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Influence of Workload and Burnout on Work Stress With Emotional Intelligence as A Moderator Variable in Maternity Home Clinic Nurses in Malang Regency

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Abstract

This study is to investigate the role of emotional intelligence as a moderator variable among maternity clinic nurses in Malang Regency, as well as the impact of workload and burnout on job stress. With the WarpPLS-based Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) method, a quantitative approach is taken. The study's findings indicate that work stress is significantly impacted negatively by workload and burnout. These results suggest that workload and burnout may actually reduce stress in some situations rather than increasing it, either as a result of coping strategies or the belief that work is a kind of devotion. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that emotional intelligence moderates the association between work stress and burnout, with those who possess higher emotional intelligence typically being better equipped to handle the effects of burnout. However, the association between workload and work stress is not considerably moderated by emotional intelligence. This study highlights the value of cultivating emotional intelligence as a tactic to lessen the psychological effects of employment, particularly for nurses who are susceptible to stress and emotional tiredness.

Keywords: workload, burnout, work stress, emotional intelligence, moderation, nurses.

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INTRODUCTION

Health workers, especially nurses who work in maternity home clinics, have a strategic role in maintaining the quality of maternal and neonatal services. However, the complexity of the task and the high demands of services make nurses vulnerable to psychological pressure, especially work stress which can have an impact on work performance and the quality of health services (Gunawan et al., 2020).

Workload is one of the main factors causing work stress among nurses. According to Robbins and Judge (2019), workload is the extent to which job demands exceed an individual's capacity in a given time. A high workload can lead to physical and psychological fatigue, especially in a crowded work environment such as maternity clinics (Yuliana et al., 2021).

Burnout, which is often described as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and decreased personal achievement, is a condition that often accompanies an overload. Maslach and Leiter (2016) emphasize that burnout not only impacts individual performance but also becomes a significant predictor of chronic work stress. Nurses who experience burnout tend to show decreased motivation, empathy, and engagement at work (Dyrbye et al., 2020).

According to Leka et al. (2015), work stress is a physical and emotional reaction that happens when job demands are out of proportion to an employee's requirements, resources, or talents. The primary causes of nurses' work-related stress in maternity home clinics are emotional pressures, time constraints, and responsibility for patients' lives (Setiawan et al., 2022).

Given this, emotional intelligence (EI) becomes a crucial psychological component that might lessen the detrimental effects of burnout and workload on work-related stress. According to Goleman (2006), emotional intelligence is the capacity to effectively identify, comprehend, and control one's own emotions as well as those of others. Some studies show that individuals with high EI tend to be better able to manage stress, regulate negative emotions, and build healthy interpersonal relationships (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Schutte et al., 2007). Research by Karimi et al. (2014) showed that EI significantly reduced stress levels in nurses under high work pressure.

Although there have been many studies that have addressed the relationship between workload, burnout, and work stress, most of those studies were conducted in large hospitals or public health institutions. Specific research on nurses working in maternity home clinics, especially in areas such as Malang Regency, is still limited. Maternity home clinics have different characteristics of a work environment, such as

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limited resources, erratic working hours, and intense emotional interactions with patients in the delivery process. This condition raises the need to examine more specifically the factors that cause work stress in this group.

In addition, although EI has been extensively studied in the context of leadership and performance, studies of the role of EI moderation in the relationship between workload and burnout to work stress in nurses have not received adequate attention, especially at the primary health service level such as maternity home clinics (Weng et al., 2011). Thus, this study fills a gap in the literature that has not explored the role of emotional intelligence moderation in these relationships.

This research offers theoretical and practical contributions with the following approaches:

- Unique context: Focus on nursing home clinic nurses in semi-urban areas such as Malang Regency who have different working conditions compared to large hospitals.
- Moderation model: Presents a conceptual model that incorporates emotional intelligence as a moderator variable, not just as a direct predictor, in the relationship between workload, burnout, and work stress.
- Practical implications: Provides the basis for the development of EI training interventions to improve nurses' psychological resilience in the face of work pressure.

Based on the above background, this study has the following objectives:

- Analyzing the effect of workload on work stress in nursing home clinic nurses in Malang Regency.
- Analyzing the effect of burnout on work stress in nursing home clinic nurses in Malang Regency.
- To examine the role of emotional intelligence as a moderator variable in the relationship between workload and work stress.
- To examine the role of emotional intelligence as a moderator variable in the relationship between burnout and work stress.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Workload

According to Tarcan et al. (2017), workload is a work demand that has both quantitative (the number of jobs) and qualitative (the degree of difficulty of the work) components and must be finished within a specific time frame. The high patient volume, extended work hours, and demanding duties in emergency situations can all contribute

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to the excessive workload experienced by nurses, especially in maternity home clinics. Overwhelming workloads can result in burnout, stress at work, and a decline in productivity (Putri & Wulansari, 2021). Increased work stress is directly related to a heavy workload. When a person's capacity is exceeded by the demands of their profession, feelings of being depressed and unable to complete the work will increase (Almazrouei et al., 2021). Studies by Putri and Wulansari (2021) also show that excessive workload contributes significantly to stress levels in nurses.

H1: Workload has a significant effect on work stress.

Burnout

Burnout is a condition of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and low personal achievement due to prolonged work stress (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). In the context of nursing, burnout often occurs due to emotional pressure in caring for patients, administrative demands, and role conflicts. High burnout can reduce the quality of service and increase the intensity of work stress (Dall'Ora et al., 2020). Burnout significantly affects the increase in work stress. Nurses who experience emotional exhaustion and loss of motivation at work tend to experience higher mental stress (Dall'Ora et al., 2020). Burnout worsens an individual's perception of his or her job and decreases coping ability to work pressure.

H2: Burnout has a significant effect on work stress.

Work Stress

According to Leka et al. (2010), work stress is a physical and emotional response that occurs when an individual's needs, resources, or abilities do not match the demands of their job. Excessive workload, long hours, emotional pressures, and an unsupportive work environment are all associated with work stress in nurses (Yuliana & Sari, 2022). Workplace stress can affect mental health, absenteeism, and even turnover intention if it is not addressed..

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability of individuals to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions and others (Goleman, 2006). In the world of work, emotional intelligence can function as a protector (buffer) from the negative impact of stress and burnout. Individuals with high emotional intelligence are better able to manage work pressure and resolve interpersonal conflicts constructively (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Miao

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et al., 2017). Emotional intelligence acts as a moderator variable that can weaken the relationship between workload and burnout to work stress. Individuals with high emotional intelligence are able to recognize and manage emotions effectively, making them more resistant to stress and burnout (Miao et al., 2017). In the context of nursing, nurses who have high EI will be more resilient to work pressure in a maternity home environment.

H3: Emotional intelligence moderates the effect of workload on work stress.
H4: Emotional intelligence moderates the effect of burnout on work stress.

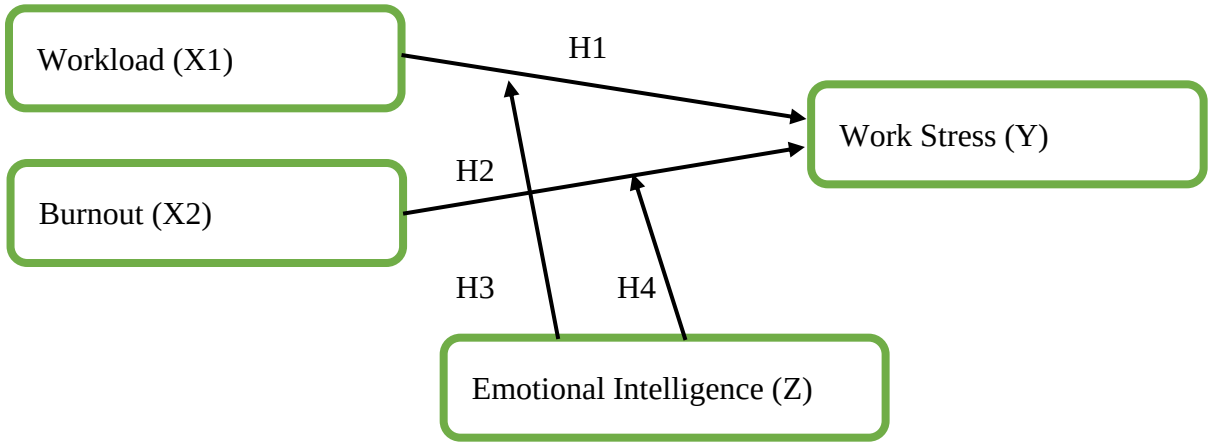


Figure 1. Research Concept Model

METHOD

This study employs a quantitative methodology and falls under the category of explanatory research, which is defined as research that uses hypothesis testing to explain the causal link between variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This study examines how job stress is impacted by workload and burnout, as well as how nurses at maternity home clinics employ emotional intelligence in moderation.

The population in this study is all nurses who work in maternity home clinics in the Malang Regency area of 732 (malangkab.pbs.go.id, 2025). The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, with inclusion criteria: (1) nurses who have worked for at least one year, (2) actively providing nursing services, and (3) willing to be respondents. Using calculator.net to obtain sample size, with a margin of error of 5%, a sample of 253 nurses was obtained.

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Data were collected using a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), which consists of several sections:

- Workload was measured using an instrument adaptation from NASA-TLX that had been modified for the nursing context (Hart & Staveland, 1988).
- Burnout was measured using the Maslach Burnout Inventory – Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS) (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).
- Work Stress was measured using a questionnaire from the Job Stress Scale by Parker and DeCotiis (1983).
- Emotional Intelligence is measured using the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) which has four dimensions (Wong & Law, 2002).

The instrument is tested for validity and reliability before it is widely used. The validity of the construct was tested using Average Variance Extracted (AVE) with a limit of ≥ 0.5. Reliability was tested with Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR), both of which are expected to be worth ≥ 0.7 (Hair et al., 2019).

Data analysis was carried out with Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using WarpPLS software. This technique was chosen because it is able to handle complex models with moderation variables and does not demand normal data distribution (Kock, 2020). The analysis is carried out in several stages:

- Construct validity and reliability test (outer model)
- Test the relationship between variables (inner model)
- To test the effect of moderation of emotional intelligence on the influence of workload and burnout on work stress.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are as follows:

Table 1. R^2, Q^2, F^2 Values

Variabel	R-Squared	Q-Squared	F-Squared
Workload			0,041
Burnout			0,011
Work Stress	0,078	0,087	
Workload * Emotional Intelligence			0,006
Burnout * Emotional Intelligence			0,020

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Source: Data processed with WarpPLS 8, 2025

a. The R^2 value for the Work Stress variable of 0.078 indicates that about 7.8% of the variability in work stress can be explained by the model (i.e. the independent variables that influence it). In the context of social research, this value is categorized as low, but it is still acceptable especially for exploratory studies or early models.
b. of 0.087 indicates that the model has a small but still relevant predictive power, so the model can still be used for prediction in a limited way
c. Workload ($f^2 = 0.041$), indicating that the effect of Workload on other variables in the model is relatively small, but still statistically significant. Burnout ($f^2 = 0.011$), the effect of burnout is also very small on the dependent variables in the model. This value indicates a weak influence. Workload Interaction × Emotional Intelligence ($f^2 = 0.006$). A very small f^2 value indicates that the role of Emotional Intelligence moderation on the Workload relationship → other variables is not very strong. The interaction of Burnout × Emotional Intelligence ($f^2 = 0.020$), is close to the minimum threshold for so-called "minor effects". This indicates that Emotional Intelligence moderates the influence of Burnout slightly on dependent variables (possible Work Stress or Job Satisfaction, depending on your model)

Tabel 2. Model fit and quality indices

No	Information	Value
1	Average path coefficient (APC)	0.129, P=0.009
2	Average R-squared (ARS)	0.078, P=0.053
3	Average block VIF (AVIF)	1.011, acceptable if <= 5, ideally <= 3.3

Source: Data processed with WarpPLS 8, 2025

Overall, the generated SEM model exhibits a statistically stable model structure, a very low degree of collinearity, and a meaningful association between variables. The model's capacity to explain dependent variables is still constrained, though, and more research is required to determine the direction of nonlinear causation. As a result, this model can be used in an exploratory setting; nevertheless, additional research is advised to improve its causal validity and prediction ability.

Hypothesis testing is carried out to prove the truth of the alleged research or hypothesis. The correlation between variables was measured by looking at the path coefficient and the level of significance which was then compared with the research

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hypothesis that the researcher had submitted. The level of significance used in this study is 5% or 0.05, with the basis for decision-making being that if the p-value ≥ 0.05, then Ho is accepted while if the <-value is 0.05, then Ho is rejected and Ha is accepted.

The following is presented the research model and its indicators in figure 1 before discussing the results of the hypothesis test:

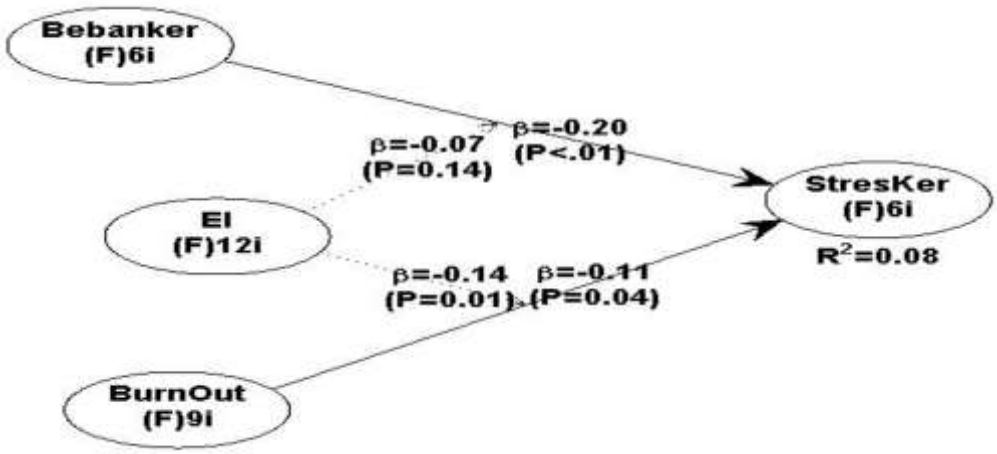


Figure 2. WarpPLS Output Output Model 8

Based on the image above, a path coefficient table can then be presented to find out the path coefficient value and significance value (p-value) in table 3, as follows:

Table 3. Path Coefficient and p-value value

Variabel	Path Coefficient	Status	P-Value	Status
Workload	- 0,199	Negative	0,001	Significant
Burnout	- 0,107	Negative	0,042	Significant
Workload * Emotional Intelligence	- 0,067	Negative	0,140	Insignificant
Burnout * Emotional Intelligence	- 0,141	Negative	0,011	Significant

Source: Data processed with WarpPLS 8, 2025

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a. The path coefficient value of -0.199 with P = 0.001 indicates that workload has a negative and significant effect on work stress. This means that the higher the workload felt, the higher the work stress level tends to decrease. This finding can be considered unusual, because in many studies workload is positively correlated with work stress. However, in the context of this study, a high workload may be positively accepted by respondents (e.g. nurses who feel that work is a calling), or because they have a good coping strategy, thereby reducing work stress levels.
b. The coefficient of -0.107 and P = 0.042 showed that burnout also had a negative and significant effect on work stress. Just like before, these negative relationships are counter-intuitive, as burnout is generally a stressor. This can happen if the construct of burnout is measured in the form of the dimension of emotional distancing, which in the short term can reduce stress. Academic interpretation: These findings indicate that burnout may act as a defensive psychological mechanism to avoid further work stress, such as by withdrawing or reducing emotional engagement at work.
c. The path coefficient value of -0.067 with P = 0.140 indicates that the moderation of emotional intelligence on the relationship between workload and work stress is negative but not significant. That is, emotional intelligence did not significantly alter the effect of workload on work stress in this model. Although the direction of the relationship suggests that emotional intelligence has the potential to reduce the effect of workload on stress, the effect was not statistically strong enough in the study sample. This may be due to low variants of emotional intelligence in the population studied, or because the workload construct is not sufficiently psychologically burdensome.
d. A coefficient of -0.141 with P = 0.011 suggests that emotional intelligence significantly moderates the relationship between burnout and work stress, in a negative direction. Emotional intelligence is able to weaken the negative effects of burnout on work stress, which means that individuals with high emotional intelligence tend to be more resistant to the effects of burnout, and they are able to manage negative emotions that arise from work fatigue more effectively.

Effect of workload on work stress

This study demonstrates that work stress is significantly impacted negatively by workload. These results are intriguing since, generally speaking, heavy workloads are linked to higher levels of stress among employees. These findings, however, indicate the opposite: the more work one does, the less stress one has at work. These findings

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suggest that, depending on personal opinions and organisational support, busyness may not always be a stressor in some situations but rather serve as a motivating challenge.

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) and Job Demand-Control (JDC) theoretical models generally explain that workload as a high job demand can cause fatigue and stress if not balanced with resources and work control (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Karasek, 1979). However, Cavanaugh et al. (2000) distinguish between threat stressors and challenge stressors. Workload, if perceived as a challenge stressor, can increase motivation, self-efficacy, and even decrease the perception of stress. This is in line with the concept that not all forms of stress have negative psychological effects, depending on how the individual interprets them.

Previous research has mostly found a positive relationship between workload and work stress. For example, Rizki et al. (2021) and Makatita et al. (2023) report that high workloads correlate with increased work stress in government employees and private companies. In contrast, the results of this study do not support the findings, suggesting that a high workload can be dealt with without causing stress if individuals have a good coping strategy or high emotional intelligence. In this case, the psychological role of the individual becomes an important factor that mediates the impact of the workload.

Other factors such as organizational culture, job meaning, and personal characteristics such as emotional intelligence can also explain why workload does not increase stress. Hofstede (2001) emphasized that collective work culture and religious values in society can influence perceptions of work pressure. If work is interpreted as a form of worship, devotion, or social achievement, then a high workload is no longer felt as pressure. In addition, Salovey and Mayer (1990) stated that individuals with high emotional intelligence are better able to manage work demands without getting caught up in emotional pressure.

The implications of these findings are very important for human resource management, particularly in the health sector such as hospitals. Emotional intelligence training and meaning-centered work-based psychological interventions can be effective strategies to help nurses cope with high workloads without experiencing excessive stress. Additionally, organizations need to create a work environment that supports, provides autonomy, and reinforces a positive perception of challenging tasks. Thus, the workload is not a psychological burden, but a healthy performance driving energy.

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The Effect of Burnout on Work Stress

The results of this study show that burnout has a significant negative influence on work stress. These findings contradict most of the literature that states that burnout is a form or result of work stress, not the other way around. In this model, higher burnout rates are actually correlated with decreased work stress. These findings sparked an interesting discussion because normatively burnout is considered an end result of stress accumulation, rather than as a stress-lowering factor.

Within classical theoretical frameworks, burnout is understood as a chronic psychological condition resulting from prolonged work stress, characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and decreased personal achievement (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), stress arises from a mismatch between external demands and an individual's ability to cope with them. Burnout, in this case, is the result of an inability to manage that stress continuously. Therefore, these theories assume that burnout and work stress are positively related and mutually reinforcing.

However, these results can also be explained by alternative approaches. For example, Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) mentioned that at a certain stage, individuals who experience burnout can experience emotional desensitization to work, so that they no longer feel active work pressure or stress. In this phase, employees may experience "emotional numbness" that makes work stress subjectively feel lighter. Similar results were also found by Demerouti et al. (2010), who observed that in conditions of high burnout, individuals tend to withdraw from work involvement, thereby reducing exposure to sources of stress.

Previous research has mostly found a positive link between burnout and work stress. A study by Harsono and Rosita (2021) on health workers shows that high burnout increases the perception of work stress. However, another study by Putra and Rachmawati (2022) on public sector employees found that burnout is not always directly proportional to stress levels, especially if employees have developed coping mechanisms or acceptance of job roles. Therefore, the results of this study can be considered to support the view that burnout can also act as a "protective mechanism" that reduces the intensity of perceived stress.

The practical implications of these findings are crucial for organizational management, particularly in the healthcare sector. If high burnout causes desensitization to stress, then organizations must be more vigilant because low work stress does not mean that employees are in a psychologically healthy condition. Instead, it can be an

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indicator of extreme fatigue and apathy towards work. Therefore, stress management programs must not only focus on reducing work pressure, but also need to anticipate symptoms of burnout early, through resilient training, social reinforcement, and proportionate workload management.

Emotional intelligence moderates the influence of workload on work stress.

The findings demonstrated that the association between workload and work stress was not significantly moderated by emotional intelligence. It has not been demonstrated that emotional intelligence reduces the impact of workload on job stress in this situation, despite the path coefficient pointing in a negative direction and not being statistically significant. Given that emotional intelligence is theoretically frequently associated with a protective factor in coping with occupational stress, especially heavy workloads, these findings raise an intriguing issue.

The basic theory that supports the role of emotional intelligence as a moderator comes from the concept of Emotional Intelligence by Salovey and Mayer (1990), which states that individuals with high emotional intelligence are better able to recognize, manage, and direct emotions in stressful situations. Goleman (1995) also asserts that emotional intelligence allows a person to deal with the workload without being psychologically disturbed. Thus, in various studies, emotional intelligence is thought to be able to attenuate the negative impact of occupational stressors on psychological outcomes, including work stress.

Nevertheless, these findings are in line with several studies that question the power of emotional intelligence moderation in certain contexts. Research by Jordan, Ashkanasy, and Härtel (2002) shows that emotional intelligence is not always effective as a buffer mechanism if the workload is already too high or if the work environment is not supportive. In addition, studies by Antonakis (2004) criticized inconsistent and often empirically invalid measures of emotional intelligence, which can lead to insignificant moderation results. Therefore, the non-significant results in this study do not completely contradict the existing academic literature.

A considerable moderating effect has been identified in some studies (Conti et al., 2020; Özdemir & Sendil, 2021), however not all of the research consistently shows that emotional intelligence always protects against stressful work situations. Differences in the work environment, company culture, or even methodological approaches could be the cause of this. It's possible that the respondents' emotional intelligence isn't developed

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enough to serve as a stress buffer in this study, or that the workload isn't heavy enough to produce noticeable stress.

The implications of these findings suggest that the development of emotional intelligence, while important, does not necessarily guarantee effectiveness in reducing the negative impact of workload on stress. Organizations cannot rely entirely on emotional intelligence training as the only stress management strategy. A more comprehensive approach is needed, such as realistic workload management, increased social support in the workplace, and organizational interventions based on employee well-being. Thus, although emotional intelligence is an important aspect of an individual's competence, its existence needs to be complemented by strong structural support from the organization.

Emotional intelligence moderates the effect of burnout on work stress

The findings demonstrated that burnout's impact on work-related stress was considerably mitigated by emotional intelligence. The negative coefficient's direction suggests that burnout's impact on work-related stress is less pronounced in people with greater emotional intelligence levels. This indicates that those with high emotional intelligence are typically better equipped to control the symptoms of burnout and prevent unwarranted increases in work-related stress. These results provide credence to the theory that emotional intelligence protects against psychosocial dynamics at work.

According to Salovey and Mayer's (1990) Emotional Intelligence Theory, people who are adept at comprehending, expressing, and controlling their emotions are better equipped to cope with psychological suffering. Emotional intelligence enables a person to identify burnout symptoms and control their emotional reaction before the stress worsens. Burnout is typified by emotional weariness and a cynical attitude towards work (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Goleman (1995), who identifies emotional intelligence as a key factor in people's ability to handle pressure at work, further supports this view.

Previous research has also shown similar findings. Studies by Shukla and Srivastava (2016) concluded that emotional intelligence weakens the link between burnout and stress, especially in emotionally demanding professions such as healthcare and education. Likewise, research by Zeidner, Matthews, and Roberts (2012) found that individuals with high emotional intelligence have a more effective coping capacity against psychological fatigue. However, not all research supports this role of moderation. Bar-On (2006) notes that the influence of emotional intelligence can be inconsistent if organizational workloads and pressures exceed the threshold of an individual's psychological tolerance, even for those with high emotional intelligence.

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These findings have significant ramifications for human resource management, particularly in fields like social work, education, and health care that are prone to burnout. Creating training programs for emotional intelligence can be a calculated move to lessen the detrimental effects of burnout on stress at work. Policies aimed at improving employee welfare must incorporate this training. Assessments of emotional intelligence can also play a significant role in the hiring and advancement process, particularly for jobs where burnout is a major concern.

Theoretically, these results reinforce the assumption that the interaction between individual characteristics and working conditions determines the level of stress experienced. Although burnout is a major risk factor for work stress, individuals with high emotional regulatory capacity can resist or even neutralize these effects. Thus, emotional intelligence is not only a personal asset, but also an organizational asset in creating a psychologically healthy work environment. These results also open up room for further research into how specific dimensions of emotional intelligence (such as empathy, self-regulation, and social awareness) play a role in coping with long-term work stress.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that among maternity home clinic nurses in Malang Regency, work-related stress is significantly impacted by workload and burnout. The association between burnout and work stress has been demonstrated to be moderated by emotional intelligence, with those who possess high emotional intelligence typically being better equipped to handle the negative effects of burnout on stress. However, the impact of burden on work stress is not much mitigated by emotional intelligence. These findings underscore the importance of developing emotional intelligence as a technique to lessen the impact of burnout and promote nurses' well-being in demanding work contexts.

This study has limitations in terms of sample size that is limited to nurses in maternity home clinics in Malang Regency, which can limit the generalization of results. In addition, this study uses a cross-sectional design, so it cannot conclude a definitive cause-and-effect relationship. Further research can be done by extending the sample to different types of healthcare facilities to improve the generalization of results. In addition, using a longitudinal design will make it possible to test the cause-and-effect relationship between the variables being studied. Research may also explore other factors, such as social support or job satisfaction, that may moderate the relationship between workload, burnout, and work stress.

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