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# ASSESSING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND JOB SATISFACTION IN PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYEES IN NORTH MACEDONIA

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## ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence (EI) is conceptualized as the capability to recognise, understand, manage, and express personal and interpersonal emotions. Previous research shows that greater emotional intelligence is related with higher job satisfaction (JS), as individuals with higher levels of emotional intelligence are better prepared to navigate stress and interpersonal dynamics. This study in employing a quantitative research design of structured questionnaires examines the association between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. The target group is a sample of 54 public sector employees in North Macedonia, a region where research on this

intersection remains limited. By addressing this research gap, we contribute to the broader understanding of how emotional intelligence influences public service delivery and employee satisfaction, including interpersonal relationships, decision-making, and stress management. Drawing on established theories and frameworks of EI and JS, we explore four key dimensions of EI: Self-Emotional Appraisal (SEA), Others' Emotion Assessment (OEA), Regulation of One's Own Emotions (ROE), and Use of Emotions (UOE). The findings from this study show a significant positive correlation between Regulation of Emotions and job satisfaction. This suggests that individuals who are able to regulate their emotions tend to exhibit greater levels of job satisfaction. Moreover, the results derived from this study can be used by public institutions to create human resource toolkits to enhance emotional intelligence and job satisfaction in employees in the public sector of North Macedonia.

**Keywords:** emotional intelligence, public sector employees, job satisfaction.

## INTRODUCTION

Governments are responsible for meeting citizens' needs and interests and creating communal well-being. This is achieved through the delivery of public services (Eljawati et al., 2021). Public services create environments for citizens to achieve their common goals and have a better quality of life (Tiernan, 2015). As public sector employees work in environments that are characterised by formality, systemic order, and rational decision-making, they often do not foresee the importance of emotions as a valuable tool for fostering relationships with citizens and other stakeholders (Vigoda-Gadot & Meisler, 2010). Research has shown that 75% of the jobs in the public sector tend to involve emotionally intense activities (Guy et al., 2008). For instance, public sector jobs include jobs of the nature of emergency responses, trauma care, household abuse, and assistance programs (Guy & Lee, 2015). Whereas, on the other hand, citizens have expectations from public sector employees to show them generous services (Lee, 2013). When public service employees succeed in creating positive experiences for citizens, it strengthens their self-esteem (Seery & Corrigan, 2009), thereby increasing their job satisfaction (Lee, 2018).

Emotional intelligence (EI) is conceptualized as the capability to identify, understand, regulate, and communicate emotions effectively both personally and interpersonally (Mayer & Salovey, 1990). An individual with higher levels of emotional intelligence can react more effectively to stress in workplace and to his or her co-workers' emotional behaviour (Alam, 2009). By encompassing aspects of perception, expression, integration, understanding, and regulation of emotions, it highlights the holistic nature of EI and its significance in personal and interpersonal functioning. By managing their emotions, individuals can stay composed, and make logical decisions, and interact positively with colleagues, fostering a supportive and harmonious workplace environment. Conversely, low emotional intelligence may result in challenges in managing one's emotions and recognizing their effect on others. It is argued that if you are not at ease with yourself, finding comfort in the workplace becomes incredibly challenging (Singh, 2006). In this context, being "at ease with yourself" aligns closely with self-awareness and self-regulation, which are central elements of emotional intelligence. Supporters of emotional intelligence contend that it affects both physical and mental well-being, along with career success (e.g., Goleman, 1995). Studies mostly have concentrated on examining the concept of emotional intelligence and emotional work in the private sector, with limited research conducted in the public sector (Lee, 2013).

Studies emphasize the significance of emotional intelligence in public sector administration, suggesting that emotionally intelligent public administrators possess several

abilities. Individuals with higher emotional intelligence levels demonstrate greater self-awareness, empathy and ability to regulate their emotions. This allows them to handle interpersonal interactions and workplace challenges skilfully, perform at a higher level, experience greater job satisfaction and enhanced overall well-being (Guy et al., 2008; Brackett, et al., 2011; Lee, 2018). Psychological research has shown that the capacity to understand and regulate emotions are crucial for enhancing both daily life and workplace experiences (Cooper & K, 1993).

The public sector in the Republic of North Macedonia has an important role in fostering economic growth, providing essential public services and ensuring social stability and cohesion. Since gaining independence, the Republic of North Macedonia has continuously reformed and advanced its public service system through legal improvements, with the aim of modernising it and enhancing its efficiency and effectiveness in servicing the public interest of citizens (Dimeski et al., 2019). According to data there are approximately 135,000 employees in the public sector of the Republic of North Macedonia (Markic, 2007). The significant number of employees highlights the central role of the public sector in the country's institutional framework. Studies on the topic of emotional intelligence among the government and public sector in North Macedonia is notably scarce. This gap in research represents a missed opportunity to understand and leverage the impact of emotional intelligence and job satisfaction in shaping the dynamics of public administration in the country. Addressing this gap through rigorous empirical inquiry is crucial for fostering a deeper comprehension of the implications of emotional intelligence within North Macedonia's government and public sector, as well as for informing evidence-based policies and practices to promote employee well-being, and, ultimately, public service delivery.

The paper is organised in the following. After the introduction, the literature review gives an overview of the main theories on Emotional Intelligence and Job Satisfaction. The third section describes the methodological approach and methods used for collecting and analysing the data. The fourth section represents the findings. It is followed by the discussion and conclusion and implications for the public sector.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional intelligence (EI) has emerged as an important field of study in recent decades, yet its conceptual origins can be linked to early 20th-century psychological research. Historically, intelligence was predominantly considered as a collection of cognitive skills, such as reasoning, problem-solving, and academic achievement. This traditional view largely ignored the significant role that emotions have in human behavior and functioning (Thorndike, 1920).

The first major shift in understanding intelligence came with Edward Thorndike's introduction of "social intelligence" in the 1920s. He defined it as "the ability to understand men and women, boys and girls-to act wisely in human relations" (Thorndike, 1920, p.228). While Thorndike focused on the social aspects of intelligence, Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences (1993) further expanded the understanding of intelligence. It incorporated both emotional and social dimensions of intelligence. Gardner proposed that intelligence was multifaceted and included not only linguistic, logical-mathematical, and spatial abilities, but also interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence (1993). This broader perspective acknowledged that intelligence is not confined to cognitive skills alone but also involves the ability to navigate social and emotional landscapes.

These pioneering works set the stage for the formal development of the concept of emotional intelligence. It was, however, the research of Salovey and Mayer in the 1990 that truly popularized the idea of emotional intelligence. They were the ones who widely introduced Emotional Intelligence. It was defined as “the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions” (Mayer & Salovey, 1990, p.189). Whereas according to Bar-On (1997) emotional intelligence is... “an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that influence one’s ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures” (p.14). Finally, Goleman (1995) has defined emotional intelligence as “the abilities called here emotional intelligence, which include self-control, zeal and persistence, and the ability to motivate oneself”(p.xii).

Other scholars, however, regard emotional intelligence as a broad collection of traits, largely dispositional ones like happiness, optimism, self-esteem, and self-regulation, rather than a strictly ability-based construct (Boyatzis & Sala, 2004; Bar-On, 2004). As suggested by Cherniss (2010) in order to clarify the concept of EI we need to distinguish between EI definitions and models (Cherniss, 2010). Studies have shown that there are three main EI models (Ashraf et al., 2014): The Daniel Goleman Model, the Salovey-Mayer Model and The BarOn Model on EI. However, this research will focus on the Salovey-Mayer model that is most widely accepted and influential in describing emotional intelligence (Mayer & Salovey, 1990). The model encompasses four key branches (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

The first dimension revolves around one’s ability to identify and express their own emotions, referred to as Self-Emotional Appraisal and Expression (SEA). This is understood as the ability for individuals to have a recognition of their inner emotions, and at the same time express them with ease (Wong & Law, 2002). Those individuals who possess this ability can identify and recognise emotions before other people (Wong & Law, 2002). It includes introspection and self-awareness, enabling individuals to discern their emotional states with clarity and precision. Through SEA, individuals gain insights into the factors influencing their feelings including internal thoughts, external circumstances and past experiences. This increased awareness allows for effective self-regulation as individuals can identify triggers and manage their emotions proactively. Moreover, SEA forms the foundation for personal growth, authenticity, resilience and a better understanding of oneself.

The second dimension of the model of Mayer and Salovey (1997), within the framework of EI, is the assessment of others’ emotions (OEA). It entails the capacity to effectively discern and grasp the emotional states of individuals besides oneself (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). This skill involves sensitivity and comprehension of the emotions exhibited by individuals in one’s surroundings. Those possessing this ability tend to demonstrate heightened empathy towards others, fostering the cultivation of meaningful relationships. By evaluating other’s emotions, individuals can comprehend and empathise with the feelings and viewpoints of others, in creating stronger interpersonal connections and more effective communication. By accurately gauging the emotions of others, individuals can respond with sensitivity and support, building trust and rapport in personal and professional relationships.

The third facet concerns the regulation of one’s own emotions (ROE) It plays a pivotal role in averting detrimental reactions and facilitating swift recovery from distressing situations that may jeopardize interpersonal connections. According to Mayer and Salovey’s model (1997) of emotional intelligence, emotion regulation entails the effective management and self-control of one’s emotions. It encompasses various strategies for modulating emotional responses in different situations, including self-soothing techniques, cognitive reappraisal and

reframing negative thoughts. Effective regulation of emotions enables individuals to adaptively cope with stress and pressure and make rational decisions despite strong feelings. Moreover, it facilitates interpersonal interactions by allowing individuals to express emotions appropriately and empathize with others' experiences. By honing the ability to regulate emotions, individuals cultivate resilience, enhance communication, and foster harmonious relationships in both spheres of life.

Lastly, the ability to use emotions to enhance performance (UOE) represents the final dimension. This capability empowers individuals to utilize their emotional experience effectively to optimize their performance in various endeavors. It involves recognizing the valuable insights emotions provide and integrating them into conflict resolution and communication with others (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). People who use emotions well can turn them into motivation, creativity, and empathy. By integrating emotional information into their thought processes, they can make more informed and balanced decisions. Moreover, they can navigate social dynamics with greater finesse and inspire and influence others positively. Ultimately, mastering the use of emotion empowers individuals to achieve personal and professional success while fostering meaningful connections with those around them. In conclusion, findings from other studies indicate a significant association between UOE and JS (Pandey & Sharma, 2016).

### **JOB SATISFACTION**

Job satisfaction can be described as an individual's feelings or attitude regarding their job. According to Locke (1976), when individuals perceive that their job fulfils their expectations, meets their needs and provides intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, they are expected to experience greater job satisfaction. He conceptualized job satisfaction as "the pleasant emotional condition resulting from the evaluation of one's job achieving or facilitating one's job standards" (Locke, 1969, p.317). There are certain factors that can be utilised to evaluate the impact of job satisfaction, like absence rate, work quality and participation in job-related activities (Habib et al., 2014). Research has shown that employees with higher job satisfaction are generally more efficient with their time at work, take fewer sick leave and show reduced intentions to leave their positions (Spector, 1994).

Although there exist different theories of job satisfaction, there are four key theories. Frederick Herzberg (1968) introduced the first theory, suggesting that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction result from two distinct groups of factors. These factors include incentives like achievement, recognition, responsibility, and hygiene factors such as pay, working environment, and policies of the organisation. He argues that incentives enhance job satisfaction, whereas hygiene factors prevent job discontent (Herzberg, 1968). Another theory was developed, hinting that job satisfaction is shaped by the difference between what job expectations employees have and what they really experience. When the actual job experience exceeds expectations, job satisfaction increases and vice versa (Porter et al., 1968). In addition, The Job Characteristics Theory Model was designed by Hackman and Oldham (1975) which recommended that job satisfaction is influenced by core work attributes. They are diversity of skills, significance of task, feedback and autonomy. Jobs that provide high levels of these attributes are more likely to lead to job satisfaction and motivation (Hackman & Oldham, 1975).

Several well-established instruments have emerged as frontrunners in this domain, each offering distinct strengths and advantages. The Job Descriptive Index developed by Smith et al. (1969) stands out as one of the most extensively used and verified measures of job satisfaction, capturing employees' perceptions across various facets of their work environment.



Similarly, the Job Satisfaction Index by Brayfield and Rothe is a broadly acknowledged measure used to assess an individual's satisfaction with their job. The index provides a quantitative score that indicates the level of satisfaction an individual feels towards their job based on their responses to these items.

### **EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND JOB SATISFACTION**

Emotional intelligence plays a key role in assessing organisational productivity, staff turnover, and job satisfaction (Seyal & Afzaal, 2013). In principle, individuals possessing elevated emotional intelligence levels are expected to excel in managing emotional labour. This encompasses tasks such as regulating emotions, handling interpersonal interactions, and navigating challenging situations with finesse. As a result of their adeptness in handling these aspects of emotional labour, they are anticipated to exhibit increased job satisfaction, experiencing a deeper sense of purpose and commitment to their job (Guy et al., 2008). Employees with high levels of emotional intelligence tend to have greater resilience as they can identify stress sources and thus create strategies to mitigate its adverse effects (Cooper & Sawaf, 1997). According to findings, employees tend to show higher levels of job satisfaction when they exhibit heightened emotional states (Ealias & George, 2012). This suggests that emotions play a crucial role in shaping individuals' overall satisfaction with their work environment (Khan et al., 2017). Moreover, research has shown that managing oneself has a great influence on Job Satisfaction (Güleryüz et al., 2018). Individuals who are better at self-managing their intense emotions tend to be in a better state to deal with higher levels of stress and fatigue - that leads to reduction of job satisfaction (Brackett et al., 2010).

Employees who are skilled at recognizing, showing good management and comprehension of their emotions, are more inclined to exhibit greater levels of job satisfaction. This is achieved due to their enhanced ability to navigate work-related stressors and interpersonal dynamics. In another study it is also proven that emotional intelligence has a substantial impact on employees' commitment to the organization, their stress levels and overall job satisfaction (Navas et al., 2018). Thus, employees with high emotional intelligence tend to report greater job satisfaction, which in turn contributes to improved performance in the workplace (Druskat et al., 2006).

When it comes to the study of the correlation between four dimensions of emotional intelligence and job satisfaction, research shows different results. For instance, research conducted by Pandey and Sharma (2016) in a large size bank shows that there is a positive correlation between overall job satisfaction and all four dimensions of emotional intelligence. Meaning that if emotional intelligence is high, so will be job satisfaction. Whereas the study conducted by Kassim and the colleagues (2016) among lecturers on university settings found that there is a significant relationship between Use of Emotions (UOE) and Regulation of Emotions (ROE) with Job Satisfaction. However, there was no relationship between Self Emotional Appraisal (SEA) and Other Emotion Appraisal (OEA) with Job Satisfaction. Similarly, Güleryüz and the colleagues (2008) conducted a study among nurses in a university hospital in Turkey. Their results indicate a link between job satisfaction and both Regulation of Emotions (ROE) and Use of Emotions to improve performance. Moreover, the study done by Long et al., (2016) in teachers in public schools found that from all four elements of Emotional Intelligence, only Emotional Self Awareness and Use of Other's emotions were positively correlated with job satisfaction. Similarly, the study done by Psilopanagioti and colleagues (2012) found that the Use of Emotions (UOE) showed a strong and positive relationship with Job Satisfaction. The study undertaken by Trivellas et al., 2013 in nursing staff working in hospitals found positive correlation between the two elements of EI that of SEA and UOE, whereas no correlation was found between OEA and ROE.

This study puts out four hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Individuals with higher levels of Self-Emotional Appraisal (SEA) are expected to exhibit greater job satisfaction compared to those with lower levels of SEA (Pandey & Sharma, 2016; Guy & Lee, 2015; Long et al., 2016; Trivellas et al., 2013).

Hypothesis 2: Individuals with higher levels of Others' Emotions Assessment (OEA) are expected to exhibit greater job satisfaction in contrast to individuals with lower levels of OEA (Pandey & Sharma, 2016; Guy & Lee, 2015).

Hypothesis 3: Individuals with higher levels of Regulation of One's Own Emotions (ROE) are expected to exhibit greater job satisfaction compared to those with lower levels of ROE (Pandey & Sharma, 2016; Kassim et al., 2016; Güleriyüz et al., 2008; Munyug et al., 2020)

Hypothesis 4: Individuals with higher levels of Use of Emotions (UOE) are expected to exhibit greater job satisfaction compared to those with lower levels UOE (Pandey & Sharma, 2016; Kassim et al., 2016; Güleriyüz et al., 2008; Long et al., 2016; Psilopanagioti et al., 2012; Trivellas et al., 2013)

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research design**

This research utilized quantitative approach based on questionnaires to test the hypothesized relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction among public sector employees in the Republic of North Macedonia.

### **Data analysis methods**

To analyse the data the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated to evaluate the reliability of the scales. Descriptive statistics were calculated for each variable, including the mean and standard deviation. Pearson's correlation coefficient was applied to examine the relationships between the dimensions of emotional intelligence and job satisfaction.

### **Respondents**

Respondents of the study were employees in the public sector in North Macedonia. The research employed a non-probability sampling method to include 54 employees. According to Roscoe's guidelines, a sample size that is between 30 and 500 participants is considered appropriate for behavioural research (Aziz & Mahmood, 2011).

### **Sampling and procedure**

The target population consists of government and public sector employees across different government departments and agencies. Taking part in the study was on a voluntary and anonymous basis. The questionnaire was administered electronically. The survey was sent to contact people in critical ministries and was distributed through four different sources. The validity of the sample size was checked randomly by all four distribution points. The total estimated number of randomly distributed surveys is around 120 to multiple public sector institutions, out of which 58 participants responded, and after cleaning the data only 54 survey responses were valid, representing a statistically significant response rate of 48%.

Descriptive statistics, such as means, standard deviations, and frequencies, were calculated to illustrate the demographic characteristics of the participants.

### **Instrumentation**

This research employs two established instruments: the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS), created by Wong and Law (2002). The first section of the questionnaire consisted of 16 items on emotional intelligence distributed across four dimensions, each dimension includes four items: Self-Emotion Appraisal (4 items), Others' Emotion Appraisal (4 items), Regulation of Emotion (4 items), and Use of Emotion (4 items). Each item is rated using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 means strongly disagree and 5 means strongly agree. The second part of the questionnaire was the Index of Job Satisfaction by Brayfield and Rothe (1951) utilized to measure participants' level of job satisfaction consisting of 18 items. By combining these two instruments, the research explores the relationship between EI and JS among participants, providing insights into the factors that contribute to workplace well-being.

### **Reliability and validity of the instrument**

Cronbach's alpha was used as a statistical method to check the internal consistency or reliability of a scale, confirming that all items within the scale are measuring the same concept. The results showed different reliability levels across the domains, with Self-Emotion Appraisal (SEA) demonstrating moderate reliability ( $\alpha = 0.6671$ ), while Others' Emotion Appraisal (OEA), Use of Emotion (UOE), and Regulation of Emotion (ROE) displayed good reliability ( $\alpha = 0.7658, 0.7932, 0.7795$ , respectively). The Job Satisfaction (JS) scale had excellent reliability ( $\alpha = 0.9078$ ). These findings confirm that the scales are consistent, supporting the validity of the study (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

**Table 1**

*Items of Emotional Intelligence and Job Satisfaction*

| <b>Self-emotion appraisal (SEA)</b>                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. I have a good sense of why I feel certain feelings most of the time. |
| 2. I have a good understanding of my own emotions.                      |
| 3. I really understand what I feel.                                     |
| 4. I always know whether I am happy or not.                             |
| <b>Others emotion appraisal (OEA)</b>                                   |
| 1. I always know my friends' emotions from their behavior.              |
| 2. I am a good observer of others' emotions.                            |
| 3. I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others.               |
| 4. I have a good understanding of the emotions of people around me.     |
| <b>Use of emotion (UOE)</b>                                             |
| 1. I always set goals for myself and then try my best to achieve them.  |



|                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2. I always tell myself I am a competent person.                       |
| 3. I am a self-motivated person.                                       |
| 4. I would always encourage myself to try my best.                     |
| <b>Regulation of emotion (ROE)</b>                                     |
| 1. I am able to control my temper and handle difficulties rationally.  |
| 2. I am quite capable of controlling my own emotions.                  |
| 3. I can always calm down quickly when I am very angry.                |
| 4. I have good control of my own emotions.                             |
| <b>Job satisfaction</b>                                                |
| 1. . My job is like a hobby to me.                                     |
| 2. My job is usually interesting enough to keep me from getting bored. |
| 3. It seems that my friends are more interested in their jobs.         |
| 4. I consider my job rather unpleasant.                                |
| 5. I enjoy my work more than my leisure time.                          |
| 6. I am often bored with my job.                                       |
| 7. I feel fairly well satisfied with my present job.                   |
| 8. Most of the time I have to force myself to go to work.              |
| 9. I am satisfied with my job for the time being.                      |
| 10. I feel that my job is no more interesting than others I could get. |
| 11. I definitely dislike my work.                                      |
| 12. I feel that I am happier in my work than most other people.        |
| 13. Most days I am enthusiastic about my work.                         |
| 14. Each day of work seems like it will never end.                     |
| 15. I like my job better than the average worker does.                 |
| 16. My job is pretty uninteresting.                                    |
| 17. I find real enjoyment in my work.                                  |
| 18. I am disappointed that I ever took this job.                       |

**Table 2***Reliability Results for Job Satisfaction*

| Construct             | Cronbach's Alpha | No of items | Remarks               |
|-----------------------|------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Job Satisfaction (JS) | 0.9078           | 18          | Excellent Reliability |

**Table 3**

*Reliability Results for all Four Domains of Emotional Intelligence*

| Construct                       | Cronbach's Alpha | No of items | Remarks              |
|---------------------------------|------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| Self-Emotion Appraisal (SEA)    | 0.6671           | 4           | Moderate Reliability |
| Others' Emotion Appraisal (OEA) | 0.7658           | 4           | Good Reliability     |
| Use of Emotion (UOE)            | 0.7932           | 4           | Good Reliability     |
| Regulation of Emotion (ROE)     | 0.7795           | 4           | Good Reliability     |

The reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha shows that three of the four emotional intelligence dimensions—Others' Emotion Appraisal (OEA), Use of Emotion (UOE), and Regulation of Emotion (ROE)—demonstrate good internal consistency, indicating that the items within each scale reliably measure their respective constructs. However, Self-Emotion Appraisal (SEA) shows moderate reliability, suggesting that the consistency of responses across its items is lower and may benefit from refinement or further validation. In contrast, the Job Satisfaction (JS) construct exhibits excellent reliability, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.9078. This high value indicates that the 18 items used to measure job satisfaction are highly consistent and dependable for capturing the construction accurately. Overall, the scales used in this study are generally reliable, especially for measuring job satisfaction and most emotional intelligence dimensions.

The Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS), created by Wong and Law (2002), was utilized in this study. Factor analysis indicated that the 16 items measuring the four dimensions of emotional intelligence had average factor loadings above 0.70 (Wong & Law, 2002). The cumulative variance explained by these items was 65.436% (Özen, et al., 2014).

For assessing job satisfaction, the Brayfield and Rothe General Index of Job Satisfaction (1951) was employed. Its validity has been established in previous studies by Aryee et al., (2002), Gautam et al., (2006), and Psilopanagioti et al., (2012), confirming its suitability for measuring job satisfaction.

### DATA ANALYSIS

The Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) and Brayfield and Rothe's General Index of Job Satisfaction were given to all participants. The data was analyzed using R Studio, Version 2024.12.0+467. Descriptive statistical techniques were first applied to confirm the assumptions necessary for the analysis. To test the hypotheses, Pearson's correlation coefficient was computed to determine whether the null hypotheses could be rejected.

## RESULTS

### CHARACTERISTIC OF PARTICIPANTS

The first step in the data analysis involved assessing the respondents' demographic profile, including variables such as gender, age, and education level. In terms of gender, 61.11% (33 respondents) were female, while 38.89% (21 respondents) were male. When analyzing age, the largest group of respondents fell within the 21-30 years range, representing 42.59% (23 respondents). The 31-40 years group followed with 27.78% (15 respondents). The age group 51-64 years consisted of 18.52% (10 respondents), and 11.11% (6 respondents) were aged 41-50 years, followed by 61-64 years group with 18.5% (10 respondents).

Regarding educational background, most respondents (51.85%, or 28 respondents) had completed undergraduate studies. This was followed by 35.19% (19 respondents) who had obtained a master's degree and 11.11% (6 respondents) who had completed secondary education. A small proportion, 1.85% (1 respondent), held a PhD degree.

In terms of employment background, most respondents were employed in governmental institutions, with a large representation from national ministries such as the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, Ministry of Education and Science, and Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Health. A significant portion were also from local government entities, including the Municipality of Tetovo and the Municipality of Krusevo. Others were affiliated with state agencies, healthcare institutions, or central government bodies such as the Parliament and Government of North Macedonia. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Characteristics of Participants*

| Category               | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| <b>Gender</b>          |           |                |
| Female                 | 33        | 61.11%         |
| Male                   | 21        | 38.89%         |
| <b>Age</b>             |           |                |
| 21-30 years            | 23        | 42.59%         |
| 31-40 years            | 15        | 27.78%         |
| 41-50 years            | 6         | 11.11%         |
| 51-64 years            | 10        | 18.52%         |
| <b>Education Level</b> |           |                |
| Secondary Education    | 6         | 11.11%         |
| Undergraduate Studies  | 28        | 51.85%         |
| Master's Studies       | 19        | 35.19%         |
| PhD Degree             | 1         | 1.85%          |
| <b>Total Responses</b> | <b>54</b> | <b>100%</b>    |

### EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

The data shown in Table 5 demonstrate that employees are good at understanding their own emotions (SEA,  $M = 4.2315$ ,  $SD = 0.4997$ ). This means they usually know why they feel a certain way, as reflected in questions like "I have a good understanding of my own emotions." Their capacity to perceive and comprehend others' emotions (OEA,  $M = 3.9444$ ,  $SD = 0.5981$ )

is slightly lower, suggesting they can observe others' feelings but may not always interpret them accurately. The Use of Emotion (UOE) score ( $M = 4.1528$ ,  $SD = 0.6302$ ) shows that employees use their emotions to stay motivated and reach their goals, as reflected in statements like "I always set goals for myself and try my best to achieve them." The lowest score was in Regulation of Emotion (ROE) ( $M = 3.8287$ ,  $SD = 0.6673$ ), meaning some employees may struggle to control their emotions at work, as seen in responses to questions such as "I can always calm down quickly when I am very angry." Overall, employees are good at understanding themselves and staying motivated, but they could improve in managing emotions and understanding others better.

**Table 5**

*Descriptive Results for Emotional Intelligence*

| Domain                        | Mean   | Std. Deviation |
|-------------------------------|--------|----------------|
| <b>Emotional Intelligence</b> |        |                |
| SEA                           | 4.2315 | 0.4997         |
| OEA                           | 3.9444 | 0.5981         |
| UOE                           | 4.1528 | 0.6302         |
| ROE                           | 3.8287 | 0.6673         |

**Table 6**

*Descriptive Results for Job Satisfaction*

| Domain           | Mean   | Std. Deviation |
|------------------|--------|----------------|
| Job Satisfaction | 2.9064 | 0.2747         |

The mean score for Job Satisfaction is 2.9064, which suggests that, on average, participants reported a moderate level of satisfaction with their jobs. Since the scale likely ranges from 1 (low satisfaction) to 5 (high satisfaction), a mean close to 3 indicates a neutral to slightly positive perception of job satisfaction among public sector employees.

The standard deviation is 0.2747, which is relatively low. This indicates that most responses were closely clustered around the mean, showing little variation in how participants rated their job satisfaction. In other words, the participants had fairly consistent views regarding their satisfaction at work.

**Table 7**

*Correlation between Self-Emotional Appraisal (SEA) and Job Satisfaction*

| Variable         | SEA    | Job Satisfaction | Sig   | N  |
|------------------|--------|------------------|-------|----|
| SEA              | 1      | -0.124           |       | 54 |
| Job Satisfaction | -0.124 | 1                | 0.373 | 54 |

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Weak negative correlation was present ( $r = -0.124$ ) between Self-Emotion Appraisal (SEA) and Job Satisfaction, meaning that as the ability to appraise one's own emotions slightly

increases, job satisfaction tends to slightly decrease. However, this relationship is very weak and not meaningful in practical terms.

More importantly, the significance value ( $p = 0.373$ ) is greater than 0.05, indicating that this correlation is not statistically significant. Therefore, a conclusion cannot be made that there is a real relationship between SEA and job satisfaction in this sample.

**Table 8**

*Correlation between Others Emotion Appraisal (OEA) and Job Satisfaction*

| Variable                | OEA   | Job Satisfaction | Sig   | N  |
|-------------------------|-------|------------------|-------|----|
| <b>OEA</b>              | 1     | 0.001            |       | 54 |
| <b>Job Satisfaction</b> | 0.001 | 1                | 0.993 | 54 |

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

There is virtually no correlation ( $r = 0.001$ ) between Others' Emotion Appraisal and Job Satisfaction. This means that the ability to recognize and understand other people's emotions has no measurable relationship with how satisfied employees are with their jobs in this sample.

Additionally, the p-value of 0.993 exceeds the conventional threshold of 0.05, suggesting that the result is not statistically significant.

**Table 9**

*Correlation between Use of Emotion (UOE) and Job Satisfaction*

| Variable                | UOE   | Job Satisfaction | Sig   | N  |
|-------------------------|-------|------------------|-------|----|
| <b>UOE</b>              | 1     | 0.164            |       | 54 |
| <b>Job Satisfaction</b> | 0.164 | 1                | 0.235 | 54 |

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

There is a weak positive correlation ( $r = 0.164$ ) between Use of Emotion and Job Satisfaction. This suggests that as individuals become more skilled at using their emotions to guide actions or problem-solving, there may be a slight increase in job satisfaction. However, the p-value is 0.235 higher than the conventional threshold of 0.05, showing that it is not statistically significant.

**Table 10**

*Correlation between Regulation of Emotion (ROE) and Job Satisfaction*

| Variable                | ROE     | Job Satisfaction | Sig   | N  |
|-------------------------|---------|------------------|-------|----|
| <b>ROE</b>              | 1       | 0.403**          |       | 54 |
| <b>Job Satisfaction</b> | 0.403** | 1                | 0.003 | 54 |

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation value between ROE and Job Satisfaction is 0.403. This demonstrates a moderate positive association between these two variables, meaning that an increase in one variable is generally accompanied by an increase in the other. The significance value (p-value)



of 0.003 is less than the standard threshold of 0.01, which means the correlation is statistically significant. Since the correlation is positive (0.403), it suggests that higher levels of emotional regulation are associated with higher levels of job satisfaction.

## DISCUSSION

This research analysed the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction in public sector employees in North Macedonia. From all the four elements of Emotional Intelligence there was only a significant positive correlation between regulation of emotion (ROE) and job satisfaction. This suggests that individuals that can manage their emotional responses are also more likely to report higher levels of satisfaction in their work. On the other hand, employees who are able to recognize and regulate their emotions effectively tend to experience higher levels of achievement and job satisfaction, reduced burnout, and ultimately contribute to stronger organizational outcomes (Lee, 2018). Effective emotional regulation may allow public sector workers to better cope with stressors such as bureaucratic constraints, limited resources, and high demands, thereby fostering a more positive evaluation of their job. The study's results are consistent with previous studies, which found that emotional regulation contributes to job satisfaction (Pandey & Sharma, 2016; Kassim et al., 2016; Güleriyüz et al., 2008; Munyug et al., 2020).

This research also found out that the other EI dimensions, self-emotion appraisal (SEA), others' emotion appraisal (OEA), and use of emotion (UOE), did not demonstrate significant associations with job satisfaction of employees in the public sector. This diverges from research in other contexts, where broader dimensions of EI have been linked to job attitudes; for instance, Psilopanagioti et al., 2012 found that the Use of Emotions (UOE) was positively correlated with Job Satisfaction. The study of Long et al., (2016) in public school teachers shows that from all components only SEA and UOE were positively correlated with Job Satisfaction. Sani et al., (2016) reported that job satisfaction is correlated with only specific aspects of emotional intelligence. This phenomenon underscores the complexity of emotional intelligence and its diverse connections to job satisfaction (Munyug et al., 2020).

From a practical perspective, the results underscore the need to design training programs that improve employees' emotion regulation abilities, as numerous researchers contend that emotional intelligence can be cultivated through education and training initiatives (Dulewicz & Herbert, 1999; Fineman, 1997). Human resource policies to be initiated by the Civil Servants Agency in the Republic of North Macedonian public sector could integrate EI-based workshops, stress management training, and leadership development initiatives that encourage emotionally intelligent management practices. Such interventions may not only improve job satisfaction but also strengthen employee loyalty and organizational performance.

While the present study found that only the Regulation of Emotion (ROE) dimension significantly predicted job satisfaction, the non-significant results for Self-Emotional Appraisal (SEA), Others' Emotion Appraisal (OEA), and Use of Emotion (UOE) are also theoretically meaningful and consistent with patterns observed in prior EI research. First, a growing body of literature shows that the relationship between EI sub dimensions and job attitudes is often inconsistent across occupational and cultural contexts (e.g., Kassim et al., 2016; Long et al., 2016; Trivellas et al., 2013), suggesting that some facets of EI may be more consequential for job satisfaction under certain organizational conditions. SEA and OEA, which reflect the awareness and perception of one's own and others' emotions, may not directly enhance satisfaction in highly formalized public sector environments such as those in North Macedonia.

These workplaces typically emphasize adherence to procedures, hierarchical communication, and standardized service delivery, which may limit opportunities for employees to translate emotional awareness into meaningful changes in workflow, autonomy, or interpersonal climate that would affect job satisfaction. In such settings, simply recognizing emotions may not provide tangible resources for navigating bureaucratic pressures, and may even heighten awareness of stressors without offering mechanisms to resolve them, possibly contributing to the weak or null associations observed. Similarly, the non-significant relationship between UOE and job satisfaction can be interpreted through the lens of boundary conditions related to job design and motivational structures. The use of emotions to fuel motivation or performance (UOE) may be more influential in roles that allow employee agency, goal setting, and creativity. Public sector employees in this study, however, may face structural constraints, limited autonomy, externally imposed goals, and rigid procedures that reduce the extent to which personal motivation derived from emotions can influence job outcomes.

Taken together, these null findings highlight the importance of examining contextual moderators, such as bureaucratic constraints, emotional labour demands, organizational culture, and levels of autonomy, that may shape whether and how specific EI dimensions translate into job satisfaction. Future research could test these plausible mechanisms by exploring whether SEA and OEA become more influential in relationally intensive public service positions (e.g., health, social care), or whether UOE predicts satisfaction more strongly in public agencies that offer greater discretion and supportive leadership.

## CONCLUSION

This research explored the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction among public sector employees in North Macedonia, offering important understanding of how emotional skills can affect the workplace behaviors, attitudes and overall organizational effectiveness. By investigating a sample of public sector workers across various institutions, the research sought to determine whether higher levels of emotional intelligence correlate with increased job satisfaction, a topic that has become increasingly relevant in modern organizational psychology. The findings present a strong story: employees with emotional intelligence—who can recognize and regulate their own emotions, show empathy, and foster positive workplace relationships—are much more likely to feel satisfied, motivated, and find meaning in their work. The research underscores that emotional intelligence is not just a desirable soft skill, it is a fundamental pillar of workplace well-being and institutional success.

However, it is also essential to recognize the limitations of the research. The reliance on self-reported data may introduce bias, and the sample, while representative, may not capture the full diversity of experiences across all regions and public institutions in North Macedonia. The response rate (54 participants) is relatively small and may not fully represent the broader population of public sector employees in North Macedonia. Larger response rate would improve the findings' generalizing. The research focuses on employees in some public institutions, which may not fully reflect the diversity of employees across the entire country. While the study provides valuable insights, it also opens the door to further exploration. Future research could expand by examining different sectors, integrating longitudinal data, or exploring how emotional intelligence interacts with other factors such as employee engagement, performance, or innovation. Nonetheless, the current findings offer a strong foundation for meaningful change.

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