

## Chapter 5

# Use of Emotional Intelligence in Human Resource Management in Healthcare Organizations for Competitive Advantage: A Systematic Literature Review

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Recent years have seen escalating interest in the impact of emotions within organizations. However, research on the role of emotional intelligence specifically in the domain of human resource management in healthcare organizations has been ignored. This chapter compiles a comprehensive, systematic review of literature on the impacts of emotional intelligence in the healthcare sector spanning a period from 1960 to 2020. The authors aim to explore and raise pertinent questions about the impacts of emotional intelligence on healthcare outcomes, job stress, emotional labor, and linkages of emotional intelligence with a competitive advantage for healthcare organizations. A major contribution of this work is the proposal of a novel conceptual framework for the marketing of emotional intelligence in the healthcare sector. Literature gaps, relationships among works, and current trends are discussed.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Since its popularization around three decades back, the concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI) has largely taken the management world by storm. Its value-addition in organizations has been greatly eulogized with claimed benefits ranging from manager competence and employee well-being to enhanced organizational performance (Grossman, 2000). It is surprising then, that the claimed benefits have neither managed to sway more Healthcare (HC) managers into incorporating it within their organizations, nor into making more efforts towards understanding it as a concept (Gilmartin & Aunno, 2007). Healthcare Organizations (HCO) are by nature, steeped in complexity. Critical decisions need to be taken on an evolving basis; interpersonal communication is crucial; the margin for errors is low and there is no room for fatigue and emotional exhaustion. The need for emotional labor only adds to challenges that are faced by HC personnel (Erickson & Grove, 2008). Another noteworthy change that has occurred with time is that patients' have become more aware and demanding of their rights as '*consumers*' (Copperman et al., 2012). Not surprisingly then, extant healthcare literature is rich in studies that document the increasing stress levels in personnel and its resultant consequences like burnout, negative attitudes, inappropriate behavior and inharmonious relationships (Magnavita, 2014). However, research exploring the benefits of applying EI to counteract the professional challenges is scarce. Nonetheless, among the studies that do broach this topic, there is a near unanimous agreement that EI significantly impacts HC outcomes like improving the quality of caregiving, reducing medical errors, and improving patients' perceptions of doctors' attitudes (Newton, et al., 2016; Rosenstein, 2015). It boosts trust-building and loyalty in the doctor-patient relationship (Nightingale, et al., 2018). It stands to reason that these will result in greater patient-compliances and revisits. Logically, far more attention should have been paid to EI by the HC sector than has been seen hitherto. The motivation behind this study stems from the fact that despite mounting empirical evidence of the benefits of EI application in organizations, the HC sector has still not been adequately studied in this regard (Gilmartin & Aunno, 2007). Further, there has been a skewed representation of HC-related stress in existing literature. The numerous deleterious consequences of stress have been extensively reported but the psychological resources that can overcome these consequences have hardly been discussed. In the current scenario, it appears as if the problem has been paid far more attention as compared to the efforts being made towards finding solutions. This linear representation of medical stress is at odds with various theoretical frameworks that challenge a unidimensional depiction of stress and highlight the role of "*individual resources and appraisals*" that determine personal and professional outcomes. Some popular theories are: the job-demands-resource theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), Lazarus' transactional

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