

Studying the Relations between Emotional Intelligence and Occupational Stress: A Case Study at Payame Noor University

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the relationship between emotional intelligence and occupational stress and its influence on the center of Payame Noor University organization. To this aim, a sample of 134 from among 900 employees working in PNU center organization was selected by simple sampling. Two Questionnaires were used in the study: The Swinburne University Emotional intelligence Test (SUEIT) and the Occupational Roles Questionnaire (ORQ). Data obtained from this study were analyzed using Pearson correlation and multiple regression. In order to study the relationship between emotional intelligence and occupational stress, path analysis technique has been used. The results show that there is an inverse significant relationship between occupational stress and emotional intelligence that significantly correlated with job performance. There is a significant relationship between subscales of emotional intelligence and emotional stress, indicating that most affection is related to emotional management subscale ($\beta = 0.4$, $p < 0.05$), the most important subscale of emotional intelligence is related to understanding other emotions ($\chi^2 = 3.63$, $\alpha = 0.05$), the most important subscale of occupational stress is related to role overload ($\chi^2 = 4.16$, $\alpha = 0.05$). The conceptual model of research has a good fit and confirms the hypotheses regarding the relationship between emotional intelligence and occupational stress ($\chi^2 = 18.20$, $DF = 43$, $p\text{-Value} = 0.36721$, $RMSEA = 0.013$). Moreover, results show that if custodians take emotional intelligence into account in suitable ways, it can play an effective role in reducing occupational stress.

Key words: emotional intelligence, occupational stress, emotional decision making, Payame Noor University (PNU), Iran

JEL Classification: Z00, M12, D23

Introduction

The human being is the most important factor of the changes that we see in different societies; although lots of research has been done on this factor, it has remained unknown. If we want to pay attention to humans, we have to consider two centers of intellect and sense that if they grow together a perfect human will develop. By the twentieth century researchers of various sciences argued about human nature to understand why some people in some situations do something that has no rational reason. Elton Mayo's (1924) attempts in management made managers and

elites to consider human's moral and emotions in and out of the organization. Goleman (2001) introduces some studies that have been done on brain and behavior showed that there are some other factors to make individuals with high intelligence less successful than those with average intelligence. These factors include another aspect of intelligence that Goleman calls emotional intelligence. An individual who has high intelligence but low emotional intelligence is somehow a caricature of a wise person. Emotional intelligence is a set of unknown abilities and skills that increases the individual's ability against stress and it is a factor that seems to have a relationship with managers' and employees' occupational stress.

Literature Review

Emotional Intelligence

After almost two decades since the official introduction of emotional intelligence in universities, there is no unitary definition for it. Goleman (2004) thinks that emotional intelligence is a skill that anyone who owns it tries to control his life with self awareness and improve it with self management and perceives its effects through sympathy or by managing the relations he tries to improve his or others' moral. Mayer and Salovi (2004) think that emotional intelligence is the ability of cognition, evaluation and expressing emotions, the ability of controlling emotions to improve the growth of emotion and ration. In another definition Bar-On (2000) has stated that emotional intelligence is a factor of abilities, adequacy, and unknown skills that affects the ability of individual to succeed in overcoming stress and environmental stress. Antonakis and Ashkanasy (2009) think that emotional intelligence includes innate factors (self awareness, self control, feeling independence and capacity) and external factors (relationship, ease in sympathy, amenability) that are important traits of managers in considering the company's objections. Due to different reasons such as the differences among people who are engaged in this concept, there are different definitions of emotional intelligence but most of the definitions focus on ability and synthetic pattern. (Petridis and Furnham, 2001).

Goleman Model

Goleman (2001) presented a model of emotional intelligence that included 25 capabilities in five different dimensions. These five dimensions are:

- *Self-Awareness*: sometimes self awareness is defined as thinking and concentrating attention on personal experiences and in other words on mindfulness. Self-awareness is the first part of emotional intelligence. Self-awareness means to have a deep perception of emotions, power and weak points, needs, self motivations. People who have strong self-awareness are too much depressed or too much hopeful, but they are honest with themselves and with the others.
- *Self Regulation*: Socrates thinks that the feeling of composure as the ability of standing against emotional storms of destiny is a good quality. We do not have to avoid bad feelings to feel consent, although we should not let bad uncontrolled feelings replace all our good spiritual moods. If those people who sometimes get angry or feel insolency have to the same extent pleasurable or happy times they will feel lucky. (Goleman,2004).
- *Motivation*: even if the results are against highly motivated people, they try to protect their optimism. In these cases, those who are highly motivated can overcome disappointment. The managers who try to identify their staff's motivation degree can look for assurance within the organization. An individual, who likes himself because of his work, will trust the organization that provides this job for him. (Goleman, 2004).

- *Empathy*: Empathy stands on self-awareness. The higher our self-awareness, the better we can understand the others' feelings. In all the relationships, the head of paying attention to others is the ability of feeling empathy for them. This ability (the ability to recognize the others' feelings) has a role in all stages of life including management, falling in love, being father or mother, and developing empathy with others and political activities. (Goleman, 2004).
- *Social Skills*: More social skills result in more friendly relationships, motivating them in his own way or adhering on a new marketing guideline. Usually the individuals with social skills have many friends and can easily find common ground with others to build a relationship together. (Goleman, 2004).
- According to studies by Mayor et al. emotional intelligence stands on *ability*. They conceptualize models of emotional intelligence's ability in the same way as cognitive intelligence. Rosette and Ciarrochi (2005) believe that emotional intelligence can be measured by tests that stand on work.

Mayer and Salovi Model

Mayer and Salovi (2007) presented a primary model for emotional intelligence that has three modules of abilities that include assessment, expression, and emotion regulation in others and our selves and emotion usage. These four dimensions are introduced below.

- The first branch is emotional perception (cognition and emotion expression) which includes the ability to develop emotional self-awareness and to express these emotions and emotional needs correctly.
- The second branch is emotional facilitation of thinking (emotional decision making) which includes the ability to differentiate between a variety of emotions and cognition of those that reflect on thinking.
- The third branch is emotional understanding (recognizing the others' emotions) which is to recognize the duplicate emotions of exchanging emotions between two persons.
- The fourth branch of this model is emotional management that is the ability to make and cut a relationship with an emotion in a special situation (Stys & Brown, 2007).
- In Antonakis's opinion, the factors of emotional intelligence include innate factors (self awareness, self control, feeling independency and capacity) and external factors (relationship with others, ease in empathy, and responsibility) which are the most important traits of managers in clarifying the organization's objections (Antonakis, 2009).

Occupational Stress

Nowadays all the people have experienced stress in their work environment or organization and this reality does not let people work. These types of stress are the result of duty, individual's interaction with his work environment. Job Stress (JS) refers to one's emotional response to work environment that appears threatening to workers (Gill, Flaschner, & Shachar, 2006). James and Arroba (1986) in a study about stress in the organization concluded that before talking about stressful factors in organizations, we should know each organization as a social system and describe the stress reactions in it. They think that reactions of stress represent a process that has an impact upon the social system. Robbins and DeCenzo (2007) have divided the stress factors in organizations into two important personal and organizational categories. They think that the employee and the structure of organization are the reasons of stress increase.

Personal Factors

In the case of personal factors there is evidence that showed that employees' characteristics influence their sensitivity against stress (Robbins and Decenzo, 2007). All the organization's personnel including employees or managers are at first persons with their own characteristics. Therefore, their characteristics affect their work and behavior and can determine their stress. French et al. (1973) mentioned mental health as the link between the individual and his occupation and they believe that the less the coordination with their occupation, the more their stress will be. Arnold and Feldman (1982) stated that occupational stress is any kind of mental stress that individuals have in their work environment and may result in some mental health problems.

Organizational Factors

Organizational factors may include a variety of *issues* such as:

- *Policies and methods* that include unreal assessment of employees (wrong assessment system), continual replacement, vague guidelines, inequality of salary, unreal duty.
- *Structure*. We can mention little chance of progress, concentrating on decision making, administrative protocols. Cooper and Marshall stated that employee participation in the organisation is related to lowered turnover and increased productivity, however, when participation is absent, lowered levels of job satisfaction and higher levels of poor health (mental and physical) result, a supposition supported in later empirical research.
- *Physical environment* includes being aware of X-ray and harmful chemicals, cold, shot and noise, crowd, safety dangers and insufficient light. (Boyatzis, R., et al., 2000)
- *Role conflict* appears when someone in his work environment encounters duties and needs that are of no interest to them or about which they have never thought (Cooper, 1999)
- *Occupation roles*. A category of antecedents of stress in the workplace is that of Roles that encompass the demands and behaviours associated with the job an individual performs (Cooper et al. 2001). Role-related strain was first identified by Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn and Snoek (1964) whose research in this area has provided the foundation for most of the empirical work on role strain.
- *Role overload* means doing lots of work than his job. We can study the concept of labor from two points of view: quantitative and qualitative overload. Quantitative role overload appears when someone does not have enough time to do his job, whereas qualitative role overload means that someone does not have enough skill to do a special job. (Ross, G. F., 2003).
- *Role insufficiency* represents lack of skill and experience in the job. Role insufficiency appears when someone does not get the necessary skill and experience to do his job and the organization does not provide the necessary education for him.
- *Role underload*: is one of the factors that cause stress in special jobs, it means they do not use all their skills. In other words, the person's abilities are not fully exploited. The stress resulted from this situation is called role underload. (Ross, Ibid.)
- *Methods of managing human resources*. Another potential category of stress in the work environment relates to methods of managing. Today the duty of managing human resources includes education, occupational growth, and development, using human resources, advantages, salary, firing, transferring an individual and compensate; each of them can have an impact upon the staff's stress. (Mullins, 2007)

- *Technological progress* has an important effect on occupational stress. Changes in technology (for example, portable computers and the internet) which enable the employee to perform work-related tasks in a variety of locations have blurred the boundary between life on and life off the job. This conflict between roles has been consistently linked with psychological strain (Frone, Russell & Cooper, 1992).

The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Occupational Stress

Emotional intelligence is the ability of expressing feeling, expressing, understanding, and sentiment regulation. An employee with high emotional intelligence can deal with work environment stress. (Cooper, C.L., et al., 2001)

Emotional intelligence has an important role in forming the person. Goleman states that emotional intelligence develops a kind of enthusiasm, confidence, friendship, motivation, and energy in the person. People with high emotional intelligence can transfer these feelings to the others. Researchers stated that people with high emotional intelligence are more successful in reaching their goals. (Cooper et al., Ibid.)

When we have a good feeling, we will have an optimistic perspective and vice versa, emotional operation affects the neurotic-psychological function. When you are in a good mood, you remember good moments of your life and when you are upset, automatically you will remember bad events. So we can say that good mood makes us forget bad memories of that job. Emotional intelligence represents the ability of cognition, assessment and expressing emotion in a good way and ease cognition activities and emotion regulation in the individual and in the others. (Gardner, 2005)

Recent research has begun to focus on the role of emotions in the workplace and a development from this approach has been to conceptually examine the relationship between cognition and emotions. This movement has largely been attributed to new research around the construct of Emotional Intelligence (EI). Emotional Intelligence involves behaviors related to the experience of emotion; specifically EI involves expressing, recognizing, understanding and managing emotions. Despite the interest in workplace EI, very little empirical research has examined the role EI may play in occupational stress. This study systematically examines the relationship between EI and the occupational stress process.

Hypotheses

Recent studies have argued that such organizationally expected emotions are closely related to occupational stress (Grandey, 2002; Morris & Feldman, 1996; Tolich, 1993; Wharton, 1993). EI significantly contributes to reducing occupational stress by better identifying feelings of frustration and stress and, consequently, regulating those emotions (Cooper & Sawaf, 1997).

Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses:

- H1: There is a negative relationship between EI and occupational stress of Payam Noor university's staff.
- H2: There is a negative relationship between cognition and Emotional Expressing and occupational stress of Payam Noor university's staff.
- H3: There is a negative relationship between Understanding Others' Emotions and occupational stress of Payam Noor university's staff.
- H4: There is a negative relationship between emotional decision-making and occupational stress of Payam Noor university's staff.

- H5: There is a negative relationship between emotional management and occupational stress of Payam Noor university's staff.
- H6: There is a negative relationship between emotional control and the occupational stress of Payam Noor university's staff.

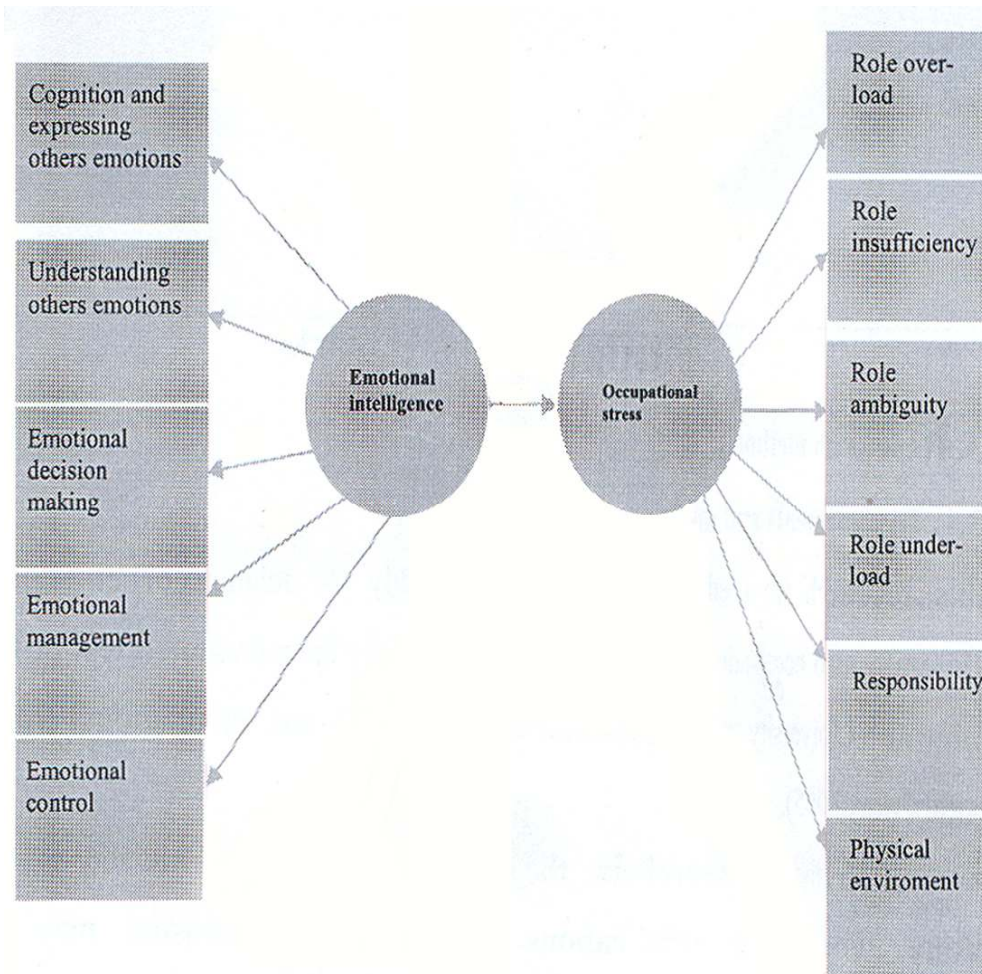


Fig. 1. Research Model

Source: Lisa Gardner, , Emotional Intelligence and Occupational Stress. Doctor of Philosophy theses, Swinburn University, 2005, p.86

Research Methodology

Instruments and Measures

In this research, we used a conceptual model to study the relation between emotional intelligence and occupational stress. This model was made by the represented test of the Swinburne University emotional intelligence test (SUEIT) and occupational roles test. (Gardner, 2005)

In this study, the variable of emotional intelligence is considered as independent variable and occupational stress variable as dependant variable.

Sample and Data Collection

In order to examine the relationships between EI and occupational stress we used the Cochran's formulae (Cochran, 1977). For computing the minimum number of participations, a total of 134 from among 900 employees working in Payame Noor university center organization were selected.

Questionnaires have been randomly distributed among employees. Throughout the data gathering, employees clearly informed that their responses are anonymous and confidential and that their participation is voluntary. Upon completion of the survey, employees are asked to return the completed questionnaires.

Table 1. Demographic information of respondents

Measure	Items	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	96	71.6
	Female	38	26.8
Age	Under 30	37	27.61
	31-40	53	39.55
	40-45	17	12.68
	Over 46	11	8.20
	Missing	36	11.94
Education	2-year college	17	12.
	BSc	98	78.35
	MSc	19	14.17

Data Analysis and Presentation of Findings

In this research, the data has been used in different ways. Factor analysis has also been used to certify the questions relating to emotional intelligence and occupational stress and path analysis has been used to study the relationship between emotional intelligence and occupational stress. Thus, the relationship between emotional intelligence and occupational stress has been evaluated through the coefficient and a meaningful number by Lizerell software.

Here are the results according to the correlation coefficient:

Table 2. Correlation between variables

	Occupational stress	Cognition & expressing Emotion	Understanding others emotions	Emotional decision making	Emotional management	Emotional control	Emotional intelligence
Occupational stress	1						
Cognition & expressing Emotion	-.465**	1					
Understanding others emotions	-.580**	-.612**	1				
Emotional decision making	-.533**	-.508**	-.604**	1			
Emotional management	-.600**	-.500**	-.637**	-.783**	1		
Emotional control	-.371**	-.430**	-.497**	-.498**	-.556**	1	
Emotional intelligence	-.662**	-.723**	-.823**	-.876**	-.877**	-.738**	1

Note: **p<0.01 (2-tailed).

Table 2 reports the results of the correlations among all the variables. Generally, according to this table, emotional intelligence is also significantly correlated to the dependent variable: occupational stress($r = -.66$). Therefore, hypotheses H1 is confirmed.

Occupational stress is significantly correlated to Cognition & expressing Emotion and Negative significant correlation is found between emotional intelligence and understanding others emotions($r = -.58$). Therefore, hypotheses H2 and H3 are also confirmed.

In addition, emotional decision making, emotional management and emotional control are negatively correlated to occupational stress (respectively $r = -.533, r = .60, r = .372$). Based on this result, hypotheses H4, H5 and H6 are confirmed.

Table 3. Regression Analyses showing each Dependent Stress Variable with the Emotional Intelligence Predictor Variables

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
				B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.695	.483	.462	1.073	.238		4.502	.000
Cognition & expressing Emotion				-.174	.080	-.185	-2.168	.032
Understanding others emotions				-.229	.091	-.251	-2.529	.013
Emotional decision making				.007	.072	.012	-.104	.917
Emotional management				-.286	.082	-.404	-3.510	.001
Emotional control				.024	.064	.030	.370	.712

Table 3 shows the standard regression model with the stress as the dependent variable and the EI as predictor variables. Collectively in this regression model, Emotional Recognition and Expression, Understanding others Emotions, Emotional Management accounted for 48.3% of the variance in occupational stress. However, only Emotional Recognition and Expression, Emotional management and Understanding others Emotions emerged as significant predictors.

The result shows that Emotional Management represents the most important role to reduce occupational stress ($\beta = -.404$). On the other hand, Emotional Recognition and Expression, Understanding others' Emotions are important to reduce job stress (respectively $\beta = -.185, \beta = -.251$). But, Emotional control and Emotional decision making can not reduce job stress in the PNU center organization.

The results regarding the relationship between emotional intelligence and occupational stress are mentioned below:

Table 4. Regression test between emotional intelligence and occupational stress

Model	Nonstandard Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	sig
Fixed criterion	1.195	0.22			
Emotional intelligence	-0.630	0.06	-0.66	-9.79	0.001

We can conclude from this table that emotional intelligence has a 0.66% effect on stress. So, by the use of these tables we can conclude that the main research assumption and secondary assumptions are correct and they are supported by the factor analysis of emotional intelligence's effect on occupational stress at PNU University organization center.

Path Analysis of Emotional Intelligence Effect on Occupational Stress of Center PNU University Branch Employees

In order to study the relation of emotional intelligence factors (emotional cognition, cognition others emotions, cognition and recognizing emotions, controlling emotions, emotional management) with emotional intelligence and stress factors (role over load, role insufficiency, role ambiguity, role limits, physical environment) with stress, and also the relationship between emotional intelligence and stress among PNU employees we use path analysis model by means of Lizerell software. We should mention that to support or reject assumptions we use the standard coefficient and meaningful numbers, for the entire path the confidence coefficient is 99 percent and error level is 1 percent.

Table 5. General Condition of Relationships

Variables direct relationship in model		sig	T
Occupational stress	Role over load	P<0.01	5.89
	Role insufficiency	P<0.01	5.15
	Role ambiguity	P<0.01	5.33
	Role under load	P<0.01	5.91
	Responsibility	P<0.01	5.68
	Physical environment	P<0.05	3.24
Emotional intelligence	Cognition and expressing emotions	P<0.01	6.43
	Cognition of others emotions and feelings	P<0.01	9.66
	Cognition of directing emotions and feelings	P<0.01	9.33
	Emotional management	P<0.01	8.28
	Emotional control	P<0.01	6.16
Relation of emotional intelligence with occupational stress		P<0.05	4.23

Model Fitness

Indicator of a good model appropriateness are (RMSEA, P value, df, χ^2).

The best indicator in Lizrell software is χ^2 /df, if it is less than 3 the model has a good appropriateness.

RMSEA indicator is the average of model's errors square. This indicator is established according to model's error. Its limit is 0.8 and it will be very good if it is below 0.5.

Table 6. Model Fitness Indication

Indicator	Criterion Evaluation	Present Condition
χ^2	smaller the better The more	18.2
Df	than zero Bigger	43
χ^2 /df	than 3 Smaller	.42
P - Value	—	.36721
RMSEA	than 0.08 Smaller	.013
GFI	than 0.9 Bigger	.095
AGFI	that 0.9 Bigger	.96

The above mentioned scores show that the conceptual model of research has a good appropriateness and the related assumption about the effect of emotional intelligence on occupational stress has been proved. As the average of model's errors square is lower than 0.8 and χ^2 to df is lower than 3 so the model has a high appropriateness and shows that the regulated variable relationships is rational.

To determine which of the components of the rate is more important, or in other words prioritize components of leadership style in terms of the impact on Karagryny, Freidman test was used ($p < 0.05$). The rates mean that larger components are the most important variables which will be used.

Table 7. Freidman test

Emotional Intelligence	Mean Rank χ^2	Occupational stress	Mean Rank χ^2
Understanding others emotion	3.63	Role over load	4.16
Emotional management	3.17	Role insufficiency	4.13
Emotional decision making	3.06	Role ambiguity	3.73
Cognition and expressing others emotions	2.58	Role under load	3.56
Emotional control	2.55	Responsibility	3.50
		Physical environment	1.92

It can be inferred from the Occupational stress table that the first priority is the Role overload and the least important component of prioritizing components is physical environment.

It can also be inferred from the Emotional Intelligence table that the first and the most important priority is understand the others' emotions and feelings and the least important component is emotional control.

Conclusion

The main assumption of the research has been proved according to the relationship between emotional intelligence and occupational stress and shows that by increasing the emotional intelligence in PNU organization center we can reduce the occupational stress of employees and improve their work. As individuals, the employees of different organizations have also experienced the effect of emotional intelligence and in this research, we saw that the effects of emotional intelligence can have a role in occupation of PNU organization and has a meaningful impact upon the employees' occupational stress. So we can say that having some educational terms to increase emotional intelligence by managers of center university organization, the evaluation of employees will determine the basic abilities that an individual needs to stand against stress and to create different motives with different methods in employees to recognize emotional intelligence and to create emotional intelligence in this organization. Moreover, the results show that there is a meaningful relationship between cognition and expressing emotions and occupational stress. We suggest some meetings to increase self-awareness in individual and teach skills of making and preserve a relationship to increase the emotional intelligence. Furthermore, we recommend some problem solving meetings to use the decision making situations and making sensitive conditions to control emotions and correct decision making in the organization.

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Studierea relațiilor dintre inteligența emoțională și stresul ocupațional: un studiu de caz la Universitatea Payame Noor

Rezumat

Scopul acestui articol a fost să exploreze și să descrie relația dintre inteligența emoțională și stresul la locul de muncă, respectiv influența acesteia asupra centrului organizatoric al Universității Payam Noor. În acest scop, s-a selectat prin eșantionare simplă un eșantion de 134 de angajați dintre cei 900 care lucrează în centrul PNU. În cadrul studiului au fost utilizate două chestionare: testul de inteligență emoțională conceput de Universitatea Swinburne (SUEIT) și chestionarul privind rolurile la locul de

muncă (ORQ). Datele obținute din acest studiu au fost analizate cu ajutorul corelației Pearson și regresiei multiple. Pentru a studia relația dintre inteligența emoțională și stresul ocupațional, s-a utilizat metoda „path analysis”. Rezultatele arată că există o relație inversă semnificativă între stresul ocupațional și inteligența emoțională, care în mod semnificativ corelează cu performanța la locul de muncă. Există o relație semnificativă între scalele inteligenței emoționale și stresul emoțional, indicând faptul că cea mai afectată este subscala de management emoțional ($\beta = 0.4$, $p < 0.05$), cea mai importantă subscală a inteligenței emoționale se referă la înțelegerea altor emoții ($\chi^2 = 0.05$, $\alpha = 3.63$), cea mai importantă subscală de stres la locul de muncă se leagă de suprasarcină ($\chi^2 = 4.16$, $\alpha = 0,05$). Modelul conceptual al cercetării se potrivește foarte bine și confirmă ipotezele privind relația dintre inteligența emoțională și stresul ocupațional ($\chi^2 = 18.20$, $DF = 43$, valoarea $p = 0.36721$, $RMSEA = 0,013$). Rezultatele arată, de asemenea, că, dacă inteligența emoțională este luată în considerare, prin modalități adecvate, aceasta poate juca un rol eficient în reducerea stresului la locul de muncă.