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A Mediating- Moderating Model on Job Stress and Emotional Intelligence

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Abstract
Job stress has adverse consequences on organizations and employees. Given its importance, we have developed a conceptual framework that has seven direct and three moderating relationships. We have focused on SMEs in Karachi, as it significantly contributes towards employment generation and GDP. Based on self-administered questionnaires, we have collected the data from lower and middle management levels of SMEs. Due to the non-availability of the sample frame, we have used convenience sampling. We distributed 490 questionnaires and received 470 questionnaires, acceptable in studies with a large sample size. The study has used Smart PLS Version 2.3 for statistical analysis. Our results suggest job stress negatively affects life satisfaction, happiness, and job performance. The study also found emotional intelligence promotes life satisfaction, reduces happiness, decreases job performance, and increases job stress. The results also suggest that emotional intelligence moderates life satisfaction, happiness, and job performance. The findings will help SMEs to reduce job-related stress. The study has used the mediating-moderating model, which brings insight into the discussed phenomena.

Keywords: Job stress, life satisfaction, happiness, job performance, emotional intelligence

Introduction

Job stress in the prevailing business environment has become a problematic issue the world over. It has several adverse consequences, including low morale, happiness, low performance, and high turnover intentions (Schwepker Jr, & Dimitriou, 2021). Given its importance, we can find a stream of research on job stress, its antecedents, and consequences. Vijayan (2017) stresses that many employees now complain about work overload, job insecurity, burnout. Employees who cannot cope with these precursors of stress suffer physically and psychologically.

Extant literature suggests the effects of job-related stress on all the employees are not the same. It varies from one employee to another. Personality factors and emotional indigence can reduce or increase the effect of stress on its consequences. Choi and Lee (2018) believe that little alignment between job-related factors and employees physical and psychological conditions promote stress leading to consequences such as happiness, life satisfaction, job performance

When employees complete their assigned work-related tasks, it means that their job performance is of the desired level. To remain competitive in the present business era, firms put an excessive burden on the employees, due to which they develop a negative attitude towards work and happiness towards life (Nisar & Rasheed, 2020). Extant literature suggests that a moderate level of stress enhances employees, happiness and job performance. However, low or high stress negatively affects employees' happiness and performance. Thus, it is necessary for the firms to adequately balance the workload on employees based on their capacity and capability (Kalyar, Shafique, and Ahmad, 2019). Choi and Lee (2018) suggest a need for rigorous research in the organizational context on emotional intelligence and stress-related consequences.

Aims and Objectives

Given this gap, this study has developed a new and complex model that contains seven direct relationships and three moderating relationships. The developed model would help in achieving the following objectives.

I. To ascertain the impact of emotional intelligence on happiness, job performance, job stress, and life satisfaction?
II. To examine the effect of job stress on happiness, job performance, and life satisfaction?
III. To ascertain the moderating role of emotional intelligence on (a) stress and life satisfaction, (b) stress and happiness, and (c) stress and job performance?

Literature Review

Job Stress

Job stress refers to harmful physical and emotional responses when there is little or no alignment between employees' capabilities and the needs or requirements. It has severe adverse consequences, including employee health, decreased performance, adverse happiness, and poor life satisfaction (Yang, Chen, Lee & Liu, 2021; Troesch & Bauer, 2017). Many researchers tend to mix stress with challenges. They both are entirely different concepts. Stress promotes negative consequences like low job satisfaction and work-life conflict (Choi, Mohammad & Kim, 2019). On the other hand, challenges energize employees both physically and emotionally. And it motivates employees to learn new skills and use them to enhance their performance (Hussain, Khaliq, Nisar, Kamboh, & Ali, 2019). When employees can meet the challenges, they feel relaxed and satisfied. Wu, Li, Yao, Luo, He, and Yin (2018). thinks that challenges are critical precursors to healthy and productive work. The delegated challenges to the employees should not be too easy or too difficult. If it is too easy, it will kill the aim and purpose of the challenges. It is beyond employees' capability; it will be counterproductive and may lead to exhaustion, poor health, and abusive behavior (Hassan, Azmat, Sarwar, Adil, & Gillani, 2020; Elshaer, Moustafa, Aiad & Ramadan, 2018). Based on the above discussion, one can infer, "a little bit of stress is good, but too much stress is not good for employees."

Interactions of the workers and work conditions promote job stress. The impact of job stress on all employees is not the same. It varies from one employee to another. Individuals embedded with a high copying strategy are less affected by job-related stress than employees with low or little

copying strategies (Ouellette et al., 2018; Nisar& Rasheed, 2020). Naseem, (2018) thinks that working conditions is a major source of job-related stress. Thus Chung, Jung, and Sohn (2017) recommend redesigning jobs to reduce job-related stress. In 1960 an employee successfully claimed monetary compensation for psychological breakdown, which a Michigan court also upheld. The employee's plea was that it was difficult for him to keep up with the excessive pressure of the production line. Thus to keep up with the product target, he had to work on several assemblies simultaneously, due to which often many parts got mixed up. Thus he was subject to repeated perpetual criticism, leading to psychological breakdown (Ivancevich, Matteson, & Richards, 1985)

Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction reflects individuals' moods, feelings, and how they feel about the future. Kong, Gong, Sajjad, Yang, and Zhao (2019) think life satisfaction measures individual well-being in terms of moods, satisfaction, social relationships, achieved goals, and self-concept. Many researchers have also measured life satisfaction in terms of standard of living, education, and experience—Ouellette et al. (2018) and Hassan et al. (2020) assert that life satisfaction is an essential component of subjective well-being. Many internal and external factors contribute towards well-being and life satisfaction (Szcześniak, & Tułecka, 2020). Job stress negatively promotes the well-being of humans, due to which they become less satisfied with life. In the present dynamic business era, employees have to meet deadlines, stay late at work, and adopt and learn new skills to remain competitive in the job market. These factors promote job stress leading to less time for family and friends, adversely affecting life satisfaction. Kong, Gong, Sajjad, Yang, and Zhao (2019) also validate that workers experience occupational stress, which leads to low job satisfaction and life satisfaction. The association between job and life satisfaction varies from one individual to another. A highly emotionally intelligent person has more capability to align job stress and its consequences, due to which they are happier in life than others (Naseem, 2018; Achour et al., 2021).

The impact of job stress on the life satisfaction of emotionally intelligent employees is not negative for the following reasons. One, they have more capability to appraise and control their emotions as compared to otters. Two, highly emotionally intelligent individuals can speculate the causes of stress, due to which they develop various coping strategies (Mazzella -Ebstein et al., 2019; Mérida-López, Extreme, & Rey, 2017; Achour et al. 2021)

H1: Job stress negatively affects life satisfaction
H2: Emotional intelligence positively affects life satisfaction
H3: Emotional intelligence moderates job stress and life satisfaction

Happiness

Happiness is an emotional feeling within an individual, comprising "joy, satisfaction, contentment, and fulfillment (Mérida-López, Extremera & Rey, 2017 Achour et al., 2021). Researchers have conceptualized happiness differently. But most researchers believe that it is related to positive emotions and life satisfaction (Rey, Extremera & Sánchez-Álvarez, 2019; Kun, & Gadanecz, 2019). When individuals talk about happiness, they might be talking about how they feel about life overall or how they feel at the moment (Ruvalcaba-Romero et al., 2017; Bhatia & Mohsin, 2020). Extant literature suggests that job stress positively and negatively affects happiness. On the one hand, it adversely affects employees' well-being, and on the other hand, it

buffers the negative effect of job-related stress (Mudgal- Shiv, 2021; Delhomme, Gutierrez, Lucas-Molina, & Meléndez, 2017). Not many studies have examined the negative effect of stress on happiness (Suh et al.,1996), despite their negative association (Schiffrin et al.,2010). The appraisal theory framework (Scherer, 1999) postulates a stressed working environment adversely affects employee well-being and happiness. Employees under stress had to deal with customers and employees at work, resulting in decreased work performance and happiness. However, if employees are emotionally intelligent, they would be able to cope with the job-related stress leading to increased performance and happiness (Rey, Extremera & Sánchez-Álvarez, 2019)

Extant literature suggests that personality and emotional intelligence are essential precursors of happiness (Hwang, 2019; Mudgal-Shiv, (2021). At the same time, other researchers believe that examining the indirect/moderating effect of emotional intelligence on happiness might bring more insight into the phenomenon. Ruvalcaba-Romero et al. (2017) found that individuals with a high emotional intelligence level can cope with such situations, resulting in a high level of happiness. Szczygiel and Mikolajczak (2017) also found that emotionally intelligent individuals are happier with their life activities. On the contrary, employees with low emotional intelligence due to overstress conditions might not complete their work-related tasks, resulting in low performance and low happiness (Latif, Majoka & Khan, 2017; Achour et al., 2021). Given the above theoretical arguments, we argue:

H4: Job stress negatively affects happiness
H5: Emotional intelligence positively affects happiness
H6: Emotional intelligence moderates job stress and happiness.

Job Performance

The researchers believe that the relationship between jobs related stress and job performance is not consistent. For example, many studies, including Rathore, Chadha, and Rana (2017) and Karimi, Leggat, Bartram, and Rada (2020), have documented a negative association between job stress and job performance. In a study on Cadets, Westman and Eden (1996) found that the stress resulting from excessive demand from the cadets had significantly decreased their performance. Also, based on empirical results, Leveck and Jones (1996) and Packard and Motowidlo (1987) concluded that nurses' job performance in hospitals decreases due to excessive job stress. On the contrary, Keijser et al. (1995) found that excessive stress of nurses has increased their objectivity and job performance. Anderson (1976), in contrast to the above-discussed relationships, found that the association between stress and performance is U-shaped. Based on SME, a study concluded that the moderate level of stress is positively associated with job performance, while high and low-stress levels negatively affect job performance (Reid, Jones, Hurst, & Anderson, 2018; Nisar, & Rasheed, (2020). Other laboratory studies, including the study of Cohen (1980), also revalidated the U-Shape association between job stress and job performance. Olsen, Bjaalid, and Mikkelsen (2017) and Furnham and Treglown (2021) believe that employees with low EI have less awareness of their emotions and little or no ability to cope with stressful situations resulting in poor work and adverse job performance. On the contrary, a highly emotionally intelligent person can cope with emotions and difficult situations at work (Clausen, Pedersen, Andersen, Theorell, & Madsen, 2021). Consequently, they are happier, and their performance level is significantly higher than others (Nagiah & Lin, 2020).

H7: Job stress negatively affects job performance

H8: Emotional intelligence positively affects job performance
H9: Emotional intelligence moderates job stress and job performance
H10: Emotional intelligence negatively affects job stress

Theoretical Grounding

This study has used job demand-control theory and the emotional ability model for developing the conceptual framework, which we have briefly discussed in the following sections.

Job Demand Control Theory

The job demand-control model has stemmed from the job demand control-support model. Many past studies have extended these models in job-strain consequences studies. The theory postulates that psychological job and job control stimulates job-related strain in an organization. Psychological job demand is traditionally related to workload, which significantly depends on time pressure and role conflict. However, many researchers, including Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2018) and Ghanayem, Srulovici, and Zlotnick (2020) assert that apart from time pressure and role conflicts, cognitive and emotional demand and interpersonal conflicts are the sub-dimension of psychological demand. Job control refers to individuals' ability to monitor, control and execute their job activities. The two significant components of job control are (I) workers' ability to make decisions about their jobs and (II) their skills. JCD theory also suggests that individuals with high job demand and low control more often experience job-related stress, including job performance, happiness, and life satisfaction (Widar, Wall, & Svensson, 2021; Akbari, Akbari, Shakerian, & Mahaki, 2017).

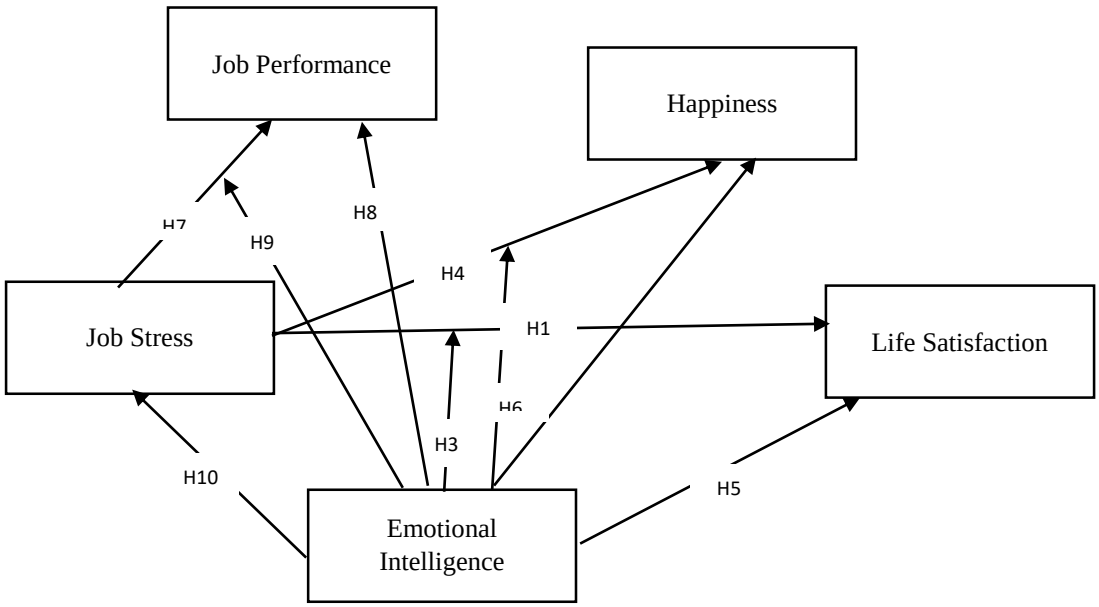
Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso's EI Ability Model

The model suggests individuals' capability of understanding and controlling their emotions help them in decision making and job-related stresses (Salovey, Mayer, Caruso, & Lopes, 2003). The four components of the models are (1) perceive emotion, (11) use of emotion, (111) understanding emotions and manage emotions (Elfenbein, & MacCann, 2017). All these four dimensions of the model align differently with different persons depending on their personalities. For example, perceived emotion and emotion use help individuals make appropriate decisions that affect job stress, happiness, job performance, and life satisfaction. At the same time, dimensions such as understanding emotions and controlling emotions help individuals reduce job and non-job-related stress and increase job and organization performance (Megías et al., 2018; Pardeller, Frajo-Apor, Kemmler, & Hofer, 2017). Job stress adversely affects job performance and happiness, but emotional intelligence can increase or decrease these discussed associations (Fiori, & Vesely-Maillefer, 2018).

Conceptual Framework

Given the above theories, we have proposed a framework presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Methodology

The study examines the impact of job stress and emotional intelligence on happiness, life satisfaction, and job performance in SMEs in Karachi. The study also examines the moderating impact of emotional intelligence on (1) job stress and happiness, (11) job stress and life satisfaction, and (111) job- stress and job performance.

Participant and Procedure

The study has focused on the lower and middle management of SMEs in Karachi. We have selected SMEs as it contributes significantly towards employment generation and GDP. The study has focused on SMEs as job-related consequences are more common in this sector, and it is generally less structured, and most units in SMEs are family-owned businesses. We have used convenience sampling for collecting the data since the sample frame of the target population (middle and lower-middle management of SMEs is not available). We have calculated the minimum sample size of 460 based on 20 samples and 23 indicator variables, 400 (Hair, Page, & Brunsveld, 2019). However, we have distributed 495 questionnaires and received 470 questionnaires.

Profile of the Respondents

The respondents' profile is as follows. The profile analysis shows that the male respondents are 70% and female 30%. Marital status analysis shows 55% of respondents are single, and the rest 45 are married. Age-wise analysis suggests that 30% of the respondents are between 18 to 28 years; 25% are in the age group 29-40 years; 35% between 41 to 50 years; and 10% from 51 to 60 years. The education back gourd of the workers shows that 60% of the workers have a matric level education; 20% workers have intermediate educational level; 10% workers have the education of bachelor's level, and 5% workers educational of Master level.

Scale and Measures

The questionnaire we have developed for the study has two parts. Part 1 relates to demographics, and it has five items, all based on a nominal scale. Part 2 has five constructs and 23 items. The study has measured all the responses in this part of the scale based on Five-Point Likert Scale. One is showing the least level of agreement, and five suggesting the highest agreement. The details about the scales and measures in terms of sources and number of items are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Constructs and their Sources.

Construct	Source	Items
Perceived stress	Ramírez, and Hernández (2007).	5
Happiness	Lyubomirsky, and Lepper, (1999)	4
Emotional Intelligence	(Libbrecht, Beuckelaer, Lievens and Rockstuhl, (2014)	4
Satisfaction with life	(Diener, Emmons and Larsen, 1985)	5
Job Performance	Ramos Villagrasa, Fernández- del-Río, Koopmans, and Barrada, (2019).	5

Results

Descriptive Analysis

The study has used descriptive analysis to measure the internal consistency and univariate normality of the constructs. The summarized results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis

	Mean	**St.Dev.**	**Skewness**	**Kurtosis**	**Cronbach's Alpha**
Emotional Intelligence	5.113	1.225	-.617	.314	0.874
Happiness	4.761	1.153	-.532	.456	0.896
Job Performance	4.12	1.042	-.569	-.068	0.881
Job Stress	5.139	0.728	.413	.341	0.813
Life Satisfaction	4.692	1.241	.682	.426	0.796

The results show that the highest Skewness value is for life satisfaction (Mean= 4.692, SD=1.241, SK= .682), and the lowest is for job stress (Mean= 5.139, SD=0.728, SK= 0.413). The highest Kurtosis value is for happiness (Mean= 4.761, SD= 1.153, KR= 0.456), and the lowest is for job performance (Mean= 4.12, SD=1.042, KR=-0.068). All these values are within the range of ± 3.5; therefore, we have inferred that the constructs fulfill the univariate normality requirement (Hair, Page, & Brunsveld, 2019).

Similarly, the highest value of Cronbach's alpha is for happiness (Mean= 4.761, SD= 1.153, α= 0.896), and the lowest is for life satisfaction (Mean= 4.692, SD= 1.241, α= 0.796). Since all the values of Cronbach's alpha are greater than 0.70, the constructs have internal consistency.

Convergent Validity

The study has assessed the convergent validity of the constructs via composite reliability and average variance extracted. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Convergent Validity

	Composite Reliability	AVE	Mean	St.Dev.
Emotional Intelligence	0.909	0.667	5.113	1.225
Happiness	0.928	0.763	4.761	1.153
Job Performance	0.926	0.807	4.120	1.042
Job Stress	0.878	0.645	5.139	0.728
Life Satisfaction	0.879	0.710	4.692	1.241

The results depict that all the values of composite reliability are greater than 0.70, and the average variance extracted values (AVE) are greater than 0.50, confirming that all the constructs fulfill the requirements of convergent validity(Cunningham, Preacher & Banaji, 2001).

Discriminant Validity

The study has Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criteria for examining the discriminant validity. Table 4 shows the summarized results of discriminant validity.

Table 4: Discriminant Validity

	EI	HP	JP	JST	LSAT
Emotional Intelligence	0.816				
Happiness	-0.596	0.874			
Job Performance	-0.81	0.607	0.898		
Job Stress	0.632	-0.703	-0.669	0.803	
Life Satisfaction	-0.566	0.562	0.611	-0.727	0.843

The results show that the square root of average variance explained values (depicted diagonally) are higher than the rest of the correlation values, confirming that all the study constructs are unique and distinct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis presented in Table 5 shows the theoretical association between indicator variables and latent variables. The factor loadings of all the items are greater than 0.70, suggesting a theoretical association between indicator variables and constructs (Carmines & Zellers, 1979).

Table 5: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

	Emotinal Intelligence	Happiness	Job Performanc	Job Stress	Life Satisfaction
EI1	0.785				
EI2	0.754				
EI3	0.853				
EI4	0.857				
H1		0.896			
H2		0.878			

H3	0.902			
H4	0.815			
JP1		0.897		
JP2		0.926		
JP3		0.87		
JP4		0.886		
JP5		0.875		
JST1			0.868	
JST2			0.883	
JST3			0.755	
JST4			0.881	
JST5			0.789	
LSAT1				0.701
LSAT2				0.919
LSAT3				0.892
LSAT4				0.876
LSAT5				0.876

Predictive Power of the Model

The predictive power of the model is analyzed using R^2 (Ringle et al., 2005). Table 6 represents the results of the predictive power of the model.

Table 6: R Square Value

Constructs	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Happiness	0.551	0.550
Job Performance	0.699	0.699
Job Stress	0.400	0.399
Life Satisfaction	0.862	0.861

The achieved R^2 value is greater than 0.1, which, according to Falk and Miller (1992), is a minimum acceptable threshold.

Results of Hypotheses

The study has developed and examined seven direct hypotheses and three indirect hypotheses. We generated the path coefficients through SmartPLS (bootstrapping). The measurement and structural model are presented in Figure 2 and Figure 3, and the summarized results are in Table 7.

Table 7: Hypotheses Results

Relationship	Beta	T Stat.	P Values	
Job Stress -> Life Satisfaction (H1)	-0.954	99.427	0	Accepted
Emotional Intelligence -> Life Satisfaction (H2)	0.046	2.718	0.007	Accepted
Moderating Effect 1 -> Life Satisfaction (H3)	0.042	4.55	0	Accepted
Job Stress -> Happiness (H4)	-0.556	20.731	0	Accepted

Emotional Intelligence -> Happiness (H5)	-0.239	8.413	0	Rejected
Moderating Effect 2 -> Happiness (H6)	0.13	8.023	0	Accepted
Job Stress -> Job Performance (H7)	-0.266	12.183	0	Accepted
Emotional Intelligence -> Job Performance (H8)	-0.639	32.765	0	Rejected
Moderating Effect 3 -> Job Performance (H9)	0.053	3.686	0	Accepted
Emotional Intelligence -> Job Stress (H10	0.632	33.669	0	Rejected

Hypothesis 1 states that "job stress and life satisfaction" are positively associated. The results support this hypothesis (β=-0.954, t=99.427, p<.05). **Hypothesis 2** states that "emotional intelligence and life satisfaction" are positively associated. The results are consistent with the prior literature and this hypothesis (β=0.046, t=2.718, p<.05). **Hypothesis 3** states that "emotional intelligence moderates job stress and life satisfaction." The results support this hypothesis (β=0.13, t=8.023, p<.05). **Hypothesis 4 state**s, "Job stress negatively affects happiness" The results support this hypothesis (β=-0.556, t=20.731, p<.05). **Hypothesis 5** states that "emotional intelligence and happiness are positively associated." The results do not support the hypotheses as we found a negative association between emotional intelligence and happiness (β=-0.239, t=8.413, p<.05). **Hypothesis 6** suggests "Emotional intelligence moderates job stress and happiness" The results are consistent with this hypothesis (β=0.042, t=4.55, p<.05). **Hypothesis 7** suggests "Job stress negatively affects job performance." The results support this hypothesis (β=-0.266, t=12.183, p<.05). **Hypothesis 8 suggests,** "Emotional intelligence positively affects job performance. The results are inconsistent with earlier literature as we found a negative association between emotional intelligence and job performance (β=-0.639, t=32.765, p<.05). **Hypothesis 9** states that "Emotional intelligence moderates job stress and job performance" The results support our hypothesis (β=0.053, t=3.686, p<.05). **Hypothesis 10 suggests** "Emotional intelligence negatively affects job stress," our results do not support this hypothesis as we found emotional intelligence enhances stress levels (β=0.632, t=33.699, p<.05).

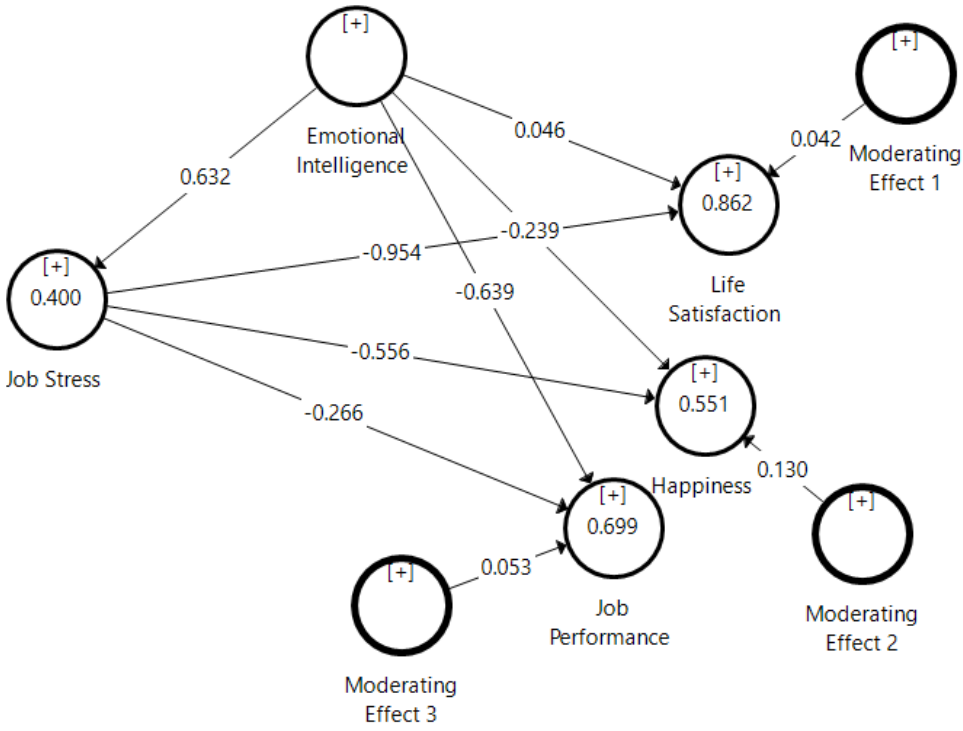


Figure 2 Measurement Model

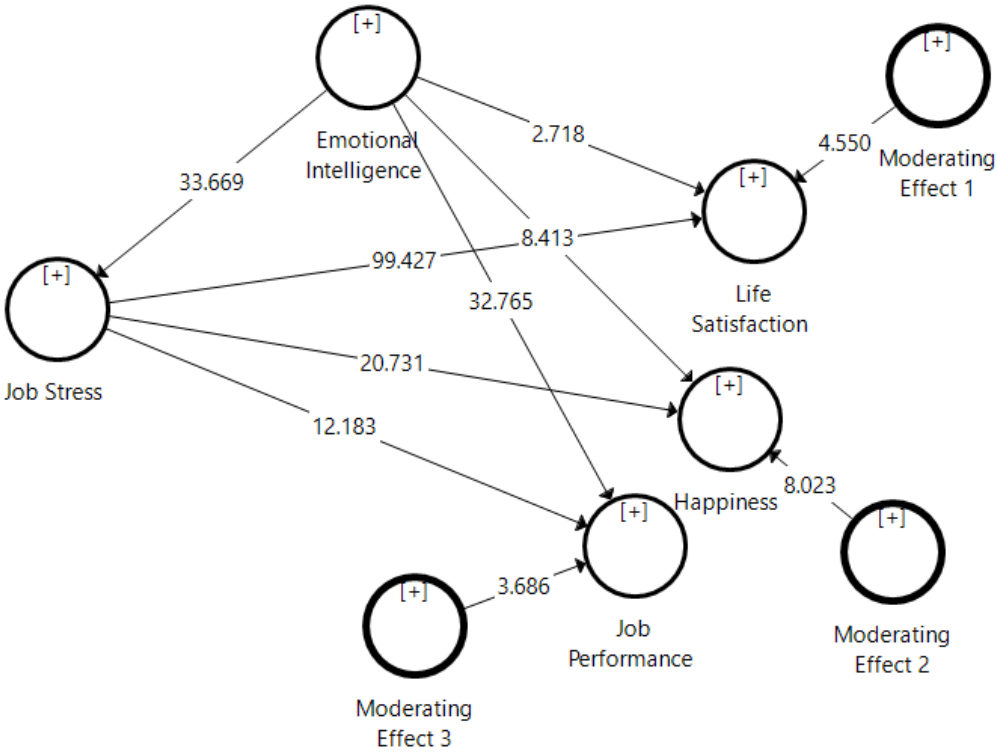


Figure 2: Strucutal Model

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussions

We have empirically tested ten direct hypotheses, including three moderating. The results and their relevance with earlier studies are discussed in the following sections.

Hypothesis 1 states that "job stress negatively affects life satisfaction." Our findings are consistent with earlier studies. Many researchers tend to mix stress with challenges. They both are entirely different concepts. Stress promotes negative consequences like low job satisfaction and work-life conflict (Choi, Mohammad & Kim, 2019). At the same time, challenges energize employees both physically and emotionally. And it motivates employees to learn new skills and use them to enhance their performance (Lo, Chien, Hwang, Huang & Chiou, 2018). When an employee can meet the challenges, he/she feels relaxed and satisfied. Wu, Li, Yao, Luo, He, and Yin (2018). thinks that challenges are critical precursors to healthy and productive work. The delegated challenges to the employees should not be too easy or too difficult. If it is too easy, it will kill the aim and purpose of the challenges. It is beyond employees' capability; it will be counterproductive and may lead to exhaustion, poor health, and abusive behavior (Elshaer, Moustafa, Aiad & Ramadan, 2018). Based on the above discussion, one can infer, "a little bit of stress is good, but too much stress is not good for employees."

Hypothesis 2 states, "Emotional intelligence positively affects life satisfaction," **And Hypothesis 3** suggests," Emotitionaly intelligence moderates job stress and life satisfaction. Our results support both of these hypotheses and are in line with earlier studies. An emotionally intelligent person can assess coworkers' feelings and frustration, due to which they regulate and monitor their personal feeling and do not react impulsively. Thus they can maintain a conducive relationship with their coworkers and superiors, due to which they are highly satisfied with their lives. A highly intelligent person also plans and executes his/her career intelligently, due to which they are more successful in life than others. Success in life is a precursor to life satisfaction. Ruvalcaba-Romero et al. (2017) believe that highly emotionally intelligent people are well organized, resilient due to which they know how to prioritize job-related tasks. Completing jobs in time means they have less stress and more time for family and friends. Emotionally intelligent people have the built-in capacity of the deep surfacing

Hypothesis 4 states that "job stress negatively influences happiness" The study's results support the hypothesis and earlier empirical studies. Researchers do not have a consensus on the definition of happiness. For example, Mérida-López, Extremera, and Rey (2017) defines happiness as an emotional feeling comprising "joy, satisfaction, contentment, and fulfillment. At the same time, Ruvalcaba-Romero et al. (2017) assert that happiness is related to positive emotions and life satisfaction. Past studies suggest an inconsistent association between job stress and happiness. A few studies found that job stress and happiness are positively associated. At the same time, other studies assert that they are negatively associated (Suh et al.,1996; Ruvalcaba-Romero et al., 2017). On the one hand, it adversely affects employees' well-being, and on the other hand, it buffers the negative effect of job-related stress (Delhom, Gutierrez, Lucas-Molina, & Meléndez, 2017) while supporting the association between stress and happiness, believe that stress buffers negative effects of stress. The association between job stress and happiness is not universal. It varies from one individual to another and from one situation to another situation

Hypothesis 5 assumes that emotional intelligence positively affects happiness. And **Hypothesis 6** suggests that" Emotional intelligence moderates job stress and happiness." We did not find support for hypothesis 5, but our results support hypothesis 6. Employees under stress often are not allowed to express their aggressive emotions and behavior. All the employees cannot control their

emotions. A highly emotionally intelligent employee can control his/her aggressive attitude and behavior. He/ she has the capability of surface and deep surface acting, due to which they avoid conflict and stay happy.

Hypothesis 7 states that "job stress negatively affects job performance." Our results are consistent with earlier studies (Rathore, Chadha, & Rana, 2017; Karimi, Leggat, Bartram, & Rada, 2020). One study found that the nurses' performance declined to excessive stress and workload in the nursing domain Packard and Motowidlo (1987). Another study found the objectivity and performance of the nurses working in ICU increased significantly (Keijser et al., 1995). Also, many studies in SMEs found a U-shape association between job stress and job performance. These studies concluded that a moderate stress level increases job performance, and low or high stress negatively affects job performance (Reid, Jones, Hurst, & Anderson, 2018; Cohen, 1980).

Hypothesis 8 states that "Emotional intelligence positively affects job performance." And **Hypothesis 9** suggests "Emotional intelligence moderates job stress and job performance," Contrary to earlier studies. Our results suggest emotional intelligence negatively suggests job performance. However, our results support the moderating role of emotional intelligence on job stress and job performance. Past studies suggest that emotionally intelligent people are more adaptive towards job environments than individuals who are not emotionally intelligent. (Augusto-Landa et al., 2008). Individuals' behaviors depend on attitude, belief, and values. All these factors are highly associated with culture and personality (Ruiz-Aranda et al., 2014)

Hypothesis 10 suggests that "emotional intelligence negatively affects job stress." Contrarily we found emotional intelligence positively affects job stress. The past literature suggests how an individual would react towards stress depends on two factors, which are personality and emotional intelligence level. Perhaps our study got the opposite result as we did not consider the personality aspects. Thus, future studies may examine the individual effect of emotional intelligence on job stress and the combined effect of emotional intelligence and personality on job stress.

Conclusion

Based on the literature, we have developed a new model with seven direct and three moderating relationships. We found support for all the hypotheses except three hypotheses. Our results suggest job stress negatively affects life satisfaction, happiness, and job performance. All these results are in line with earlier literature. The study also found emotional intelligence promotes life satisfaction, reduces happiness, decreases job performance, and increases job stress. Of these four hypotheses, our results only support one hypothesis: the association between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction. The results also suggest that emotional intelligence moderates life satisfaction, happiness, and job performance. The findings will help SMEs to reduce job-related stress. The study has used the mediating-moderating model, which brings insight into the discussed phenomena.

Implications

Job stress negatively affects organizational performance, life satisfaction, and happiness. Thus, SMEs and other organizations should ensure to reduce job-related stress. Thus, organizations need to develop policies and procedures that are employee-friendly. Researchers believe that organizations should not randomly assign job-related tasks. They should align jobs based on individuals' capacity and capability. Organizations should also assess and plan the employees' training requirements. Perpetual training and development improve employees' skills and enhance their motivation and attitude towards work. An alignment between employees and organizational

values is a precursor for sustainable growth and a sustainable relationship between employees and employers. Emotionally intelligent employees can deal with stressful situations and control their emotions. While hiring new employees, the firms should also give significant weightage to soft skills, including personality and emotional intelligence. Organizations besides arranging technical training should also arrange training on personality development and emotional intelligence. In the long run, such training will be beneficial for organizations and employees.

Limitation and Future Directions

The study has focused on SMEs in Karachi. Future studies can extend the developed conceptual framework in service sectors and other cities. A comparative study between the manufacturing and service sector may also give more insight into the issue. The study found emotional intelligence negatively affects job performance and life satisfaction. It also increases job-related stress. These are interesting results, but one sector is too small to generalize. Future studies may investigate whether such different results were are culture and industry-specific. In the context of the discussed different results, others can investigate these results based on longitudinal and mixed studies.

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