makeup of other people Skill in treating people according to their emotional reactions	Expertise in building and retaining talent Cross-cultural sensitivity Service to clients and customers
Social skill	Proficiency in managing relationships and building networks The ability to find common ground and build rapport	Effectiveness in leading change Persuasiveness Expertise in building and leading teams

Source: Goleman (2000).

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