

A Study on Emotional Intelligence as a Buffer Against “Invisible Workload” Among Women Professionals

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ABSTRACT

Invisible workload—comprising emotional labour, household management, care giving coordination, and unpaid organizational tasks—disproportionately burdens women professionals and contributes to stress, burnout, and reduced career progression. Emotional Intelligence (EI) can be defined as the assessment and management of both personal and professional emotions and thereby implements them for managing the circumstances and career succession. Emotions are personal thoughts, it may bring happiness and accomplishment in life if managed properly. But if it is not handled in a proper way then it may be dangerous for human beings. Our Interpersonal and intrapersonal disagreement, the relations with society, family and self is also affected by uncontrolled emotions. The developed version of Emotional Intelligence helps the individual to channelize emotions constructively and use them as motivational tool. This study also highlights the fact that EI is an essential determinant for effective leadership and an integral element of the new transformational leadership approach. Therefore, women can also have the same potential to become effective and successful leaders by developing and enhancing their EI skills.

Keywords: Invisible Work Load, Emotional Intelligence(EI), Women, WLB.

Introduction

Women's invisible workload refers to the extensive, often unrecognized mental, emotional, and organizational labour that women carry both at home and in professional environments. This workload includes tasks such as planning, coordinating schedules, anticipating needs, managing household responsibilities, providing emotional support, and performing “office housework” like mentoring, note-taking, or organizing team activities—duties that are essential but rarely acknowledged or compensated. The persistence of invisible workload reflects deep-rooted gender norms and highlights the need for organizational recognition, equitable task distribution, and supportive policies to reduce the disproportionate strain placed on women. For example, mothers of young children often make mental lists of children's day-to-day routines or activities, which at face value is just cognitive labour. This evolves into a mental ‘load’ when the mother is at work thinking not only about the routines and activities, but also about the experiences of their child in these routines and activities, which is emotional labour too, because they are worried about their child even in their absence. When doing this while at work makes it even more an emotional burden because they are having to conceal this from colleagues and/or supervisors while managing their work tasks. This combination of cognitive and emotional labour forms a load as it is tied to the emotional experiences of the family. Emotional intelligence skills helps in the

understanding of emotions so that we can relate better to other people, form healthier relationships, achieve greater success at work, and lead a more fulfilling life.

The Impact of Invisible Work on Mental Health

A person's mental health may suffer greatly as a result of the burden of unseen work. As the person tries to balance several obligations with little assistance, it might result in feelings of overload, stress, and burnout. This may be particularly true for those people who live with a single parent or who share the majority of care giving duties in a couple. Because this kind of job is frequently perceived as something that should be "natural" or "easy," it can also result in emotional guilt and inadequacy. When there is always something else that needs to be done, it can be challenging for those bearing this load to put their priorities first. An individual's general well-being may be impacted by persistent stress brought in by the mental strain of invisible employment.

Emotional Intelligence(EI)

The capacity to comprehend, analyse, and control our own emotions as well as those of others is known as emotional intelligence.



Fig. 1: EI Components

Source: Women's Emotional Intelligence: The Hidden Power You Didn't Know You Had! by Laura Adams published on March 16, 2025 <https://womensoutfront.com/>

- **Self-Awareness**

Awareness about being in tune with one's emotions is the first step. This awareness enables people to recognize their emotions and the reasons behind them at any particular time. Better control of emotions results from an awareness and comprehends them. Strategies for controlling strong emotions, controlling reactions, and reacting in ways consistent with one's values and objectives are all part of emotional regulation.

- **Self-Regulation**

A crucial component of emotional intelligence that is essential for both personal and professional success is the ability to manage and control disruptive emotions and adjust to change. The

first step is to identify when a feeling is becoming problematic. For instance, unchecked anger can harm relationships, while excessive anxiety can impair performance. Effective management begins with recognizing these feelings as they emerge. Once recognized, methods like self-reflection, mindfulness, or asking help from others, can help manage these feelings.

- **Motivation**

A fascinating feature of emotional intelligence that exhibits resilience, tenacity, and optimistic thinking is the drive to accomplish goals and the ability to remain optimistic in the face of setbacks. The secret is to have a positive outlook and a strong sense of self-worth. This entails emphasizing your strengths, acknowledging your accomplishments, and having faith in your ability to overcome obstacles.

- **Empathy**

Empathy, a crucial component of emotional intelligence, is the ability to comprehend the feelings of others and respond to them appropriately. This entails acknowledging, honouring, and reacting to the feelings and emotions of others. Empathy is essential, but it also calls for moderation and limits. Emotional exhaustion can result from over-empathizing without taking care of oneself. It is equally crucial to be conscious of one's emotional demands. Although it's a difficult skill that requires awareness, and mindfulness, its effects can be significant and wide-ranging.

- **Social Skills**

It takes a complex mix of social skills, emotional intelligence, and strategic thinking to manage relationships, create networks, and establish common ground to advance in the desired direction. This holistic approach can be crucial, in both personal and professional settings.

Action for mental health at work

The following actions can be taken by the government, employers, organizations that represent employers and employees, and other stakeholders in charge of workers' health and safety to help promote mental health at work:

- Reduce the hazards leading to mental health at work in order to prevent job-related mental health disorders;
- safeguard and advance mental health in the workplace;
- encourage employees with mental health issues to engage in and succeed at work; and foster a climate that is conducive to change.
- Workers and their representatives, as well as those who have personally experienced mental health issues, should be meaningfully included in any action taken to address mental health at work. Counselling the employees who have mental health issues can help in solving the problem to a great extent, which can be done by hiring experts.

WHO Response

WHO is dedicated to enhancing workplace mental health. The WHO Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan (2013–2030) and the WHO Global Strategy on Health, Environment, and Climate Change provides pertinent guidelines, goals, and tactics for promoting mental wellness at work. These include lowering stigma and discrimination, improving access to evidence-based care through health service development, including occupational health services, and addressing socioeconomic determinants of mental health, such as living standards and working conditions. The workplace is a prime example of a setting where transformative action on mental health is required, according to WHO's 2022 World Mental Health Report: "Transforming Mental Health for All."

The WHO's guidelines on mental health at work include evidence-based suggestions for promoting mental health, preventing mental health disorders, and facilitating the participation and success of those with mental health disorders in the workplace. Organizational interventions, worker and manager training, individual interventions, going back to work, and finding a job are all included in the recommendations. A practical framework for putting the WHO's recommendations into practice is provided in the accompanying policy brief, "MENTALHEALTH AT WORK: POLICY BRIEF", published by the International Labour Organization and WHO. It outlines the particular actions that governments, employers, organizations that represent employers and employees, and other stakeholders may take to enhance mental health in the workplace.

Emotional Intelligence in Career Advancements

Professionals have long been informed that emotional intelligence is essential for career advancement and job success. This is evident in the present situation. In addition to being a quality that hiring teams want, emotional intelligence also affects the one who gets salary hikes and promotions.

- By 2030, there will likely be a 26% increase in the demand for emotional intelligence.
- Among the top ten most sought-after abilities, emotional intelligence will continue to be crucial at least through 2025.
- The average annual salary difference between persons with high and low emotional intelligence is \$29,000. An increase in the yearly pay by \$1,300 for every point, results in the rise in emotional intelligence.
- 75% of managers use emotional intelligence to assess whether staff members are prepared for a raise or promotion, according to Emotional Intelligence Statistics.
- With 58% of success in all job kinds, emotional intelligence is the best indicator of job performance.
- According to 57% of managers, their best-performing staff members possess high emotional intelligence.

Literature Review

Newton(2016) A growing body of empirical studies suggests that EI can buffer the negative effects of stressors. Individuals with higher EI report lower perceived stress and better psychological adjustments while facing job demands that require emotional regulation. Several occupational studies—across healthcare, education, and service sectors—report that EI moderates the relationship between emotionally taxing work (including caregiving and customer emotional demands) and burnout, supporting the buffering hypothesis in organizational settings. Having said that, critiques emphasize that EI alone cannot substitute for structural solutions. Relying on EI as the primary fix risks individualizing which are often called systemic and gendered burdens.

Joyce and Magesh, (2017) conducted study among women employees working in IT sector by among 150 women. The results indicated that, the level of emotional intelligence among women employees working in IT sector is quite low.

Mayer et al., (1999) Emotional Intelligence is “the ability to perceive emotions, integrate emotions to facilitate thought understand emotions, and to regulate emotions to promote personal growth.

(Boyatzis, Goleman and Rhee, 2000) “It is more accurate to say that the frequency with which a person demonstrates or uses the constituent capabilities, or competencies, inherent in emotional intelligence determine the ways in which he/she deals with themselves, their life, work and others.”

(Allen et al., 2013) Work-life balance may be facilitated by remote work choices, flexible work schedules, and maternity leave, according to research. Organizations that adopt flexible policies report higher job satisfaction and lower rates of burnout among female employees.

(Hudson Resourcing, 2005) Indian economy is undergoing rapid changes in role of women from traditional culture to current modernised culture due to monetary pressures that influence women to enter into workforce with the notion to support family with financial benefits and to lead a stress free life and to maintain a positive balance between work and life. WLB is broadly defined as an equally satisfied level of involvement or ‘fit’ among the multiple roles in a person’s life .

(Chincholkar and Krishna, 2012) Women participation in the workforce represents a contribution of their part in the total workforce. The role of employed women encompasses duties like love, caring mother and wife, the responsible daughter in law to the professional women executive .

(Wattis et al., 2013)Child care responsibility is still a constraint for working women as well as it has an influence on labour market assessment of parents, specifically mother with younger children

Research Objectives

- To investigate the scope and the characteristics of the unseen workload faced by female professionals in both personal and organizational settings.
- To assess the correlation between invisible workload and significant outcomes including perceived stress, job satisfaction, wellbeing, and turnover intention.
- To pinpoint organizational elements that either promote or mitigate invisible workload, and to evaluate the interaction of Emotional Intelligence with these elements.
- To ascertain if Emotional Intelligence serves as a moderator (buffer) for the effects of invisible workload on psychological and work-related outcomes among women.

Research Methodology

The purpose of research is to discover answers to questions through the application of scientific procedures. The main aim of research is to find out the truth which is hidden and which has not been discovered as yet. Research methodology is a way of explaining how a researcher's intend to carry out their research. It is a logical, systematic plan to resolve a research problem. A methodology details a researcher's approach to the research to ensure reliable, valid results that address their aims and objectives. It encompasses what data they are going to collect and from where, as well as how it's being collected and analysed.

Analysis & Interpretation

The aggregated findings distinctly demonstrate that the unseen workload significantly adversely affects women in professional roles, leading to increased stress levels and diminished job satisfaction. Nevertheless, Emotional Intelligence acts as a catalyst and a mitigating factor, alleviating these impacts and empowering women to more effectively handle emotional and cognitive challenges. Although EI enhances personal resilience, the results further imply that depending solely on EI is inadequate; comprehensive organizational reforms are also necessary to recognize, assess, and equitably allocate invisible responsibilities.



Fig. 2: Employer Investment in behavioural Health Coaching

Source: <https://www.benefitnews.com/>

When it comes to juggling work and family obligations, women in the office traditionally have had a greater burden. Women are finding it more difficult to carry that burden as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Everyone has found it difficult to adjust to the change to remote work, but women have been given a larger share of the workload as they try to manage their obligations both within and outside the virtual office. Men spend 51.5 hours a week on housekeeping and caring, compared to 71.2 hours for women who work full-time and have a partner.

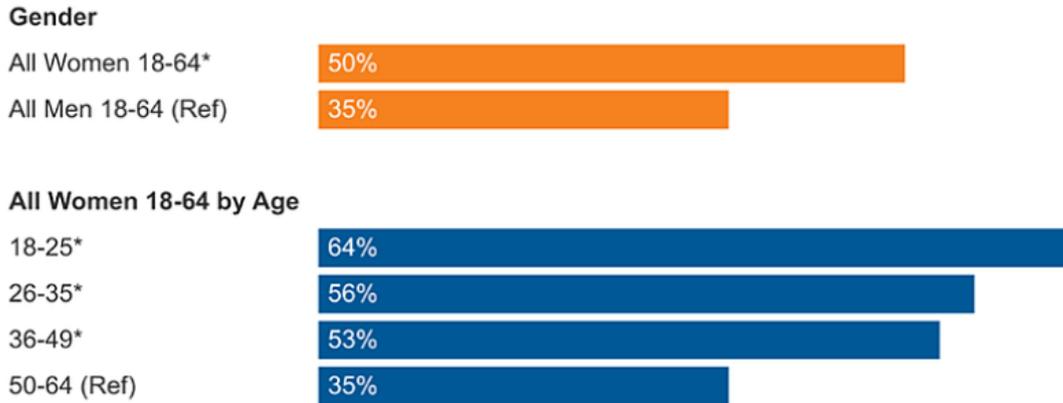


Fig. 3: Requirement of mental health service

Source: KFF women's health survey 2022

According to an examination of data from the 2022 Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) Women's Health Survey (WHS), a sizable portion of women did not receive the mental health services they believed they required, despite the fact that a sizable portion of them reported requiring them within the previous two years. Only half of the 50% of women between the ages of 18 and 64 who reported needing mental health services in the previous two years (including 64% of women between the ages of 18 and 25) were able to get an appointment, which may indicate unmet mental health care needs.

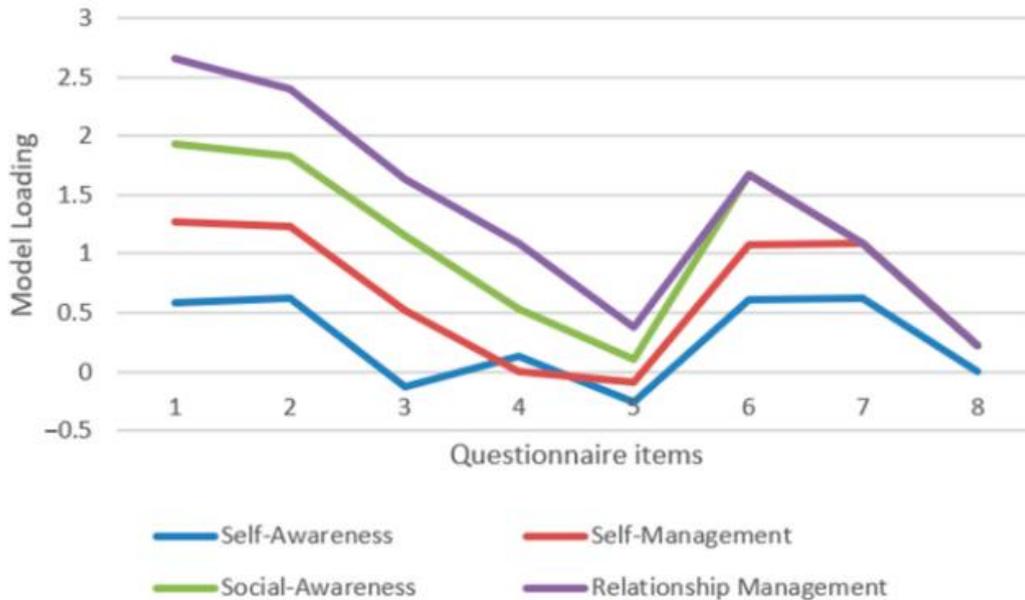


Fig. 4: Impact on EI

Source: Supramaniam, S., & Singaravello, K. (2021). Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Organisational Performance: An Analysis in the Malaysian Public Administration. *Administrative Sciences*, 11(3), 76. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci11030076>

According to the survey participants' EI viewpoints, "Relationship Management" and "Social Awareness" were highly valued. This suggests that a higher OP rate is supported by effective stakeholder relationship management and a high degree of social element awareness. Maintaining a high level of Organizational Performance (OP) also depends on "self-awareness" and "self-management," which should not be disregarded. Finding out how EI affected OP was the next step.

Conclusion & Suggestions

The unseen workload—encompassing emotional labour, mental organization, coordination, and unassigned tasks within the organization—plays a significant role in contributing to stress and burnout among women. Nevertheless, women who possess elevated levels of emotional intelligence (EI) exhibit enhanced coping mechanisms, improved emotional regulation, and more proficient boundary-setting, which together alleviate the adverse effects of these pressures. Emotional intelligence fosters resilience, improves communication, and enables women to negotiate their responsibilities with greater confidence. Although EI can alleviate some of the psychological stress associated with invisible workloads, it cannot replace the need for structural reform. To achieve meaningful advancement, organizations must recognize invisible labour, equitably distribute responsibilities, and establish supportive policies. Lastly to conclude the development of emotional intelligence and institutional acknowledgment provide a comprehensive approach to enhancing wellbeing, job satisfaction, and career progression for women in the workforce.

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