



Impact of Workplace anger on Employee behavioural outcomes: Mediating role of Emotional Intelligence

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Abstract

Workplace anger has become a challenging phenomenon for organization. Concerted efforts are directed to develop physical and psychological resilience among employees to manage the anger effectively. The objective of the study is to investigate domain of workplace anger and its consequences on employees' behavioural outcomes of job dissatisfaction, turnover intentions, and creativity, and to examine the role of emotional intelligence in affecting workplace anger. Using a structured questionnaire and convenience sampling, the data has been collected from 152 respondents from telecommunication industry. Descriptive and inferential statistics techniques have been used for data analysis. The results indicate a statistically significant effect of workplace anger dimensions of experienced anger, workgroup conflict, and expressed anger on employee behavioural outcomes. Whereas suppressed anger has an insignificant impact on behavioural outcomes. Emotional intelligence has been found to mediate the relationship. The study offers opportunities to organizations to plan and implement requisite intervention strategies to lessen the impact of workplace anger and use emotional intelligence to strengthen employee competence to manage anger effectively for desirable work outcomes.

Keywords: Workplace anger, emotional anger, behavioural outcomes, Pakistan.

Introduction

Management of emotions by employees has become an essential imperative for service organizations to remain competitive in challenging business environment. Positive emotional display by frontline employees during interface with customers has the optimistic effect on customer and significantly affects their satisfaction¹⁻³. There has been renewed focus on this important phenomenon due to its economic, psychological, and social consequences on firm's environment and performance of the organization for competitive advantage⁴⁻⁵.

In knowledge-based economy, the emotional competence of an employee is contributing toward improvement in idea generation, work processes, and organizational performance. This aspect significantly enhances employee performance with regard to problem solving, and decision making⁶⁻⁷. Hence the role of emotional intelligence (EI) has become significant in management of employee emotion in the workplace⁸. The significance of this aspect necessitates exploring and empirically testing the role of EI in mediating the association between anger and workplace and behavioural outcomes of an employee.

Employees perceive and practice management of emotions in the workplace as an essential dimension of performance and tend to generate the positive emotional response compatible with job requirement notwithstanding the personality and cognitive ability⁹. The EI positively influenced employee behavioural outcomes¹⁰. Extensive research has been carried out

to establish the relationship of workplace anger and different work related constructs; workplace anger and employee and organizational performance as well as its effects on pseudo voice in the firms¹¹. However, a limited number of studies existed about the workplace anger and its association of EI¹³. In addition, a few studies examined the causality of EI and other dimensions of behavioural outcomes of employee job-dissatisfaction, turnover intentions, and creativity. Grant¹⁴ identified the need to explore the "soft forms of workplace anger, which has been ignored by the researchers and focused only on physical aggression within context of work. Some studies have identified conflicting results on this relationship¹⁵⁻¹⁶. Hence, there is a need to further explore this relationship in additional studies in a different cultural context to validate the relationship. The study makes a significant contribution in the existing literature by testing empirically the effect of workplace anger on those dimensions of employee behavioural outcomes that have not been examined earlier. Moreover, the study explores the mediation role of EI in the determining the association between two important constructs that have not been studied earlier and need for such study has been stressed¹⁷⁻¹⁸.

Workplace Anger: Employees experience and have to deal with exasperating and provoking context at the workplace¹⁹. This context makes employees to suppress or express anger. Manifestation of anger results in destructive and irrational behaviour²⁰. The frequency, intensity, and duration of experienced anger have serious effect on health²¹. Expressing anger during workplace poses a critical challenge that needs

transformation of behaviour through improving employees' learning and emotional competence²².

Scope of workplace anger: Experienced anger: Experienced anger has been described by Fitness¹⁶ as, "when a person communicates or exhibits his anger towards other, observer's feeling of facing or undergoing someone else's anger is regarded as experiencing anger." This phenomenon exists in firms, especially in service organizations in which employees and customers' interaction is quite frequent²³. Employees frequently experience outburst of anger from unhappy customers²⁴. The experience of anger by employees results in its fall out during interaction with supervisors and colleagues²⁵. Conflicting findings exist in literature with regard to the effect of experience anger on EI²⁶⁻²⁷. A few studies provide strong negative outcomes of experienced anger on employee and organizational performance²⁸⁻²⁹. Other studies have provided positive evidence about this relationship and validated that experienced anger facilitate readjusting interpersonal relationship, voicing disagreement, and resolving conflicts through negotiating, creativity, and improved working relationship with stakeholders, especially peers and customers^{9,15,31}.

Expressed anger: Booth and Mann¹⁵ viewed expressed anger as overt behaviour. Glomb and Liao³² argued that expressed anger by individual reflect the lack of EI, antagonistic personality, and ineffective self-monitoring. In addition, expressed anger negatively affects EI. This state seriously affects behaviour within the organizational context through poor workplace relationship, reduced performance, and emotional instability³³⁻³⁴. Glomb³⁵ stated that the individual expressing anger was likely to modify the negative manners through use of EI due to requisite understanding of its effects on individual and team performance.

Suppressed anger: Booth and Mann¹⁵ described suppressed anger as "concealing the feeling of anger." Baumeister³⁶ stated that suppressing anger make employees go through a cycle of emotional reflection and review it repeatedly in his or her mind resulting in undesirable stress^{27,37,38}. The ability of employees to manage emotions enables them to use these experiences as an opportunity to control stress and improve productivity²⁷. Van-Rooy and Viswesvaran³⁹ found that high EI among employees enables them to manage emotions and demonstrate positive behaviour through effective techniques of suppressing anger. Farh, Seo and Tesluk⁴⁰ stated that suppressed anger results in emotional draining, enhances irritability, and heightens aggressiveness affecting workplace performance. However, Porath and Erez²⁸ found high EI among an individual who practiced suppressing anger on account of his or her understanding of others' emotions, and need to manage own emotions directed toward positive behavioural outcomes. This lead towards the conclusion that suppressed anger positively affects EI.

Work group conflicts: Litterer⁴¹ defined it the manifestation of behaviour of disagreement between groups. Georgopoulos⁴² stated that group-based structure results in enhanced motivation, developed knowledge, increased creativity, and value addition to group performance. Researchers found positive and significant effects of EI on employees' self-efficacy and emotional balance that facilitate the creation of supportive work environment and improved interpersonal relationship among team members⁴⁴⁻⁴⁵. Huy²² found that individuals with higher level of EI demonstrate effective team cohesion and effective job performance under challenging work environment.

Employee Behavioural Outcomes: Job dissatisfaction: In organizational psychology, job dissatisfaction has been established as an essential construct within context of work. Farrell⁴⁶ identified that employee response to job dissatisfaction through loyalty, voice, neglect, and exit. Maute and Dube⁴⁷ found that job dissatisfaction adversely affected turnover intentions, negative behaviour, and anger toward peers, absenteeism, insecurity, and diminished morale⁴⁸. Staw⁴⁹ found increased turnover as a result of job dissatisfaction. It is pertinent to conclude that EI reduced job dissatisfaction because it enables an employee to manage effectively the emotions in the workplace.

Turnover intentions: Extensive research has found conflicting results for the determinants of employee turnover intentions. This is primarily due to diversity of constructs and measurement scales⁵⁰⁻⁵¹. Dong et al.¹³ found affirmative relationship between EI and turnover intentions. Employee possessing high EI tend to have strong and cordial relationship with colleagues and supervisors and likely to stay within the organization for a longer period of time due to psychological bonding. Whereas, the study of Carmeli⁵² indicated an association between EI and employee intention to leave the organizations. Supervisors with high EI positively influence employee and preclude their intention to leave the organization⁵³.

Creativity: It entails conception and formulation of original, novel, and unique ideas that facilitate in development of new product and services, improvement in existing processes, and create value for organization in enhancing customer satisfaction, increase in market share and growth in profitability⁵⁴. Evidence existed that employee with high EI go beyond the routine work rituals and tend to discover and shape the future through discovery of others' emotion and using these for productive outcomes³⁴. Mayer et al.¹⁰ suggested that emotionally intelligent employee effectively controlled and managed workplace conflicts and anxieties and tend to create environment that affected creativity and superior performance.

Emotional intelligence (EI): Mayer and Salovey⁵⁶ advanced the concept of EI. However, Goleman⁵⁵ promoted the concept in organizational context and established that people with high EI are effective in managing own emotions and understanding others' emotions. Several studies have found statistically

significant relationship of EI with work-related outcomes of employees⁵⁷⁻⁵⁹⁸. Salovey, Mayer and Caruso⁵⁹ maintained that employees possessing requisite EI effectively use their abilities and produce excellent results during uncertain work environment. Employee often manifests anger, frustration, anxiety, and dissatisfaction at work. Organizations should create work environment and enhance employee competence to understand others' emotions and manage own emotions with a view to become effective workers⁶⁰.

Research hypotheses: Hypotheses statements: Conceptual framework: H1: Workplace anger positively affects EI. H1 (a): Expressed anger predicts EI. H1 (b): Experienced anger positively affects EI. H1(c): Suppressed anger predicts EI. H1 (d): Workgroup conflicts significantly influence EI. H2: EI predict behavioural outcomes of an employee. H2 (a): EI significantly influences employee's turnover intentions. H2 (b): EI predicts job dissatisfaction of an employee. H2(c): EI predicts creativity of employee. H3: Workplace anger significantly affects behavioural outcomes of an employee. H4: EI mediates the relationship between workplace anger and behavioural outcomes of an employee.

Methodology

The study is causal and cross sectional. The instrument of the study has been adapted from previous studies. A five-point Likert scale has been used to obtain the response with end points of strongly disagree (1), and strongly agree (1) respectively. The measurement of variables has been adapted through different scales. Creativity scale has adapted from Scott and Bruce⁶¹, turnover intentions from Allen and Meyer⁶², job dissatisfaction from Zhou and Geoge⁶³, workgroup conflicts from Jehn⁶⁴, expressed anger from Podsakoff, Ahearne and Mackenzie⁶⁵, Fischer and Rosemann⁶⁶, and Hawthorne, Mouthaan, Forbes and Novaco⁶⁷. Roseman, Wiest and Swartz⁶⁸ scale has been adapted for suppressed anger and expressed anger, whereas EI scale has been adapted from the study of Leach and Iyer⁶⁹. Professional expertise was sought to establish face and content validity of the instrument To ensure validity of

the instrument, pilot testing was conducted on a sample of 45 employees. Results of pilot study are shown in table-1. The results of reliability statistics indicate that the adapted items of all the variables provide reliable results and their values are greater than the cut of value .70 as recommended by Nunnally⁷⁰.

Employees working at different tiers in telecommunication industry were the population of the study. The unit of analysis was individual employees. The questionnaires were self-administered. Out of 237 questionnaires distributed, 152 responses were found accurate for data analysis. This constituted a response rate of 64 %.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive and inferential statistical test were employed to analyze the data using SPSS V .17 software.

Demographic analysis: The respondent constituted 23% female and 70% male. The age bracket varied for 20-30 years (48%), 31-40 years (43%), 41-50 years (5%), and above 50 years (4%). The experience varied from 12 % (less than one year), 39% (6-10 years), and 49% (11years and above).

Hypotheses results: Regression analysis entails meeting assumptions of heteroskedasticity, normality, multicollinearity, and linearity of data. These assumptions were met to ensure that the regression was non-spurious. Correlation test was applied to test the association between variables. The results are reflected in table-2 that indicated the lack of multicollinearity.

The results of the study, as shown in table-3, indicate workplace anger dimensions of workgroup conflicts, experienced anger, and expressed anger has a statistically significant effect in determining the behavioural outcomes of an employee (turnover intentions, job dissatisfaction, and creativity). The dimension of suppressed anger, however, indicates an insignificant effect on behavioural outcomes. The latter result is not in harmony with the previous studies^{71,72}, though it indicates statistically significant and positive association with EI as indicated in table-2.

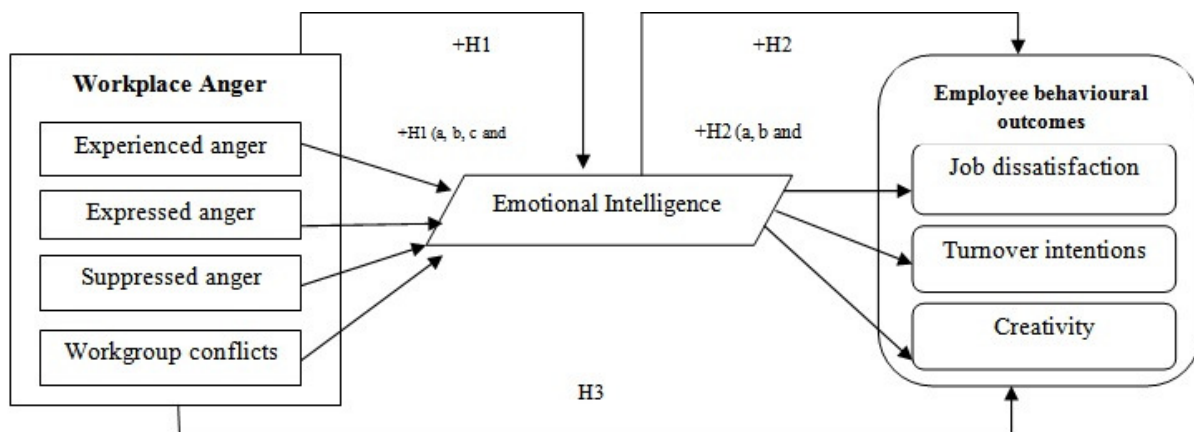


Figure-1
Conceptual Framework

The determination of mediation effects necessitates the adoption of methodology as proposed by Baron and Kenny⁷³. The results of mediation effects are shown in Table 4. The results indicate that EI partially mediates the relationship between workplace anger and behavioural outcomes of an employee.

The purpose of the research is to empirically determine the effects of workplace anger on behavioural dimensions of employee and to what extent EI mediates this relationship. The results of the study concur with the results of earlier studies^{36,37,41,42,45}. However, the results of the effects of suppressed anger on EI are not consistent with prior studies^{71,72}. According to Wu, Hsu and Cheng⁷⁴, suppressed anger, as stressful process, generate negative behaviour and its effect on EI is not positive. In Pakistani culture, where power distance is high, employee demonstrates commitment to suppressed anger on account of economic reason and not because of having high EI.

Managerial and academic implications: The results of the study provide useful insight to organizations with regard to dimensions of workplace anger and its effects on EI and behavioural outcomes of an employee. The findings offer opportunities to organizations to generate awareness among employees about the need of emotional management, focused orientation, and socialization as well as development programmes, and training sessions on these aspects. The emphasis of these programmes should be on understanding and management of emotions. This should also formulate an essential aspect of performance appraisal of an employee. The need for open and frank communication and quality of work

environment based on organizational justice are vital to provide requisite feedback and improve interpersonal relationship with organizational internal and external stakeholders. The need for an institutional mechanism for voicing concerns should be encouraged to foster trust, commitment, and sense of belonging among employees and demonstrating management commitment to their wellbeing. Organizations should capitalize the strong effect of EI on behavioural outcomes of employees to achieve excellence in performance.

The study contributes to the existing literature regarding workplace anger and evaluated empirically the impact of workplace anger and its dimensions' effect on behavioural outcomes of an employee. The study broadens the scope of this phenomenon through empirical results about the mediating role of EI in the relationship of workplace anger and behavioural outcomes of an employee.

Table-1
Results of reliability of instrument

Variables	Items	Pilot study	Main study
Expressed anger	8	.761	.761
Experienced anger	5	.798	.798
Suppressed anger	5	.803	.803
Workgroup conflicts	5	.665	.794
Emotional Intelligence	10	.801	.819
Turnover intentions	5	.781	.796
Job dissatisfaction	5	.748	.831
Creativity	5	.723	.828
Total	48	-	-

Table 2
Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix

Variable	Mean	Deviation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. C	3.169	.972	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
2. TI	2.875	.977	.011	1	-	-	-	-	-
3. JD	3.200	1.03	.271*	.010	1	-	-	-	-
4. EI	3.270	.899	.176**	.166**	.399*	1	-	-	-
5. EA	2.491	.707	.030	.050	.152**	.299*	1	-	-
6. XP	2.781	.868	.071	.044	.274*	.344*	.611*	1	-
7. SA	3.292	.982	.009	-.101	.163**	.080	.212*	.120	1
8. WG	2.424	.858	.035	.151	-.107	.221*	.414*	.355*	.087

**Correlation is significant at p < 0.01 level (two-tailed)

Table 3
Hypotheses test: results

Hypotheses	B	SE	β	t-stat	p	R ²	F
Expressed anger → Emotional intelligence	.381	.099	.299	3.849	.000*	.089	14.82*
Experienced anger → Emotional intelligence	.357	.079	.344	4.494	.000*	.119	20.19*
Suppressed anger → Emotional intelligence	.076	.074	.083	1.019	.309	.007	1.040
Workgroup conflicts → Emotional intelligence	.232	.083	.221	2.781	.006*	.049	7.734*
Emotional intelligence → Creativity	.190	.087	.176	2.188	.030**	.031	4.786*
Emotional intelligence → Job dissatisfaction	.457	.086	.399	5.329	.000*	.159	28.40*
Emotional intelligence → Turnover intentions	.191	.092	.166	2.068	.040**	.028	4.270*

*Significance p < .01, **Significance p < .05

Table 4
Result of hypotheses test for mediation

Hypotheses	β	t-stat	p	R ²	F
Workplace anger → Employee Behavioural Outcomes	-.245	-3.089	.002*	.059	9.544
Workplace Anger → Emotional Intelligence	.453	3.873	.000*	.099	15.005
Emotional Intelligence → Employee Behavioural Outcomes	.252	5.017	.000*	.143	25.173
Workplace Anger → EBO	.143	2.822	.070		
Workplace anger → EI	.224	4.271	.000*	.162	14.440

*Significance p < .01

Limitations and suggestions: The important limitations include the resources, scope, and the lukewarm response of organizations in facilitating the provision of information. Only one industry has been explored, and there is a need to broaden the scope of this study to other industries in order to generalize the findings. The study offer opportunities for further exploration of additional dimensions of angers and its effect on other attitudinal and behavioural outcomes of employees. Further study needs to be carried out on the relationship of suppressed anger with EI and behavioural outcomes of employees. To augment the conceptual framework of the study, further studies should be carried over larger sample and time frame.

Conclusion

The study highlights the importance of workplace anger its management for effective and positive behaviour of employees. Workplace anger postulates negative and positive influences on behaviour of employees. EI partially mediates the relationship between workplace anger and job dissatisfaction, creativity and turnover intentions of an employee. The results provide opportunities to management to plan, implement, and monitor such interventions that generate awareness among employees about the significant effects of workplace anger on attitudinal and behavioural outcomes, and develop psychological resilience to exhibit the positive response to the management of emotions in the workplace. The prevalence of quality of work environment and the role of supervising in developing such resilience is extremely essential. An institutional approach is essential to transform the anger in an opportunity that is vital for individual and organizational performance.

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