

## The Effect of Emotional Intelligence on the Attitudes of Nurses Towards Their Work by Studying the Role of Moderator of Emotions and Job Performance

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### Original Article

#### Abstract

**INTRODUCTION:** The present study was conducted with the aim of answering the question of whether emotional intelligence has an effect on the working attitude of hospital nurses.

**METHODS:** By reviewing the background of the studies conducted on the three attitudes of job satisfaction, organizational commitment and the turnover intention, and to examine the effect of the research variables on each other by using the descriptive-analytical research method and collecting data through a survey, 175 nurses were selected and examined by random sampling method. Data analysis was done by structural equation modeling method using Smart PLS3 software.

**FINDINGS:** The findings showed that adding emotional intelligence criteria can improve job satisfaction, improve performance, reduce the turnover intention and increase organizational commitment by helping nurses to reduce negative emotions and increase positive emotions.

**CONCLUSION:** In this research, the mediating role of emotions and job performance was examined, and according to the results, state positive affect had a significant moderating role in the relationship between job satisfaction and all dimensions of emotional intelligence among nurses.

**Keywords:** Emotional intelligence; Hospital nurses; Job emotions; Job performance; Organizational commitment

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#### Introduction

Nurses play a key role in the healthcare system of the country as guardians of the health of society. The nursing profession is one of the stressful and exhausting jobs, and nurses are constantly exposed to stress, pressure and various work challenges due to the characteristics and conditions of their work environment. Therefore, nowadays, nurses do not only need knowledge and practical skills, but the way of dealing with different behaviors with different people is also important, and in addition to practical skills and knowledge, they need problem-solving skills, appropriate decision-making, and the ability to communicate effectively and correct judgment in different situations. Emotional intelligence is a skill that

allows nurses to think better under difficult conditions, to prevent wasting time due to emotions such as anger, anxiety and fear, and to make correct and creative decisions by maintaining calmness in the busy and stressful environment of the hospital and provide care services correctly. (1, 2) In addition to reducing the negative effects of stress in nurses, it can increase the level of nursing services and also increase the level of community health. (3-5). According to researchers, emotional intelligence is a testable and measurable intelligence from a scientific point of view. (6-9). Its characteristics are: knowing one's own feelings, using them for appropriate decisions in life, the ability to manage one's mood appropriately, managing one's own

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and others' emotions, enjoying happiness, vitality and liveliness, independence and better performance in work, and having more success and progress in life (5&10). In the study of emotional intelligence, two dimensions, individual and organizational, are considered. In the individual dimension, emotional intelligence leads to self-evaluation, self-awareness, recognition of strengths and areas of improvement, increasing social capabilities and potentials, skills to obtain calmness, self-confidence and high motivation. In the organizational dimension, emotional intelligence leads to higher levels of learning, teamwork and more motivation, less dissatisfaction and moral problems, increased creativity and innovation, more efficiency and better job performance (11). Researchers divided emotional intelligence into three streams, which include measures of emotional intelligence ability (stream 1), self-reported emotional intelligence (stream 2), and integrated emotional intelligence (stream 3). Measures of emotional intelligence ability have shown that dealing with focused emotions in turn facilitates performance. Also, self-report is an excellent method to assess emotional intelligence, because intrapersonal processes such as emotional self-awareness are easily measured by self-assessment of internal states. Researchers often conceptualize emotional intelligence as a trait, not as an ability. The integrated measures of emotional intelligence use self-report measures (stream 2); however, they include a wide range of variables and qualifications as well as attributes. It should be noted that these three streams of emotional intelligence are related, but they are distinct from each other in several ways. (12-16). Researchers have described the components of emotional intelligence as follows:

a) *Self-arousal*: Directing emotions towards a specific goal is very important to focus attention and motivate oneself.

b) *Self-awareness*: Recognizing the emotion is an important and key part of emotional intelligence. The ability to control and manage the moment of emotions shows self-understanding and psychological insight.

c) *Self-control*: Controlling and managing emotions is a skill that is formed based on self-awareness.

d) *Social consciousness (empathy)*: Another ability that is formed based on emotional self-awareness is empathy with others, which is

considered as a kind of skill.

e) *Social skills*: The art of communicating with people largely includes the skill of controlling and managing other people's emotions (12, 13, 17 & 18).

In this research, to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and job attitudes, we have examined three important job attitudes, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention. The most important job attitude, which is always considered one of the important issues in the field of organizational success, is job satisfaction which expresses a person's level of interest in his job, and in other words, it means the difference between the level and intensity of a person's needs and the level of fulfillment of those needs in the job. (1, 8, 19 & 20). Job satisfaction increases productivity, organizational commitment, physical and mental health, and work morale. Both indicators, emotional intelligence and job satisfaction, are variables that play an important role in shaping and improving a standard work environment. Various studies have confirmed the positive relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction (1, 8, 10, 13&20). Organizational commitment is also a strong source of motivation to strengthen employees' performance and also to convince them to continue working in difficult conditions as well as work-related tensions and pressures. Paying attention to the commitment and loyalty of human resources to the organization and performing the roles assigned to them as best as possible and even extra-role tasks by human resources are one of the serious concern of the managers of organizations, thus; they try to improve the organizational commitment of the employees and following this to improve the productivity of the organization. (13, 21-24) Various studies have shown that emotional intelligence, job satisfaction and organizational commitment are also highly important for healthcare organizations. Employees in the turbulent environment of the hospital are trying to increase the quality of patient care by spending the least resources, and since the hospital is the main pillar of community care, therefore, providing acceptable performance along with attracting and retaining nurses is an important issue. (22, 25). In addition to the positive relationship between emotional intelligence, job satisfaction and organizational

commitment, studies have shown that emotional intelligence has a negative relationship with the turnover intention. People with emotional intelligence can control their emotions, which means that they are less likely to leave the organization due to emotional shocks, and therefore the turnover intention is reduced and the organization's adaptability increases (26,13). Therefore, employees with higher emotional intelligence have more job satisfaction, higher organizational commitment and less turnover intention. Adding emotional intelligence criteria to a set of cognitive and personality criteria that are currently used can improve the ability to evaluate employees' job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intention. Emotional intelligence improves job satisfaction by helping employees by reducing negative emotions, increasing positive emotions, or improving job performance.

*First hypothesis:* Emotional intelligence has a positive relationship with job satisfaction and organizational commitment and a negative relationship with the turnover intention (1, 2, 8, 10, 11, 13, 22, 23, 34&35). It can predispose employees to view a wide range of organizational events in a way that reinforces positive effects. Consistent with self-perception theory, employees may see their positive mood at work and conclude that they have high job satisfaction. The State Positive Affect (SPA) refers to pleasant and energetic feelings and emotions, while the State Negative Affect (SNA) refers to the momentary experience of anger, fear, anxiety and other negative emotions at any specific time. Various studies have shown that a state positive affect has a positive relationship with job satisfaction and personal development and a negative relationship with emotional exhaustion and self-distortion, while a state negative affect has a negative relationship with job satisfaction and personal development and a positive relationship with emotional exhaustion and self-distortion. The theory of emotional events shows that every person should be in an average level of emotional mood and some people tend to be in the positive half, while others are in the negative half. Furthermore, responding to discrete emotional events in the workplace influences emotional responses, thus leading to affective, attitudinal, and behavioral outcomes. In this way, this average level of mood can be a result of decreasing or increasing negative or positive activities in the

work environment. Hence, the emotional reactions triggered by workplace events create an uptick in job satisfaction. (13, 27) which has an emotional component, meaning feeling. Therefore, emotional intelligence contributes to the emotional base of job satisfaction by increasing positive emotions and reducing negative emotions. People with high emotional intelligence are better at managing emotional processes because they can accurately perceive and monitor their emotions and accurately process emotional information to effectively respond to their emotions. (13, 28). Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses:

*Second hypothesis:* State positive affect plays a mediating role in the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. (13, 27)

*Third hypothesis:* State negative affect plays a mediating role in the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. (13, 27)

A review of related research history shows that several studies have confirmed the positive relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance (5, 13, 29-33). According to self-perception theory, employees observe their performance level and perceive a level of job satisfaction. People who have high mental intelligence have better understanding and this increase their ability to set self-motivational goals and the opportunity to achieve performance goals that lead to job satisfaction. Therefore, emotional intelligence can increase job performance, because people with emotional intelligence are able to control their emotions to experience positive emotions. Positive emotions develop the set of employees' behaviors, increase their behavioral flexibility and attention span, and thus lead to improved job performance (13, 29, 30, 33). In line with the theory of goal setting, job satisfaction is the result of goal-oriented performance, because the individual's progress in achieving the goal (that is, goal-oriented performance) affects job satisfaction. Because the better the work is done, the more goals are achieved and the more job satisfaction it brings. Also, people with emotional intelligence moderate their emotions to avoid draining resources that cause burnout, bounce back quickly from negative emotions, and maintain positive emotions. According to the job demands-resources model, maintaining these cognitive resources should

enable employees to more effectively accomplish performance goals that lead to positive outcomes such as job satisfaction. (13). Therefore, we suggest that job performance should mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction, because emotional intelligence is able to maintain its performance goals and increases the achievement of job satisfaction goals, and based on this, we propose the following hypothesis:

*Fourth hypothesis:* Job performance has a mediating role in the relationship between

emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. (5, 13, 29- 33)

The proposed conceptual model (Figure 1) depicts the relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational commitment, turnover intention, job performance and job satisfaction. Also, according to the proposed research plan, variables of job performance and emotions (state positive affect and state negative affect) can also mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction.



Figure 1. Conceptual model taken from the research (13)

## Methods

The method of the current research is descriptive in terms of its purpose and survey in terms of the data collection tool. Therefore, the data required for the research has been collected through a questionnaire. The statistical population of this research consists of nurses from two private hospitals in Gilan province (Aria Hospital and Pars Hospital), which were 300 people. To determine the statistical sample size, the sample size calculation formula (Cochran's formula) has been used and according to the formula, the desired sample number without sample loss with a confidence level of 95% and an error level of 0.05, 169 people were obtained and the questionnaire was completed by 175 people. To collect information from a 40-item structured closed questionnaire with a five-point Likert measurement scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to measure the variables of self-arousal (2 items), self-awareness (4 items), self-control (4 items), social consciousness (3 items), social skills (2 items), job satisfaction (5 items), organizational commitment (5 items), turnover intention (5 items), state negative affect (3 items), state positive affect (2 items) and job performance (5 items) used. In order to check to what extent each of the research constructs are aligned with the questions of the questionnaire used to measure them, the measurement model or confirmatory factor analysis was used to separate the studied

dimensions. In order to perform confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling, standard factor loading and t-statistics have been calculated, and the validity of the questionnaire has been confirmed by face and construct validity and reliability by calculating the correlation coefficient, and according to the results obtained, it is shown in table no. 2), the standard factor loading for measuring the strength of the relationship between these variables and their observable variables (questionnaire items) in 33 items (except the fourth question of the self-control index, the third question of the social consciousness index, the first question of the job satisfaction index, the fifth question of the organizational commitment index, the first and second questions of the turnover intention index and the fifth question of the job performance index) were greater than 0.7 and the unqualified items were removed. As shown in Table 2, Cronbach's alpha for all constructs is above 0.7, which shows high convergence validity and also states that the constructs (hidden variables) have a high reliability for fitting the model. Composite reliability values (CR) for all structures are reported to be higher than 0.7, which shows that the structures have adequate composite reliability.

Composite reliability is greater than 0.7 and AVE is greater than 0.5, and composite reliability is greater than AVE, however; the questionnaire also has convergent validity.

**Table 1.** Factor loading values, statistical significance, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability and AVE for the research questionnaire

Construct	Item	Factor loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE	Statistical significance
Self-Arousal (SA)	<i>Sa1</i>	0.860	0.720	0.855	0.769	53.337
	<i>Sa2</i>	0.861				49.769
	<i>Saw1</i>	0.824				33.815
Self-Awareness (SAW)	<i>Saw2</i>	0.763	0.838	0.878	0.694	23.397
	<i>Saw3</i>	0.864				46.295
	<i>Saw4</i>	0.816				33.160
	<i>Sc1</i>	0.769				25.976
Self-Control (SC)	<i>Sc2</i>	0.791	0.756	0.829	0.586	28.891
	<i>Sc3</i>	0.768				20.787
	<i>Sc4</i>	0.674				11.293
	<i>Sv1</i>	0.773				19.608
Social-Consciousness (SV)	<i>Sv2</i>	0.812	0.696	0.797	0.595	29.854
	<i>Sv3</i>	0.680				12.458
	<i>Ss1</i>	0.832				28.902
Social Skills (SS)	<i>Ss2</i>	0.855	0.697	0.836	0.739	45.847
	<i>Js1</i>	0.682				13.180
	<i>Js2</i>	0.716				14.419
Job Satisfaction (JS)	<i>Js3</i>	0.711	0.768	0.828	0.532	17.287
	<i>Js4</i>	0.712				17.610
	<i>Js5</i>	0.754				20.991
	<i>Oc1</i>	0.736				20.529
	<i>Oc2</i>	0.767				17.707
Organizational Commitment(OC)	<i>Oc3</i>	0.731	0.794	0.845	0.567	15.413
	<i>Oc4</i>	0.790				29.578
	<i>Oc5</i>	0.668				13.521
	<i>Ti1</i>	0.436				4.746
	<i>Ti2</i>	0.653				11.479
Turnover Intention (TI)	<i>Ti3</i>	0.700	0.768	0.848	0.685	14.546
	<i>Ti4</i>	0.748				20.095
	<i>Ti5</i>	0.756				16.435
	<i>Sna1</i>	0.852				47.705
	<i>Sna2</i>	0.836				41.083
State Negative Affect (SNA)	<i>Sna3</i>	0.793	0.793	0.861	0.711	24.264
	<i>Spa1</i>	0.879				68.154
	<i>Spa2</i>	0.871				51.644
State Positive Affect (SPA)	<i>Jp1</i>	0.798	0.768	0.871	0.794	29.775
	<i>Jp2</i>	0.706				15.395
Job Performance (JP)	<i>Jp3</i>	0.790	0.805	0.858	0.646	22.819
	<i>Jp4</i>	0.798				29.936
	<i>Jp5</i>	0.626				9.875

**Table 2:** Descriptive findings of the studied variables

Variables	Mode	Median	Average responses
Emotional Intelligence (EI)	4.22	4.1111	4.1198
State Positive Affect(SPA)	4	4	4.0894
State Negative Affect (SNA)	2.19	2.6250	2.7242
Job Performance (JP)	4.11	4	4.005
Organizational Commitment (OC)	4	4	3.9916
Turnover Intention (TI)	2	2	2.0146
Job Satisfaction (JS)	4	4	4.0223

### Findings

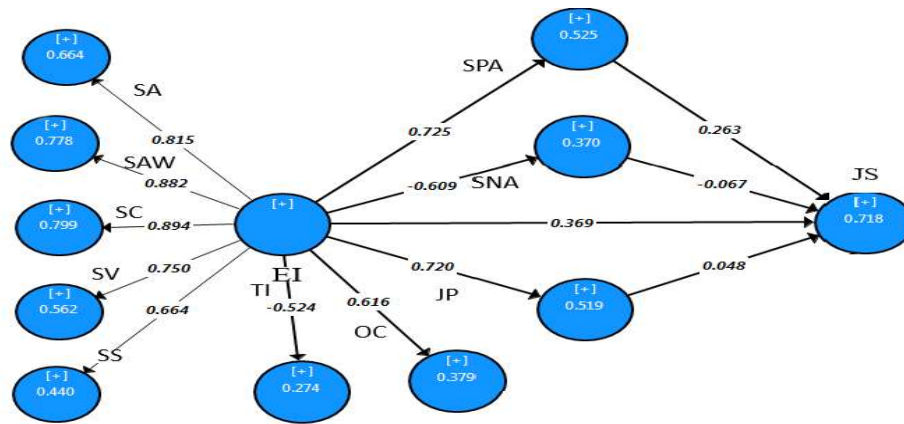
To measure the variables of the research, a total of 33 items have been used at the rank measurement level in the form of a five-point Likert scale, and the descriptive findings of the variables are as described in Table No. 2.

As can be seen in Table 2, according to the measurement scale which is between 1 and 5 and the mean of which is 3, the level of emotional intelligence of the respondents is higher than other variables of the research, and the variable of nurses' turnover intention has the lowest score.

The results of examining research hypotheses by axis variance modeling and PLS software are described in Table No. 3 and Figure 2. The numbers written on the paths show the coefficients of the path. To test the significance of path coefficients, using the Bootstrapping method, t-test values have been calculated. If the t-test values are greater than 1.96, the path coefficient is significant at the 0.05 level. As shown in Table No. (3), among the research hypotheses, three hypotheses were rejected and the rest were confirmed.

**Table 3:** The results of the research hypothesis test

From variable	Path	To variable	T-value	Path coefficient (β)	Result
Emotional Intelligence (EI)		Job Satisfaction (JS)	4.298	0.396	Confirmed
		State Positive Affect (SPA)	18.773	0.725	Confirmed
		State Negative Affect (SNA)	14.252	-0.609	Confirmed
		Job Performance (JP)	15.640	0.720	Confirmed
		Organizational Commitment (OC)	7.466	0.616	Confirmed
		Turnover Intention (TI)	9.156	-0.524	Confirmed
State Positive Affect (SPA)			2.992	0.263	Confirmed
State Negative Affect (SNA)		Job Satisfaction (JS)	0.889	-0.067	Rejected
Job Satisfaction(JS)			0.530	0.048	Rejected



**Figure 2.** Standard path coefficients of the research conceptual model

### Discussion and Conclusion

The first hypothesis of the research claims that emotional intelligence has a positive relationship with job satisfaction and organizational commitment and a negative relationship with the turnover intention. Confirmation of this hypothesis shows that adding emotional intelligence criteria can help nurses to improve job satisfaction, increase organizational commitment and reduce their turnover intention.

Therefore, it is suggested that in order to increase the level of job satisfaction and organizational commitment, as well as to reduce the turnover intention among nurses, managers should create conditions to advance the organizational goals and increase the spirit of cooperation among them. The findings of this research are consistent with researches (1, 2, 8, 10, 11, 23, 34 & 35).

The second hypothesis of the research claims that state positive affect plays a mediating role in the relationship between emotional intelligence

and job satisfaction. The confirmation of this hypothesis by emphasizing the important role of positive emotions shows that the increase of positive emotions and feelings, which are mentioned in this study as a state positive affect, can lead to the improvement of job satisfaction by playing the role of a mediator in the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction of nurses. Therefore, with the results obtained, it can be suggested to the hospital managers to create a safe and calm environment to foster a sense of comfort and security among the personnel, thereby increasing the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. These results are consistent with the views and findings of (13, 27) who believe that state positive affect has a mediating role in the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction, and based on this, it seems that the relationships between all three types of emotional intelligence and job satisfaction are moderated by the effect of job performance.

The third hypothesis claimed that state negative affect plays a mediating role in the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. The findings of this research are in contrast with the studies of researchers such as (13, 27) who believe that state negative affect plays a mediating role in the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. Therefore, among the studied nurses, the relationships between all three types of emotional intelligence and job satisfaction are not moderated by negative emotions.

The fourth hypothesis of this research claims that job performance plays a mediating role in the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. The findings of this research, which led to the rejection of this hypothesis, are not consistent with many studies such as (5, 13, 29- 33) which state that job performance plays a mediating role in the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction, which shows that job performance among the studied nurses does not play a mediating role in emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. Therefore, in the studied nurses, the relationship between emotional intelligence and goal setting, based on which emotional intelligence helps employees to achieve their performance goals and then calculate their job satisfaction from their job performance level is weak. This research was conducted as a "survey" and in a "certain period" of time and in

two hospitals with a statistical population of about 300 nurses, so its results cannot be generalized to a wider range of organizations. Therefore, this research has no external validity.

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### Conflict of Interests

The authors declared no conflict of interest regarding the publication of the present study.

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