Relating emotional quotient to understand self and adapt socially

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Abstract
Purpose - Self Image is what we think of ourselves - constructed from our beliefs and values. These beliefs and values are based on our influences, experiences, interactions and responses from people we interact with. Further, how we react to others, form part of an attribute that is dependent on our self belief - Emotional Intelligence. As subjective feelings and emotions control responses in a particular way: angry, sad, happy; each of these impacts our performance. This paper examines the ability of a student to balance these emotions and use them towards behaving congruently, performing optimally and living a better life. Drawing from the biographical narrative written interviews, the study explores, among 240 students of business management school, the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and the support from family, friends, teachers in adapting appropriate career development.

Design/Methodology /Approach –
Biographical narrative interview method was used to examine the Self-Image of students. The reports were critically analysed to assess the influence of the environment on the student and with one on one mentoring session helped them explore their competencies and skills for deciding employment trajectory and adopting appropriate career development. – Helping management students create Self Image through Biographical narrative interview method

Findings - Extensive interactions with the students individually as well as in a group and results from the Coaching and Training sessions brought to fore that most of the students had conflicting self images which led them to believe that they had inadequacies in their personalities and this led to low self esteem. Therefore, there was a definite requirement for students to be more congruent and believe in themselves. The research carried out also intended to help the students change their self image and operate from a position of self belief and congruence which in turn would lead them to succeed in their endeavours.

Research Limitation –
  1. *The study has been carried out in one institution therefore the sample size does not cater to diversity in socio economic class and background of students.*
  2. *Disadvantages can be that a biographical interview is work and time consuming and analysis is difficult if it is not possible to record and transcribe the interview.*

Practical Application - The learning of the study has been found to help students being much more self aware and self confident and therefore has allowed them to accordingly adapt positively to social set ups professionally and personally.

Originality Statement - This research study is original. Training and Coaching Sessions were conducted in the premise of the Birla Institute of Management Technology (BIMTECH) and feedback was shared with the students and Faculty.

Introduction
    Young Business Management students in India face a lot of challenges while choosing a right career path. Due to tough competition, rapid change and instability in the existing market, even

those who possess strong academic, technical, and interpersonal skills have encountered difficulty in securing appropriate entry-level positions. This uncertainty, in addition to limited opportunity to engage in work experience, is believed to undermine confidence in and planning for the future among many young graduates in India. They are often seen to be confused related to their goals, the strengths which they possess and their competencies.

Corporate on the other hand feels that in order to efficiently manage projects, teams, and companies, students need to first learn to manage themselves; look within and reflect on how efficient they are at this skill. The goal of the current research is to make students stop and think about their own character, assumptions, beliefs and values; understand the changing career landscape; develop the right skills and chart out a road map for a successful life career.

Literature Review

Emotions contain information about a person's relationship with the environment and can be triggered when the person– environment relationship changes (Lazarus, 1991). During social interactions, verbal and nonverbal emotional expressions convey information about one's own and others' thoughts, intentions, and behaviors (Buck, 1984; Ekman, 1973; Keltner & Haidt, 2001). Emotional abilities, including the ability to perceive, use, understand, and manage emotion, contribute to optimal social functioning (Denham et al., 2003; Eisenberg, Fabes, Guthrie, & Reiser, 2000; Feldman, Philippot, & Custrini, 1991; Nowicki & Duke, 1994; Savage, 2002). For example, accurately perceiving a person's emotions (type and intensity) facilitates the prediction and understanding of that person's subsequent actions (Elfenbein, Marsh, & Ambady, 2002). To understand the significance of emotional states regarding the person– environment relationship, guides attention, decision making, and behavioural responses (Damasio, 1994). Managing emotions effectively is critical to optimal social functioning as this skill enables one to express socially appropriate emotions and behave in socially acceptable ways (Gross, 1998). Intelligent processing and effective management of emotional information are necessary to navigate the social world (Keltner & Kring, 1998). Emotional intelligence EI theory also relates concept of intelligence with an array of mental abilities, which includes social, practical, and personal intelligence, rather than merely a monolithic (e.g., Cantor & Kihlstrom, 1987; Gardner, 1983; Sternberg, 1985). Specific intelligences often are distinguished according to the kinds of information on which they operate (J. B. Carroll, 1993; Wechsler, 1997). EI operates on cognitions or information processing that involves matters of personal and emotional importance to individuals and their relationships (Abelson, 1963; Zajonc, 1980; see also Mayer & Mitchell, 1998). The goal of the study presented here was to use theoretically derived self-report presented in the form of written biographical narrative interviews and performance measures of EI to examine the role of emotional abilities in the social behaviours of the students. The study intended to help students change their self image and operate from a position of self belief and congruence which in turn would lead them to succeed in their future endeavours.

Biographical research used for this study is not a new term. Collecting and analysing personal stories in a systematic way has a long tradition in the social sciences. It refers to a "…field which seeks to understand the changing experiences and outlooks of individuals in their daily lives, what they see as important, and how to provide interpretations of the accounts they give of their past, present and future" (Roberts 2002, 1). A distinction is usually made between autobiographical and narrative interview; autobiographical interview focuses on the life history of the person while narrative interview focus on other things too (Riemann 2003). It involves analysis of "brief, topically specific narratives organised around characters, setting, and plot" (Riessman 2001, 82). Present study used narrative interviews in the form of autobiographies as a research tool.

In recent years the story telling aspect has gained a significant importance in qualitative researches that are done in social sciences. Through this technique, an individual narrates events and how the events are related indicate how individual gives meaning to his life (Johansson 2005, 220;

Riemann 2003.) There has been a lot of debate on realistic and constructive/ narrative approach (Roberts 2002, 7). By narrative we mean a story about life (biography) or part of life; which comes out interesting both as to content and to form. There is a lot of emphasis on using kind of questions that can generate right responses like for e.g.: 'Every person has a life story. Try to tell me about your life in about 20 minutes. Start wherever you want.' Or 'If you were to write a book about your life story, what would the different chapters be about?' (Holstein- Gubrium 1995, 40-41; see Johansson 2005, 248.) Some researchers recommend specific question, like 'What does your life mean to you?' (Chase 1995; see Johansson 2005, 248.) Curran & Chamberlayne (2002, 2) in his research used an open question in which the interviewee was asked to speak freely about his/her own situation.

Special care has been taken while using biographical narrative interview method for the present study. The interviewers tried to be vague enough to not to restrict the interviewee's storytelling but specific enough, so that the interviewee knows what is expected of him/her. Keeping Riemann suggestions in mind, the interviewer pulled the interviewee into narrating by narrating something first, e.g. introducing herself with a story before asking students to tell their stories (Riemann 2004.)

To make students comfortable, they were asked to narrate the incidents on a piece of paper in written form. They were given 60 minutes to narrate their life stories on paper.

Pre- requisites followed while using BNIM technique in research

When using biographical narrative interview method in the present work with young management students, some important aspects given by Riemann (2003) were kept in mind:

1 –The exercise was conducted in duration sufficient to develop trust between interviewer and interviewee (total 5 hours/300mins). Many individual mentoring sessions were conducted post BNIM.

2 – The generating question were formulated in such a way that it can elicit an extempore narrative of the interviewee's involvement in events and experiences that were relevant for the person instead of eliciting plain accounts or explanations as to why he/she acted in a certain way.

3 – The interviewee was allowed to write his/her story without being interrupted, except for when the interviewer got lost and does not know what the narrator is talking about.

4 – After the closing remark of the main narrative, there was a phase of questions and answers: the interviewer asked a few narrative questions in order to let the interviewee conclude his narration.

Methodology
Participants

One hundred and ninety one postgraduate management students (65% female) at Birla Institute of Management Technology, Greater Noida in India participated in the study for the partial completion of a course requirement titled 'Managing self and Career'. Participants primarily ranged in age from 21 years to 27 years.

Procedure

No specific hypotheses were proposed for this analysis. The study was conducted in three stages. These stages were carried out by two judges who discussed their decisions until a consensus was reached.

Amongst the variety of research methods employed within BIMTECH as a whole, the researchers took 'Who Am I' approach to use self exploratory methods to tackle the specific primary research question:

How to understand oneself and his abilities, so that he can communicate better, build effective relations personally and professionally and live a better life?

'Understanding the psychology of self can mean the difference between success and failure, love and hate, bitterness and happiness. The discovery of the real self can rescue a crumbling marriage, **recreate a faltering career** and **transform victims of personality failure.** On another plane,

discovering your real self means the difference between freedom and the compulsions of conformity.' - T.F. James

The goal of the current research was to make students stop and think about their own character, assumptions, beliefs and values (Self image); understand the changing career landscape; develop the right skills and chart out a road map for a successful life career. The research carried out also intended to help the students change their self image and operate from a position of self belief and congruence which in turn would lead them to succeed in their endeavours. Keeping this as the premise, the approach of group coaching was adopted as a first step to understand how and what constructs 'SELF'. The study was conducted in three phases:

In the first phase, the students were made to write a one page biography about themselves, emphasising their ambitions, goals and influences; without giving them any specific format or a structure. The outcome was a mixed bag of aspirations, goals, fears, pain, beliefs, triumphs, successes and failures.

In the second phase, based on the analysis of the write ups, students were asked to write their own concept of the 'sort of person' they are. The buildup, thereby, being from their own beliefs about themselves.

a) The research began with a three hour group coaching session which was driven by a 'Question Based Discussion' and a 'Neuro Linguistic Programming' (NLP) technique to help the researchers elicit the core values of each student. The focus hinged on a single question that is designed to elicit narrative from student: ***"Can you tell me about yourself – your core values, strengths, your goal as a child and your goal now as an adult in the threshold of a career. Please begin wherever you like"***. The students were offered the space to tell their story in their own way, without interruption or guidance from the coach. The method requires the coach to abstain from interrupting, and to offer the student a sense of open-ended space within which to speak. During the students' response to the question, the researchers took notes about the topics discussed, paying particular attention to the sequence in which topics are raised and the language used by the students. Then, after the students finished with what they had to say, the coach further asked questions about the events and experiences that had been recounted, for more narrative detail and seeking out narratives of particular incidents ("pushing for influences and inspirations as a child, adolescent and as an adult'). The questions followed the sequence of topics raised by the students in their initial answer, and used the student's own words. The method, however, was a structured questioning procedure where a pre-set list of questions or themes guided the students. In the entire procedure, the students decided for themselves what and how to speak wherein researchers only asked for more detail about events and experiences that they themselves first discussed. The process elicited the information about attitudes and orientations towards the issues focused on understanding their core values, beliefs and who their role models were (influences), which constructed their 'SELF IMAGE'. The approach produced rich narratives about their biography, however there were a lot of confusion in the minds of the students in relation to their beliefs and the goals. Majority of the lot termed their wishes and desires as their goals which weren't very specific.

b) To help them come out with their specific goals, first they were helped to discover their core values. Two methods were used in doing so. First a value elicitation exercise was carried out by asking them the question: "What is important in your life?, " What do you truly value?" On repeatedly asking this question each student came out with a minimum of 8 values. They were made to describe each value. All the 8 values after having been elicited, the students were made to compare each value and make a hierarchy of values with the most important one at the top. The result came out with their most important core value which they identified with and which made them happy.

c) The third method used was an NLP technique called "Anchoring and Mentors Table". This refers to the process of associating an internal response with some external or internal trigger so that the response maybe quickly or covertly, reassessed. The process:

1. **Pick a memory**- The students were made to close their eyes and pick a memory with strong feelings attached to it. The aim was to anchor 'motivation' and pick a memory when they were super motivated.

2. **Associate into the memory**- This means, making the memory intense and visualise the place, the colour, three people who inspired them and they took them as mentors; and the surroundings. The clearer the image the more intense the memory.

3. **Anchor the feeling and what the mentors said**- As the students felt the positive feelings, they were asked to recreate what each person with them said as a motivation. They were made to fully live the memory as if it was happening then. They were asked to hear what each of the people, they idolised, said. Once they accessed it, they were made to step out of it and take a deep breath. Then they were made to open their eyes and note down what the mentors said to them. The interesting part was that all the students were super motivated and were able to relate with what their mentors said and how it connected to their core values. The exercise helped them connect to their sub-conscious mind and cognitively work out their goals based on what they believed in and what they identified with.

In the third and last phase, the students were asked to write a one page Career Autobiography in a structured manner again, this time emphasising on their core values and strengths- which were more concrete now; about the people and events that inspired them and about their goals which enabled them to decide and choose their career wisely.

Validity

To validate the data collected through various methods, the first thing researchers did was to adopt grounded methodology. Instead of starting with a hypothesis and looking for evidence to prove or disprove that hypothesis, the data was looked from the bottom up methodology- inductive reasoning, to be specific "What do I see here?". In the next step negative case sampling was adopted; a method where you're basically asking yourself throughout qualitative research, what is the story this data is telling me? Not what is the story I want to tell. To get the perfect unbiased results, researchers used triangulation method i.e. multiple data collection method followed to have multiple investigators, in our case there were two investigators.
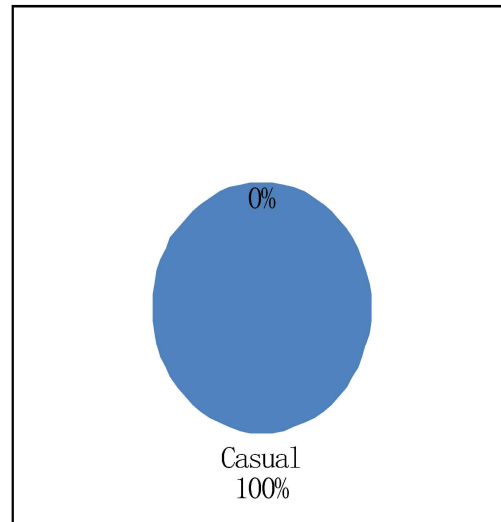
Findings

Pattern recognition and fair representation methodology was adopted to get the exact data. Through analysing the autobiographical narratives, commonalities and similarities were pulled out. There were instances where the outliners were also embraced for the simple reason that though they were uncommon they were significant. Inductive analysis was done to identify which state of mind the narration is indicating. For the present study, four major state of mind were identified.

1. Highly focused and committed
2. Casual
3. Confused
4. Frustrated

At this stage, the researchers extracting quantitative data out of the qualitative observations. This was done to generate meaning from qualitative data; to document, verify and test interpretation and to re-present target experiences.

Exhibit 1

Extensive interactions with the students individually as well as in a group and results from the Coaching and Training sessions brought to fore that many students had conflicting self images which led them to believe that they had inadequacies in their personalities and this led to low self esteem. **25%** of the total students were falling in this category which was termed as **'frustrated' state of mind**. The second category termed as '**confused**' state of mind involved all those participants who were not sure about their goals and the competencies which they possess or the competencies which they lack to achieve their goals. This category had **32%** of the total students. Clubbing the above two categories, the result indicated that more than half of the participants **(57%)** were struggling to identify their own character, assumptions, beliefs and values; understand the changing career landscape; develop the right skills and chart out a road map for their successful life and career. **5%** of the students were found to be very casual about their future life. They do not appear to be confused or frustrated but were found to be directionless. There were good amount of participants **(38%)** who are focused, highly aware about their goals and the skills/ competencies they have to achieve for reaching to those goal. They were found to be constantly working on building up the competencies they lack to achieve their goals.

Through NLP technique called **"Anchoring and Mentors Table"** where participants were made to go through the process of associating an internal response with some external or internal trigger, some amazing results emerged. About **60 %** of the participants confessed 'father' as their source of inspiration. While identifying the source of inspiration on basis of inner (family-parents, close relatives, grandparents, siblings) and outer circle (friends, mentors, colleagues, peers, bosses, leaders, public figures**) 76%** of the participants revealed that their source of inspiration was from inner circle rest **24%** gave credit to the outer circle.

Discussion

In the entire procedure it was very vivid that the students were at times overwhelmed with emotions and also lead to questioning their identity and beliefs. As the exercises focused on exploring self and going inwards, a lot of revelations were there. Most of the students had conflicting self images which led them to believe that they were inadequate and therefore they had a low self esteem and confused state of mind **(57%).** There were statements that clearly indicated conflicting images:
"I feel that I didn't get the required practical exposure hence I wasn't fully confident about my technical abilities."

"During graduation I realised that I was not so good in coding and I should not limit myself as a software engineer."

"After clearing my 1st group of IPCC, over the period of time I realised that this course is not helping me much in achieving my goals."

"I have played various National level tournaments and have also represented the country at the World University Badminton championships, in Malaysia. I feel like there's a huge void in my life if I can't play badminton at any point of time, which is also the reason for why I don't like my college right now."

"After school, I did BMS which is a course by the Faculty of Management Studies (FMS). And there I realised I still stand nowhere. Meeting people from different walks of life who were far better than me in terms of exposure and skills, my self-confidence took a beating."

"During my 1st year of graduation, I realised that technical field was not my cup of tea."

"I would like to say that during childhood I had to suffer a lot because of my stammering problem. I am hardly able to express my thoughts in front of people. Whenever I speak they start making fun of me. This had created a feeling of insecurity and complex inside me. I felt that I am not able to do anything in my life."

Basic reason for such findings could be associated with the culture that exists in India. Parental pressure dominates children's career choices even today. Despite the potential in off-beat and unconventional courses, such as Graphic Designing, Journalism or Architecture , most children are forced by their parents to take up the routine subjects such as Engineering, Medicine and Law which in some way assures jobs — ostensibly as they offer a 'financially secure' future.

Some participants in the category of 'confused' state of mind were found to be discovering their passion & potential by learning through experience. They narrated:
"Earlier I was upset with my selection of the course. Being associated with the NGO in my college, I realised that my ultimate aim in life is to open a NGO and educational school for underprivileged girls. And to achieve that I wanted a professional degree in human resource which would enhance my knowledge more and push me one step closer to my goal in life."

"With the increasing number of computers and mobile devices in every household I see digital marketing an opportunity for myself and this also facilitates my interest in the field of IT. The challenges I see in achieving my goals are the recklessness and the very little concern today's world has for the environment of our planet."

The narrations given by the participants falling under the 'focused' state of mind category were found to be very direct, full of confidence and clear in their thoughts:
"Starting from the bottom and by elevating further in organisation on the basis of my performance, I would like to see myself as the Sr. Manager in next five years then further as Asst. General Manager in next 7 years and ultimately being the top executive in the field of banking sector is my ultimate goal."

"I want to be a certified trainer in the field of Human Resource. My long term goal in life is to work for people and to help poor and needy people as much as I can."

"During my graduation, I chose HRM because I found HRM really interesting and I knew that this is what I want to study in the future."

Conclusion

The study concluded that there was a definite requirement for students to be more congruent and believe in themselves. The research carried out, helped students change their self image and operate from a position of self belief and congruence which in turn would lead them to succeed in their endeavours.

The exercises helped the students realise that each one of them was unique and no two people are the same. They were made to realise that when they look at other people they tend to delete aspects which they are not at all aware about. Interestingly, the students understood that they had to take responsibility of their actions and start trusting their capabilities and their strengths. Instead of building negative simulations of "I am not good enough", "I can't do ….", "I don't know myself", these exercises helped them appreciate and acknowledge who they are and thereby, live in the present. They should stop comparing themselves with others. As Lori Deschene put it so eloquently, "…you can't hate your way into loving yourself. Telling yourself what a failure you are won't make you any more successful. Telling yourself you're not living up to your full potential won't help you reach a higher potential. Telling yourself you're worthless and unlovable won't make you feel any more worthy or loveable."

What lied beneath were exposed and the students were more at ease once they realised that they were able to balance these emotions and use them towards behaving congruently, thereby being more focused in identifying their goals. This led them to validate their strengths which in turn led them to move towards choosing their dream career. It sounds almost annoyingly simple, but the only way to achieve is to accept yourself the way you are—regardless of who you are and where you stand and even if you know you want to change. The students were finally able to relate to themselves and identify with their beliefs, thereby, understanding ", Who Am I". They were empowered to construct their 'Self Image.

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