International Journal of Accounting and Economics Studies, 12 (8) (2025) 81-86

International Journal of Accounting and Economics Studies

Website: www.sciencepubco.com/index.php/IJAES
https://doi.org/10.14419/wqh94p26
Research paper

Emotional Intelligence as A Pathway to Job Satisfaction: Navigating Stress among College Teachers in Self-Financing Institutions

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Received: July 30, 2025, Accepted: October 14, 2025, Published: December 4, 2025

Abstract

Teaching in self-financing colleges frequently involves high levels of job stress due to administrative duties, academic demands, and a lack of institutional support, all of which can affect overall job satisfaction. This study investigates the relationship between job stress and job satisfaction among self-financing college teachers in Kerala, with emotional intelligence serving as a moderator. Standardized tools were used to survey a sample of 377 college teachers. Data analysis was performed through Smart PLS to model the complex relationship between the constructs. The findings indicated a substantial inverse correlation between job stress and job satisfaction, supporting the literature that teachers who experience elevated levels of stress also report reduced levels of satisfaction. Additionally, the relationship was significantly moderated by emotional intelligence, indicating that people with higher emotional intelligence were better able to sustain job satisfaction even in stressful situations. The study suggests that in order to improve teacher performance, retention, and well-being in self-financing colleges, emotional intelligence training can be included in professional development programs.

Keywords: *Job Stress; Job Satisfaction; Emotional Intelligence; Teachers; Kerala.*

1. Introduction

In recent decades, the higher education sector in India has experienced significant growth, especially with the emergence of self-financing institutions. Although these institutions have alleviated the increasing demand for higher education, they frequently operate under resource limitations and competitive pressures, creating a challenging work environment for college educators. (Shivendra and Kumar 2016). Faculty in self-financing colleges frequently experience job stress due to factors such as job security, excessive workloads, limited autonomy, and inadequate institutional support, which can lower job satisfaction and impact performance, student outcomes, and institutional quality. (Hasna, Mutheallifah, and Bulut 2023).

Job satisfaction is a vital factor influencing teacher retention, motivation, and overall institutional efficacy, yet maintaining it in high-pressure academic settings is challenging without effective coping mechanisms. Emotional intelligence, the capacity to comprehend and manage one's own emotions and those of others, can serve as a valuable psychological resource. It may help reduce stress by enhancing emotional regulation, interpersonal relationships, and coping strategies. (Mylonakis, Orfanos, and Evripiotis 2024).

However, the moderating effect of emotional intelligence on the relationship between job stress and job satisfaction remains insufficiently investigated within self-financing institutions in India, especially in Kerala. Most existing studies examine stress or emotional intelligence in isolation, overlooking their combined effect on job satisfaction. Furthermore, little research focuses specifically on educators in self-financing colleges, who face distinct challenges compared to their counterparts in government institutions. This study fills this gap by investigating the impact of job stress on job satisfaction among faculty in self-financing institutions and assessing whether emotional intelligence moderates this relationship, thereby contributing to both scholarly understanding and institutional well-being initiatives.

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Job stress among college teachers

Job stress refers to the detrimental physical and emotional reactions that arise when job demands surpass an employee's capacity or resources. (Montano, Martínez, and Lemus 2023). It arises from job insecurity, insufficient funding, performance demand, student diversity, administrative responsibilities, and lack of recognition, particularly in self-financing institutions. (Kumar and Velmurugan 2021). Numerous studies indicate that elevated occupational stress adversely impacts educators' health and professional efficacy. (Shen, Basri, and Asimiran 2018) However, some research proposes that personal coping strategies or organizational support may moderate the relationship between stress and job satisfaction, resulting in varied outcomes. (Malik 2025) Observes a significant correlation between workplace stress and burnout, which diminishes job satisfaction; however, other studies indicate that structured mentoring or supportive leadership can mitigate these effects, suggesting possible contextual or methodological variability. In India, self-financing colleges commonly involve contractual employment, limited career growth, and heavy workloads without adequate pay or support, leading to burnout and reduced job satisfaction. Empirical research consistently confirms that job stress has a detrimental impact on educators' job satisfaction. (Hasna, Muallifah, and Bulut 2023) (Subashini, Velmurugan, and Wang 2022). Therefore, although the adverse effects of job stress on educators' satisfaction are well acknowledged, additional longitudinal and context-specific studies are required to elucidate the circumstances that precipitate burnout and diminished engagement.

2.2. Job satisfaction in the educational context

Job satisfaction refers to the extent to which employees are content with their job roles, conditions, and outcomes. (Locke 1976), encompassing factors like pay, workload, recognition, relationships, and organizational policies. For educators, it is closely associated with motivation, student achievement, institutional commitment, and retention. (Hidayatullah et al. 2020). Work environment and leadership also play a major role in enhancing job satisfaction. (Widyanarko et al. 2025). In self-financing colleges, job satisfaction is often affected by insecure working conditions, contracts, hierarchical decision-making, and restricted autonomy. Research has highlighted that chronic job stress negatively correlates with job satisfaction, leading many teachers to consider leaving the profession. (Shivendra and Kumar 2016); (Elrayah et al. 2023). However, a significant portion of the current research depends on cross-sectional surveys, which constrain causal inference and frequently neglect to consider regional, institutional, or demographic variations among educators. The methodological deficiencies underscore the necessity for additional longitudinal and contextually aware studies to elucidate the intricate relationship among job stress, institutional variables, and educator job satisfaction.

H1: Job stress has a significant negative relationship with job satisfaction among teachers in self-financing colleges.

2.3. Emotional intelligence and job satisfaction

Emotional intelligence (EI) denotes a person's capacity to recognize, comprehend, manage, and utilize emotions adeptly in both interpersonal and intrapersonal situations. (Salovey and Mayer 1990). Emotional intelligence has a high impact on job satisfaction and job performance. (Sari, Aima, and Elfiswandi 2025) Teachers possessing high EI typically manage work-related stress more adeptly, resolve disputes with greater efficacy, and cultivate more robust relationships with students and peers, consequently improving their job satisfaction. (Schlaegel, Engle, and Lang 2022). EI enhances one's capacity to manage professional challenges and is a key predictor of job satisfaction. Despite the recognized positive correlations, the majority of studies depend on self-reported assessments of emotional intelligence and job satisfaction, potentially introducing common method bias. Moreover, contextual factors, including institutional type, workload, and cultural norms, may influence these relationships, indicating that the effect of emotional intelligence on educator satisfaction may differ across various educational environments. Emotional intelligence (EI) serves as a crucial personal asset that empowers educators to adeptly manage professional challenges and sustain elevated levels of job satisfaction.

H2: Emotional intelligence has a significant positive influence on job satisfaction among college teachers in self-financing institutions.

2.4. Emotional intelligence as a moderator

Emotional intelligence (EI) defined by Salovey and Mayer (1990) and popularized by Goleman (1995), is the ability to recognize, comprehend, and manage emotions in oneself and others. It is associated with better coping skills, resilience, interpersonal relationships, and job performance. Higher EI helps teachers manage classroom dynamics, student behavior, and administrative demands more effectively, reducing emotional exhaustion and enhancing well-being. (Krén and Séllei 2021); (Silva, Marzo, and García 2024). Emotional intelligence has been demonstrated to mediate or moderate the adverse impact of job stress on job satisfaction and burnout. (Yousaf et al. 2023); (Navabinejad, Rostami, and Parsakia 2023). In the Indian academic context, (Chakravorty and Singh 2020) Discovered that teachers with high emotional intelligence demonstrate greater satisfaction and reduced stress reactivity. However, a significant portion of the current research depends on self-reported metrics and cross-sectional methodologies, which constrain causal inferences and may neglect the impact of institutional, cultural, and workload-related variables. This highlights the necessity for context-sensitive and longitudinal studies to elucidate the interaction between emotional intelligence, job stress, and satisfaction among educators.

H3: Emotional intelligence moderates the relationship between job stress and job satisfaction such that the negative effect of stress on satisfaction is diminished for teachers with higher emotional intelligence.

The literature provides robust evidence that job stress negatively influences job satisfaction and that emotional intelligence plays a critical moderating role. However, very few studies have empirically tested this moderation effect in the context of teachers of self-financing institutions in Kerala.

Hence, the conceptual framework of this study can be elucidated in Fig. 1.

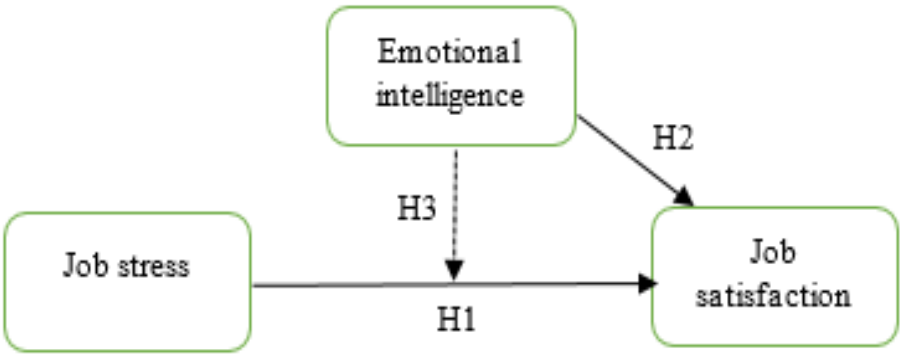

Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study.

3. Methods

The study investigates the correlation between job stress and job satisfaction among self-financing college educators in Kerala, with emotional intelligence acting as a moderating variable. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey was executed employing stratified random sampling, collecting data from 377 educators across diverse institutions and disciplines. Standardized instruments were employed to assess all principal constructs. The Parker and Decotiis (1983) job stress scale, the Paul Spector (1997) job satisfaction scale, and the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) were used to measure job stress, job satisfaction, and emotional intelligence, respectively. The gathered data were examined utilizing SmartPLS 4 (PLS- SEM) to assess the direct and moderating effects, confirming the reliability and validity of the instruments and drawing insights relevant to faculty well-being in higher education.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Demographic analysis

The study sample consisted of 377 college teachers employed in self-financing colleges across Kerala. The faculty was predominantly female (68%) and relatively young, with 48%under 30 and 35% aged 31-45. In terms of qualifications, 68% held a postgraduate degree with NET, 24% had a Ph.D., and 8% held only a postgraduate degree. Teaching experience was mostly limited, with 41% having less than 5 years and 47% between 5-10 years. Only 2% had over a decade of experience. Employment status revealed that 71% were on contractual or temporary terms, underscoring the widespread job insecurity in the sector.

The demographic characteristics possess significant implications for the study. The prevalence of female and comparatively younger educators may affect perceptions of job stress, job satisfaction, and emotional intelligence, as younger faculty or women may encounter unique work-life challenges or coping mechanisms. Inadequate teaching experience may influence stress perception and performance, as less seasoned educators may encounter heightened difficulties in managing workload and classroom expectations. The significant prevalence of contractual employment highlights potential susceptibility to job stress and diminished job satisfaction, which may enhance the mediating function of emotional intelligence in alleviating negative consequences. Consequently, demographic variables including gender, age, experience, and employment type are expected to influence the relationships among emotional intelligence, job stress, and job satisfaction in this context.

4.2. Measurement model assessment

The measurement model evaluates convergent and discriminant validity to ensure indicators effectively measure their intended constructs. Convergent validity is confirmed when outer loadings exceed 0.7 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) (Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt 2012). Model reliability is assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, both of which should exceed 0.7

Figure 2 depicts the outer model of the SEM, demonstrating the relationships among the latent variables (Emotional Intelligence, Stress, and Satisfaction) and their corresponding observed indicators. Factor loadings reflect the efficacy of each indicator in assessing its corresponding construct, with the majority surpassing the 0.70 threshold, thereby indicating strong convergent validity. Three indicators exhibit loadings below 0.70 yet above 0.40; they are retained owing to their theoretical significance, as their exclusion may diminish the model's overall validity.

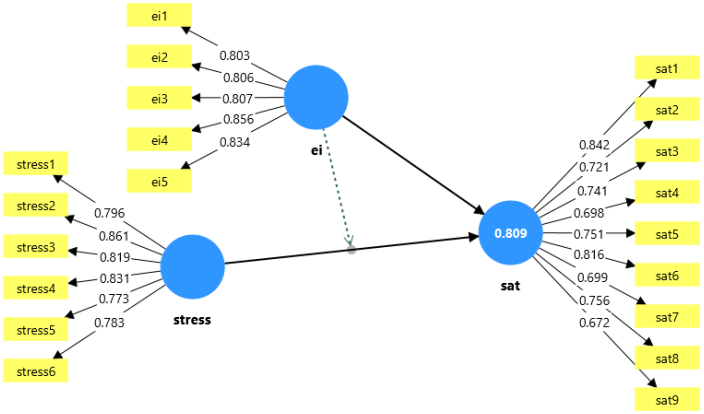

Fig. 2: Outer Model Display.

Table 1 shows the reliability and validity of the constructs, from which it is evident that the CR (Composite Reliability) values are greater than 0.7, which is considered good. (Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt 2012) And AVE (Average Variance Extracted) values are greater than the acceptable value (0.5) (Fornell and Larcker 1981). The Cronbach's alpha values satisfy the acceptable criteria, which are higher than 0.7 for each construct (Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt 2012) And the Rho_A values are also higher than the 0.7 threshold (Dijkstra and Henseler 2015). Thus, the convergent validity of the model is established.

Table 1: Reliability Measures

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
EI	0.879	0.880	0.912	0.675
SAT	0.899	0.904	0.918	0.556
STRESS	0.896	0.900	0.920	0.658

Notes: EI=Emotional intelligence, SAT= job satisfaction, STRESS= job stress.

Discriminant validity as illustrated by (Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt 2012) Signifies the degree to which a construct is differentiated from others. Discriminant validity ensures that a construct represents a unique phenomenon not included within other constructs. Cross loadings, (Fornell and Larcker 1981) Criterion and heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) correlation values are used to assess the discriminant validity. The cross-loading analysis showed that each indicator loaded higher on its associated construct than on any other, indicating a clear construct distinction.

Table 3: Fornell- Larcker Criterion and HTMT Values

Construct	ei	sat	stress
Fornell-Larcker criterion			
ei	0.821		
sat	0.816	0.746	
stress	-0.053	0.299	0.811
HTMT values			
ei			
sat	0.715		
stress	0.068	0.329	
ei x stress	0.048	0.137	0.078

Table 3 indicates that, as per the Fornell-Larcker criterion, the square roots of the AVE values exceed their correlations with the latent constructs. The HTMT values are also less than the threshold of 0.85. Thus, the cross loadings, Fornell-Lacker criterion, and HTMT evaluations confirm the model's established discriminant validity.

4.3. Inner model measurement

The inner model was evaluated using bootstrapping in SmartPLS 4, which assessed the predictive power of the independent variables on the dependent variable. Table 5 indicates the R-square value for job satisfaction is 0.809, which means that 80.9% of its variance is explained by job stress and emotional intelligence. As values above 0.67 indicate a strong relationship (Chin, Peterson, and Brown 2008) The model shows a strong predictive power in this context.

Table 4: Calculation Result of R-Square Value

Construct	R-square	R-square adjusted
Job Satisfaction	0.809	0.807

Furthermore, hypothesis testing was performed to evaluate the relationship among job stress, emotional intelligence, and job satisfaction. At a 5% significance level, a p-value less than 0.05 indicates a significant effect, while a value above 0.05 suggests no significant impact. The results are presented in Table 6 and Figure 3.

Table 5: Path Coefficient Test Results

Path between variables	Coefficient	T statistics	P values	Conclusion
Emotional Intelligence -> Job Satisfaction	0.835	40.629	0.000	Significant
Job Stress -> Job Satisfaction	-0.356	14.074	0.000	Significant
Emotional Intelligence x Job Stress -> Job Satisfaction	0.172	7.487	0.000	Significant

As presented in Table 5, emotional intelligence demonstrated a substantial positive impact on job satisfaction, evidenced by a p-value of 0.000, which is below the 0.05 significance threshold. Similarly, job stress was found to significantly adversely affect job satisfaction, also supported by a p-value of 0.000.

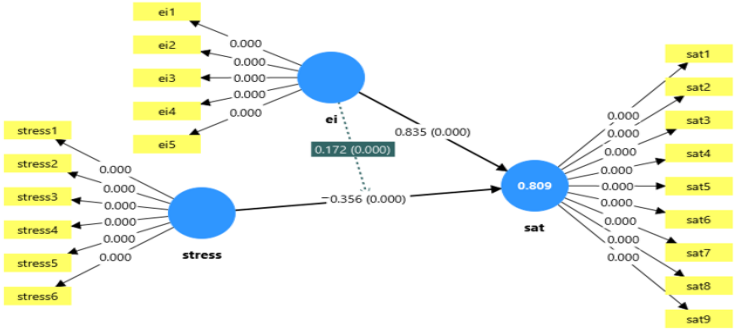

Fig. 3: Inner Model Display.

Additionally, the study also investigated the moderating effect of emotional intelligence on the relationship between job stress and job satisfaction. The interaction term yielded a p-value of 0.000, confirming that emotional intelligence significantly moderates the effects of job stress on job satisfaction. These findings validate all the proposed hypotheses and emphasize the crucial buffering role of emotional intelligence in mitigating the adverse effects of job stress.

5. Discussion

5.1. The effect of job stress on job satisfaction

This study's findings demonstrate that job stress significantly reduces job satisfaction among college teachers working in self-financing colleges. This aligns with earlier research. (Kyriacou 2001); (Skaalvik and Skaalvik 2017) Highlighting how stress from heavy workload, job insecurity, and lack of support lowers morale and engagement. The negative correlation found in this study underscores the necessity for institutional interventions targeting stressors in self-financing colleges where faculty frequently face unstable contracts and limited resources.

5.2. The effect of emotional intelligence on job satisfaction

The research indicated that emotional intelligence has a substantial and positive influence on job satisfaction. Teachers with high emotional intelligence manage emotions better, build positive relationships, and handle work challenges effectively (Law, Wong, and Song 2004). This supports earlier research linking emotional intelligence to better stress management, resilience, and job satisfaction. (Anari 2012); (Carmeli 2003). In higher education, it serves as a key factor in promoting well-being and professional fulfillment.

5.3. The moderating role of emotional intelligence

The findings reveal that emotional intelligence moderates the relationship between job stress and job satisfaction, mitigating the adverse effects of stress. This supports the buffering concept (Baron and Kenny 1986) This suggests that personal resources, such as emotional intelligence, can reduce the harmful effects of stress. The results highlight the importance of developing emotional competencies through training in self-awareness, regulation, and empathy to help faculty manage stress in demanding academic achievements.

6. Conclusion

The study examined the impact of job stress on job satisfaction among teachers in a self-financing college in Kerala, with emotional intelligence as a moderator. Findings show that job stress lowers job satisfaction while emotional intelligence boosts it and buffers the negative effects of stress. The results of the study highlight the significant role of emotional competencies in managing workplace challenges. Institutions should consider implementing structured programs that enhance teachers' emotional intelligence, as this can help reduce stress, improve interpersonal relationships, and foster a more supportive work environment, ultimately contributing to higher retention and better performance. Practical initiatives could include workshops on emotional regulation and stress management, where teachers learn mindfulness techniques, deep-breathing exercises, and strategies to reframe negative thoughts. Programs that focus on interpersonal skills, such as empathy, active listening, and conflict resolution, can further improve communication between colleagues, students, and administrators. Additionally, guided self-awareness and reflection sessions, such as journaling or emotional check-ins, can help teachers recognize their emotional triggers and strengths, while leadership and resilience training can equip senior faculty with tools to manage team dynamics and model emotionally intelligent behavior. Technology-assisted platforms, including mobile applications with micro-learning modules and role-play scenarios, can offer accessible and continuous learning opportunities. By investing in such programs, institutions can create a positive and supportive work environment, enhancing teacher well-being and overall organizational effectiveness.

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