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The Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Employee Performance with the Mediating Role of Job Stress and Employee Trust (Case Study: Sugarcane Development Holding Company and Subsidiaries)

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Article History: Received 7 March 2021 Received in revised form 14 May 2021 Accepted 20 June 2021 Available online 26 June 2021</p>	<p>This study was conducted with the aim of examining the impact of emotional intelligence on employee performance through the mediating roles of job stress and employee trust in the Sugarcane Development Holding Company and its subsidiaries. The research is applied in purpose and causal-descriptive in nature. The conceptual framework included emotional intelligence as the independent variable, job stress and employee trust as mediating variables, and employee performance as the dependent variable. The statistical population consisted of all staff employees of the holding company, all of whom were surveyed through a census approach. Data were collected using standard questionnaires, including the 16-item Emotional Intelligence Scale developed by Wong and Law (2002), the 6-item Employee Performance Scale by Bört et al. (2012), the 10-item Job Stress Scale by Hellriegel and Slocum (1996), and the 7-item Employee Trust Scale by Jian et al. (2015). Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 18 and LISREL version 8.8. The findings revealed that emotional intelligence significantly influences employee performance through the mediating effects of job stress and employee trust within the organization.</p>
<p>Keywords: Job Stress, Employee Trust, Employee Performance, Sugarcane Development Holding Company, Emotional Intelligence</p>	

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's turbulent business environment, superior performance serves as a crucial pathway to gaining competitive advantage. Managers across organizations and institutions have consistently sought to improve organizational outcomes by evaluating and enhancing employee performance [1]. Employee performance has been one of the central concerns of both researchers and organizations, as it refers to the degree of individual contribution toward achieving organizational objectives [2]. Prior studies have shown that individual performance is closely associated with personal characteristics. Over the past century, psychologists have strived to identify, measure, and

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influence those personality dimensions that significantly shape individuals' ability to adapt to the challenges and demands of life [3]. Many of these efforts have centered on cognitive abilities such as emotional intelligence [4].

The concept of emotional intelligence was first introduced into the psychological literature by Mayer and Salovey, who defined it as the ability to accurately perceive, evaluate, and express emotions; to access and generate feelings that facilitate thought; and to regulate emotions for intellectual and personal growth [5]. Employees with higher emotional intelligence exhibit a wide range of competencies absent in those with lower levels. Emotional intelligence directly affects how effectively and efficiently employees perform their tasks, as well as how such performance is perceived by themselves, their supervisors, and colleagues [6].

Previous studies have demonstrated that emotional intelligence influences job stress [7–9]. Job stress is a psychological process that generates latent risks for negative outcomes [10]. It is recognized as one of the most significant threats to both mental and physical health in diverse work settings [11]. Understanding the regulatory mechanisms of emotional intelligence facilitates social interactions and affects emotional responses and job-related stress. Individuals with higher emotional intelligence are better equipped to regulate and mitigate stress, given the direct link between emotion regulation and stress management [12,13].

Other studies have highlighted the relationship between emotional intelligence and employee trust [14,15]. Trust represents confidence in individuals, groups, or institutions to safeguard the rights and interests of all parties engaged in collective efforts or economic exchange. Scholars generally agree that trust entails having positive expectations regarding others' motives in situations involving risk [16]. Employees with high emotional intelligence not only enjoy stronger workplace relationships and greater career success but also demonstrate healthier lifestyles and higher capacity to trust and be trusted by others [17].

Moreover, empirical evidence suggests that job stress has a significant negative impact on employee performance [18–20]. Stress reduces performance by interfering with personal appraisal processes, which are influenced by a complex interplay of biological, cognitive, emotional, and socio-cultural factors. These appraisal processes involve both threatening and challenging elements, each shaping how stress affects outcomes [21,22].

Similarly, trust has been shown to play an essential role in improving employee performance [23,24]. Based on the Affective Events Theory, workplace attitudes such as trust can enhance: (1) reliance on others, thereby improving performance, and (2) persistence in effort, which fosters beneficial behavioral outcomes. Trust motivates individuals and fosters collaboration toward shared objectives, ultimately enhancing performance [25].

Some studies have suggested that emotional intelligence has both direct and indirect effects (through job stress and employee trust) on performance [15]. Considering that organizational efficiency particularly in the Sugarcane Development Holding Company and its subsidiaries relies heavily on human resources, it is crucial to address psychological factors such as emotional intelligence and organizational behaviors such as job stress and trust. Accordingly, the central research question of this study is: To what extent does emotional intelligence influence employee performance through the mediating roles of job stress and employee trust in the Sugarcane Development Holding Company and its subsidiaries?

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Emotional Intelligence

The term emotion has been the subject of debate among psychologists and philosophers for more than a century. Goleman notes that the English word "emotion" is derived from the Latin verb *motere*, meaning movement or agitation. In Persian, it is translated as *heyajan* (excitement) or *atefeh* (affection). Emotional intelligence encompasses abilities such as maintaining motivation, showing resilience in the face of challenges, remaining calm in crisis situations, delaying gratification, empathizing with others, and sustaining hope. It has been widely recognized as an important factor in interpreting and analyzing workplace behavior [26,27]. Emotional intelligence relates to the capacity to understand one's own and others' emotions, to self-motivate, and to cultivate positive relationships [28]. Since emotions are a primary driver of human behavior, emotional intelligence is expected to

play a significant role in shaping employee conduct. Research has indicated that emotional intelligence enhances positive discretionary behaviors while reducing negative discretionary behaviors in organizational settings [29,30].

From a structural perspective, emotional intelligence is often conceptualized in four dimensions:

- Self-emotion appraisal: the individual's ability to recognize and express personal emotions.
- Others' emotion appraisal: the ability to perceive and understand others' emotions.
- Use of emotion: the ability to channel emotions toward constructive activities that facilitate performance.
- Regulation of emotion: the ability to regulate one's own emotional states [31].

2.2. Employee Performance

Employee performance has long been considered one of the most critical topics in management and organizational behavior, particularly in applied fields such as industrial psychology, organizational behavior, training, and job design [32]. It refers to the degree to which individuals can successfully accomplish job tasks under standard conditions using available resources [33]. Performance is defined as the achievement of organizational goals by employees in line with established norms and expectations [34]. Since performance directly influences organizational productivity, improving it remains a top managerial priority [35].

Employee performance is typically divided into two categories:

- In-role performance: behaviors directly related to formal job requirements, recognized by the organization's reward system, and essential for continued employment.
- Extra-role performance: voluntary, positive behaviors that go beyond formal job descriptions, which are not explicitly rewarded nor penalized if absent [36].

2.3. Job Stress

Stress is a psychophysiological reaction experienced when individuals perceive a mismatch between environmental demands and their ability to cope with them [37]. The concept was first introduced by Selye in 1963 in medical science. Research on psychological stress peaked between the two World Wars (1918–1945) and gained further momentum during the 1960s, with particular attention to occupational stress in high-pressure environments such as prisons, nuclear power plants, military facilities, and defense industries. Job stress refers to conditions in which job-related factors interact with employees to alter their psychological or physiological states, compelling them to deviate from normal functioning [38]. It has been defined as the feelings of difficulty, tension, frustration, worry, emotional exhaustion, and discomfort associated with one's job [39].

Occupational stress is often categorized into three main types:

- Physical environment: factors such as poor working conditions, excessive workload, long working hours or shifts, inadequate compensation, frequent travel, and separation from family. These conditions can disrupt employees' mental health.
- Role ambiguity: a lack of clarity about job expectations, performance evaluation criteria, career advancement, responsibilities, and organizational expectations, all of which can generate stress.
- Role conflict: situations where fulfilling one set of job requirements conflicts with another, leading to tension and reduced job satisfaction. Both role ambiguity and role conflict are among the most significant contributors to occupational stress, which in turn diminishes job performance [40].

2.4. Employee Trust

Trust is a fundamental component of all aspects of social life [41]. It has been studied across various disciplines, including sociology, psychology, anthropology, philosophy, history, medicine, economics, and management [42]. Within organizations, trust represents a psychological bond that fosters creativity and enables employees to deliver superior services to customers [43,44]. It also reduces negative work outcomes such as turnover and absenteeism while enhancing positive performance behaviors [45]. Employee trust is a psychological process embedded in organizational interactions, largely dependent on identification with the organization and willingness to maintain long-term relationships [46]. It is defined as an expectation regarding the fairness and reliability of organizational practices and procedures that affect members [47].

Organizational trust can be categorized into two dimensions:

- Affective trust: based on employees' emotions and feelings toward the organization.
- Cognitive trust: based on employees' expectations of competence, consistency, and predictability of organizational behavior in fulfilling commitments [48].

2.5. Theoretical Framework of the Research

2.5.1. The Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Employee Performance

Emotional intelligence (EI) has been defined as a non-cognitive capability that influences individuals' ability to cope with different situations. EI has been associated with several positive outcomes, including enhanced performance [49]. While technical skills have limited significance, EI plays a decisive role. For instance, when comparing top performers with average managers in senior leadership positions, nearly 90% of the performance difference was attributed to EI rather than cognitive abilities [50]. Individual EI is therefore a fundamental factor determining business performance. This is because employees with higher EI are able to foster supportive emotional environments that promote higher levels of performance [51]. Chung et al. (2020) demonstrated that EI is positively related to job performance among academic staff in private higher education institutions [52]. Similarly, Asrar-ul-Haq et al. (2017) found that EI and its dimensions significantly influence teachers' job performance [53]. According to Mohammadi (2019), there is a significant relationship between EI and job performance [54]. Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1. Emotional intelligence has a positive effect on employee performance in the Sugarcane Development Holding Company and its subsidiaries.

2.5.2. The Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Job Stress

The ability of individuals to perceive, regulate, and manage their own emotions, as well as those of others, may influence the level of stress they experience in the workplace. This is important, since job stress has been shown to be significantly associated with dissatisfaction, depressive symptoms, absenteeism, and several medical conditions such as elevated heart rate and blood pressure [55, 56]. EI encompasses a set of non-cognitive abilities that enhance individuals' capacity to deal successfully with environmental demands and stress, leading to adaptive and prosocial behaviors. Tour and Kang (2018) found that individuals with low EI tend to experience higher stress levels [57]. Similarly, Leung et al. (2019) reported that among the dimensions of EI, self-management and social skills serve as effective mechanisms for reducing job stress [8]. In line with this, Toobaizadeh and Bakhtiarpour (2016), analyzing data from 150 participants, demonstrated that EI is negatively related to job stress [58]. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 2. Emotional intelligence has a negative effect on job stress in the Sugarcane Development Holding Company and its subsidiaries.

2.5.3. The Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Employee Trust

Studies consistently report that EI significantly influences interpersonal trust. For example, individuals with high EI are more effective in handling emotional changes in the workplace compared to those with lower EI. Furthermore, a clear link exists between emotions and the development of better social relationships with others [59, 60]. Positive emotions are associated with greater confidence and stronger relational bonds, while negative emotions such as anger may reduce confidence [61, 62]. Other research indicates that reduced emotional awareness a key component of EI can lead employees to become suspicious and pessimistic [63]. Given that emotional awareness is integral to EI, a strong relationship between EI and trust can be expected. Rezvani and Khosravi (2019) found that EI increased trust among software developers [15], while Ghanipour et al. (2018) showed that EI was positively and significantly related to organizational trust [14]. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 3. Emotional intelligence has a positive effect on employee trust in the Sugarcane Development Holding Company and its subsidiaries.

2.5.4. The Impact of Job Stress on Employee Performance

Stress reduces performance through its influence on personal appraisal processes. These processes involve a complex interplay of biological, cognitive, emotional, and socio-cultural factors that shape an individual's perception of their current situation [22]. Appraisal processes include both threatening and challenging elements, each exerting distinct effects on how stress influences performance. Stress diverts emotional and cognitive resources away from productive efforts, undermining employees' ability to cope effectively in the workplace [21]. Molaieian and Amiri (2019) reported that job stress significantly predicted job performance [18]. Similarly, Saleh-Beigi (2018) found that job stress negatively affected nurses' performance [19]. Taghija et al. (2019) confirmed a significant negative relationship between job stress and academic performance [20]. Based on these insights, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 4. Job stress has a negative effect on employee performance in the Sugarcane Development Holding Company and its subsidiaries.

2.5.5. The Impact of Employee Trust on Employee Performance

According to affective events theory, workplace attitudes such as trust have the potential to: (1) enhance reliance on and confidence in others, which improves performance, and (2) sustain effort, leading to beneficial behavioral outcomes. Trust in colleagues and leaders motivates employees and encourages collaboration toward shared goals, thereby improving performance [51]. Trust acts as a cohesive mechanism that creates and sustains unity within social systems, thereby enhancing organizational productivity. Building and fostering trust within organizations strengthens employee commitment and morale, resulting in more effective performance [25]. Organizational trust further facilitates open communication, information sharing, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and higher performance [64]. Several studies confirm the significant effect of organizational trust on employee performance [23, 24]. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 5. Employee trust has a positive effect on employee performance in the Sugarcane Development Holding Company and its subsidiaries.

2.5.6. The Mediating Role of Job Stress in the Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Employee Performance

Conservation of resources theory suggests that individuals seek to retain, protect, and build resources. Thus, situations involving loss of resources, or investment of resources without sufficient return, create stress [22]. Enhancing individual capabilities and competencies can serve as a buffer against resource depletion in highly stressful situations [65]. Employees with high EI are more likely to develop strong relationships with colleagues and organizational members [66]. In the absence of other resources, a stable social network becomes invaluable for individuals under stress. Hence, EI can be seen as a key factor that facilitates resource gains and reduces resource losses. The ability to perceive and manage emotions in oneself and others affects the level of stress experienced.

This is important, as stress has been linked to dissatisfaction, depression, absenteeism, and low performance [67, 68]. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 6. Emotional intelligence affects employee performance through the mediating role of job stress in the Sugarcane Development Holding Company and its subsidiaries.

2.5.7. The Mediating Role of Employee Trust in the Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Employee Performance

Affective events theory suggests that interpersonal trust, shaped by individuals’ emotional experiences, mediates the relationship between EI and performance. Workplace emotions such as joy, anger, fatigue, satisfaction, and enthusiasm trigger emotional responses that shape behaviors [66]. EI represents a core personal competency and an essential component for building trust with others, thereby improving social relationships. Such trust, in turn, facilitates interpersonal interaction by promoting constructive relationships at work [60, 51]. Developing trust requires individuals to ground their behavior in communication and social interaction skills, which are directly related to EI [59]. Employees who effectively manage interpersonal relationships are more likely to build shared understandings of trustworthiness. This increases collaboration, participation, and a sense of belonging, leading to more effective resource distribution aimed at achieving shared goals [60, 51]. Based on these considerations, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 7. Emotional intelligence affects employee performance through the mediating role of employee trust in the Sugarcane Development Holding Company and its subsidiaries.

The research model is illustrated in the following figure.

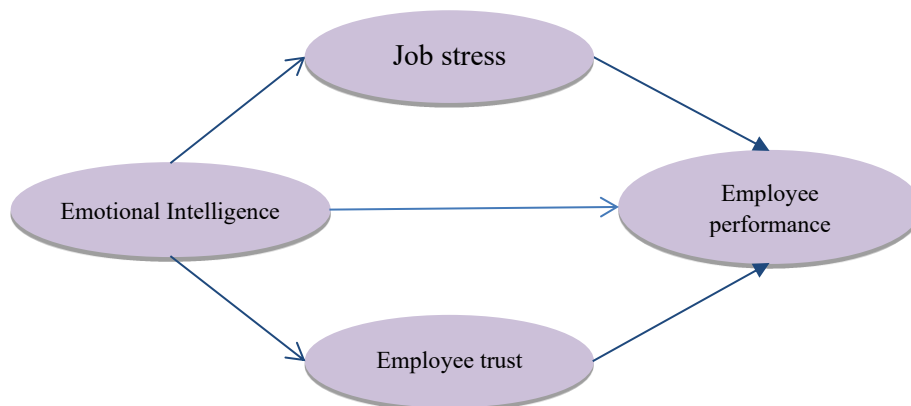


Fig. 1. Conceptual Model of the Research (adapted from Rezvani & Khosravi, 2019) [15]

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is applied in terms of its purpose. With respect to the nature of data, since the research data are numerical and quantifiable, the study follows a quantitative approach. Regarding the level of researcher control, the study is non-experimental, and in terms of strategy, it is classified as a survey, case study, and causal research.

The statistical population of this study comprises all headquarters employees of the Sugarcane Development Holding Company and its subsidiaries. According to the latest report from the Deputy of Planning and Human Resources of the company, the total number of employees is 158. Given the relatively small population size, no sampling was conducted; instead, a census approach was applied, and all employees were included in the study.

The primary research instrument was a structured questionnaire. The structure of the questionnaire is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Structure of the Research Questionnaire

Variable	Type	Dimension / Indicator	Item Numbers	No. of Items	Source
Emotional Intelligence	Independent	Self-emotion appraisal	1–4	16	Wong & Law (2002)
		Others’ emotion appraisal	5–8		
		Use of emotion	9–12		
		Emotion regulation	13–16		
Employee Performance	Dependent	In-role performance	17–19	6	Borman et al. (2012)
		Extra-role performance	20–22		
Job Stress	Mediator	Physical environment	23–25	10	Hellriegel & Slocum (1996)
		Job conflict	26–29		
		Role ambiguity	30–32		
Employee Trust	Mediator	Affective trust	33–35	7	Chien et al. (2015)
		Cognitive trust	36–39		

The questionnaire used in this study was standardized and validated by experts in the field, including the research supervisor and several company managers, thereby ensuring its **content validity**. Regarding **reliability**, as shown in the table of Cronbach’s alpha coefficients, all variables scored above the recommended threshold of 0.70, confirming that the instrument has adequate internal consistency.

Table 2. Reliability analysis of the questionnaire

Variable Name	Cronbach’s Alpha
Total Emotional Intelligence	0.923
Total Employee Performance	0.895
Total Job Stress	0.873
Total Employee Trust	0.837
Total Questionnaire	0.905

4. FINDINGS

The results indicate that the model’s fit indices were calculated as presented in the following table:

Table 3. Calculated model fit indices

Table 3. Calculated Model Fit Indices

Category	Index	Full Name (English)	Acceptable Range	Calculated Value
Comparative (Relative)	NFI	Normed Fit Index	> 0.80	0.93
	CFI	Comparative Fit Index	≥ 0.90	0.95
	RFI	Relative Fit Index	≥ 0.90	0.95
	χ^2/df	Relative Chi-Square	< 3	1.742
Parsimonious	RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation	0 – 0.08	0.052
Absolute	GFI	Goodness of Fit Index	Close to 1	0.92
	AGFI	Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index	Close to 1	0.90
	χ^2	Chi-Square	Dependent on sample size	50.54

In the above table, the model fit indices are presented. The results show that the ratio of chi-square to degrees of freedom was 1.742 (criterion < 3), the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) was 0.92, the Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) was 0.90, the Relative Fit Index (RFI) was 0.95, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) was 0.95, and the Root

Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was 0.052. These values indicate that the final model demonstrated an acceptable level of fit without the need for modifications. Furthermore, all relationships among the variables in the model were statistically significant at the level of $p < 0.05$.

Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the overall research model generated by LISREL software. Figure 2 presents the standardized estimates, while Figure 3 depicts the t-values. Based on the conducted model tests, both the significance model and the standardized model, along with the path coefficients, are shown in the following diagrams.

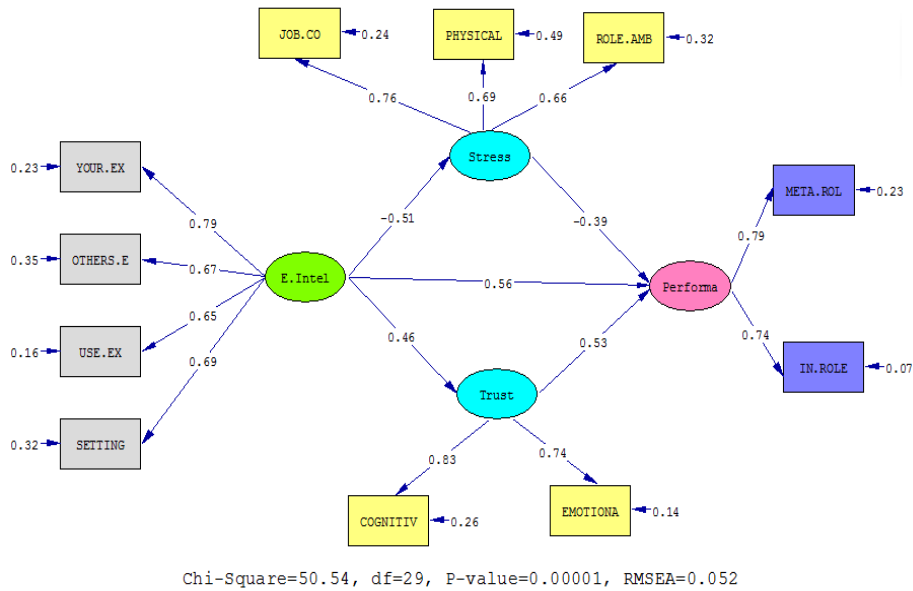


Fig. 2. The main research model in standardized estimation mode

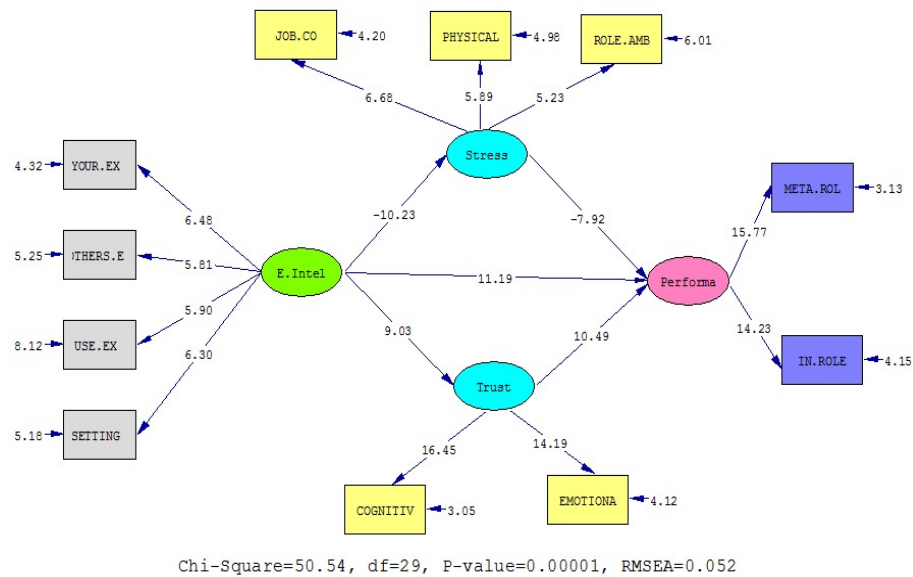


Fig. 3. The main research model in significance estimation mode

The following table presents the results of testing the sub-hypotheses. As shown, the reported t -values for all sub-hypotheses are greater than 1.96, indicating that the tests are significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and all the proposed sub-hypotheses in this study are confirmed.

Table 4. Results of testing the sub-hypotheses

Direct Path	Standardized Coefficient (β)	t-value	Result
Emotional intelligence → Employee performance	0.56	11.19	Confirmed
Emotional intelligence → Job stress	-0.51	-10.23	Confirmed
Emotional intelligence → Employee trust	0.46	9.03	Confirmed
Job stress → Employee performance	-0.39	-7.92	Confirmed
Employee trust → Employee performance	0.53	10.49	Confirmed

Furthermore, the results of the Sobel test confirmed the mediating role of the variables, as summarized below.

Table 5. Mediating role of job stress and employee trust in the effect of emotional intelligence on employee performance

Result	Sobel Statistic	Indirect Effect			
Hypothesis confirmed	3/09	(β)			
		-0/51	×	-0/39	
		(t-value)			
		-10/23		-7/92	
Hypothesis confirmed	4/23	(β)			
		0/46	×	0/53	
		(t-value)			
		9/03		10/49	

The results indicate that both job stress and employee trust significantly mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and employee performance. Specifically, higher emotional intelligence reduces job stress, which in turn enhances employee performance. Similarly, higher emotional intelligence increases employee trust, leading to improved performance outcomes. These findings confirm the mediating roles of job stress and trust in the proposed conceptual model. 5. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the present study indicate that emotional intelligence (EI) has a positive effect on employee performance at the Sugarcane Development Holding Company and its subsidiaries. These results are consistent with previous studies [9, 15, 52, 53, 54]. To maintain optimal human resources performance, managers should apply psychological principles in the workplace. One key concept emphasized by recent research in organizational psychology is emotional intelligence. The results suggest that any increase in EI can lead to measurable improvements in employee performance. Emotional intelligence competencies, together with thirty-three critical job behaviors such as time management, motivation, insight, and communication, are essential for professional success. Specifically, the components of EI including self-emotion assessment, others' emotion assessment, use of emotion, and emotion regulation account for up to 60% of performance across job types, making EI the strongest predictor of workplace success and effective leadership. Employees with high EI demonstrate greater focus, memory retention, learning, and decision-making capabilities. Consequently, EI is vital for productive organizations and has practical implications for specialized roles aimed at improving performance. High EI employees, capable of evaluating and regulating their emotions, gain confidence and motivation that drive superior performance.

The study also revealed that emotional intelligence negatively impacts job stress. These results align with prior research [7, 8, 15, 57, 58]. EI comprises a hierarchy of emotional capabilities that enable effective coping with conflicts and stressors. Employees with high EI are better able to assess their emotions, leading to higher job satisfaction and greater resilience against stress. They recognize stress-inducing factors and apply adaptive strategies with persistence, whereas employees with low EI lack emotional awareness, resulting in heightened stress levels and diminished performance.

Additionally, EI positively affects employee trust, which is consistent with previous studies [14, 15]. Higher levels of EI foster organizational trust, as individuals who manage emotions effectively are better able to establish interpersonal relationships and navigate workplace interactions constructively. This trust encourages collaborative behaviors and strengthens emotional bonds among colleagues, further supporting organizational cohesion and performance.

Job stress was found to have a negative impact on employee performance, confirming previous findings [15, 18, 19, 20]. Excessive stress disrupts decision-making, reduces adaptability, diminishes focus, and undermines motivation, all of which impair productivity. While moderate stress may enhance performance, stress beyond optimal levels produces adverse effects, as evidenced in the present study.

Furthermore, employee trust positively influences performance, supporting prior research [15, 23, 24]. Trust enables managers to maintain positive expectations of their employees, which enhances confidence, encourages ownership of responsibilities, and promotes better task execution.

The study's main hypotheses demonstrated that emotional intelligence affects employee performance through the mediating roles of job stress and trust. Path analysis indicated that EI exerts both direct and indirect effects on performance. Direct effects suggest that EI independently enhances performance, while indirect effects highlight the mediating influence of job stress reduction and trust enhancement. Consequently, EI is a key tool for improving employee performance, as it strengthens employees' capacity to manage stress and fosters trust within the organization.

5. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the study's findings, the following practical recommendations are proposed:

Regarding Emotional Intelligence:

- Implement training programs and workshops to enhance life skills, particularly EI.
- Promote emotional awareness, emotion regulation, and understanding of clients' emotions across all levels of employees.
- Foster teamwork and collaboration.
- Identify and develop competency profiles for key job positions.

Regarding Job Stress:

- Train employees in time management to prevent excessive stress and increase efficiency.
- Encourage thoughtful decision-making and prioritization of important tasks.
- Clearly define job roles and expectations to reduce role ambiguity.
- Ensure consistent and fair managerial behavior toward subordinates.

Regarding Employee Trust:

- Empower employees to take independent actions to build confidence and trust.
- Monitor and enhance employees' capabilities through supportive managerial practices.
- Promote teamwork through trust-building initiatives.
- Facilitate knowledge and experience sharing among employees to strengthen trust and performance.

Regarding EI, Stress, and Trust Mediation:

- Consider EI in recruitment, promotion, and professional development to enhance performance, reduce stress, and build trust.
- Develop strategic competency profiles to guide human resources in hiring, training, and career development initiatives.

In conclusion, fostering emotional intelligence in employees not only directly improves performance but also indirectly enhances productivity by reducing stress and increasing trust. Organizations seeking high-performing, resilient, and collaborative employees should prioritize EI development as a core strategy for sustainable success.

Transparency Statement

The data supporting this study are available upon reasonable request to the corresponding author, subject to ethical and confidentiality considerations.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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