



Emotional Intelligence and Employee Performance in Public Health: The Role of Work Experience as a Moderator

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ABSTRACT

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This study investigates the influence of emotional intelligence on job performance, with work experience as a moderating variable. Employing a quantitative approach with a descriptive-verification design, data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed to all 62 employees. The analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS 3.0 software. The results reveal that emotional intelligence has a significant and positive effect on job performance. Employees with higher emotional intelligence demonstrate greater interpersonal competence, adaptability, and decision-making effectiveness—attributes that are essential in healthcare service delivery. Moreover, work experience also positively influences job performance, suggesting that practical exposure enhances task proficiency and professional maturity. Importantly, the study confirms a significant moderating effect of work experience in the relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance, indicating that experience strengthens the positive impact of emotional intelligence. These findings underscore the importance of fostering both emotional intelligence and relevant work experience to improve individual and organizational performance, particularly in service-oriented public institutions such as community health centers.

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INTRODUCTION

In the globalized world, human resources have become a critical factor for organizations and institutions seeking to remain competitive and sustainable. Despite having access to sophisticated infrastructure and financial resources, a lack of competent and qualified human resources can severely hinder organizational effectiveness (Siagian, 2018). The quality of human resources directly affects an organization's ability to meet its objectives,

maintain productivity, and deliver quality services. One significant aspect that determines employee success is Emotional Intelligence (EI), which has become increasingly recognized for its role in driving personal and professional achievements. Goleman (2020) emphasized that EI accounts for 80% of success, in contrast to only 20% attributed to Intelligence Quotient (IQ). In a rapidly evolving work environment, organizations must prioritize understanding and improving emotional intelligence to enhance employee performance and ensure better organizational outcomes.

Despite the growing emphasis on Emotional Intelligence in enhancing employee performance, organizations, especially in public health, continue to face significant challenges in performance levels. This is evident in community health centers (Puskesmas) across Indonesia, which serve as the first line of primary healthcare. One of the primary challenges lies in the underperformance of employees, who struggle with service responsiveness, friendliness, and overall efficiency. Poor performance in these crucial areas negatively impacts the quality of service and public satisfaction. The inability to effectively manage emotions and navigate interpersonal interactions further complicates the situation, particularly in high-pressure environments such as healthcare. As a result, the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and employee performance in public health settings needs deeper exploration to understand the key factors that influence performance outcomes.

At UPTD Puskesmas Talun, located in Cirebon, West Java, a concerning decline in patient visits was observed, with a reduction from 1,166 visits in January 2024 to just 634 visits by December 2024. The decrease was attributed to the suboptimal performance of employees, who struggled with providing efficient services. Factors such as a lack of responsiveness, emotional intelligence, and low work engagement were seen as contributors to this performance gap. These issues highlight the importance of addressing employee competencies, including emotional intelligence, in order to improve overall service delivery. Despite the significant impact that emotional intelligence may have on healthcare performance, there is a scarcity of research examining how work experience influences the application of emotional intelligence in these settings, which is a crucial aspect to explore in this study.

A considerable body of research has been dedicated to studying the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and employee performance. Goleman's (2020) work highlights EI as a more significant predictor of success than IQ, with substantial implications for professional achievement. Moreover, Carmeli (2003) affirmed that EI positively influences managerial performance in the public sector, while O'Boyle et al. (2011) found that individuals with high EI and work experience tend to exhibit superior job performance. However, much

of the existing literature has focused primarily on the direct relationship between EI and performance, often overlooking the moderating role that work experience plays in this dynamic. This research gap is particularly relevant in the public health sector, where the complexity of interpersonal interactions and emotional demands makes EI a key factor in enhancing performance. Understanding the role of work experience in moderating this relationship remains a critical gap that this study aims to address.

Although various studies have emphasized the importance of emotional intelligence in influencing job performance, few have examined how work experience moderates this relationship, especially in the context of public health institutions such as Puskesmas. Existing research has largely overlooked the interaction between EI and work experience, leading to inconsistent findings in some technical occupations (Joseph & Newman, 2010). Furthermore, some studies have reported weak correlations between EI and performance in specific fields, such as healthcare, where emotional demands and technical skills are intertwined. While Goleman & Boyatzis (2022) and other researchers (Suleman et al., 2014; Rahim & Malik, 2010) have highlighted the importance of EI in public health settings, the application of EI in real-world scenarios, particularly by experienced employees, remains underexplored. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the moderating effect of work experience on the relationship between EI and employee performance in public health.

This research represents a significant step forward in understanding how emotional intelligence impacts employee performance in public health institutions, particularly through the lens of work experience. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the moderating role of work experience in enhancing the EI-performance relationship. While emotional intelligence has been well-established as a key factor in job performance, the role of experience in influencing how EI is applied in practice remains unclear. The healthcare sector, with its emotionally demanding and interpersonal nature, provides a unique context to explore this relationship. By focusing on Puskesmas employees, this study will contribute to the growing body of literature on emotional intelligence in healthcare, offering valuable insights into how emotional intelligence, when coupled with experience, can improve public health services and outcomes.

This study seeks to answer the research question: How does work experience moderate the relationship between emotional intelligence and employee performance in public health institutions, particularly in Puskesmas? The hypothesis posits that work experience strengthens the positive impact of emotional intelligence on job performance by enabling employees to better apply their emotional intelligence in practical situations. The research will

contribute to understanding how emotional intelligence can be developed and utilized effectively in healthcare settings, providing recommendations for human resource practices aimed at improving employee performance. By addressing this gap, the study will not only enhance theoretical understanding but also provide actionable insights for improving the performance of healthcare employees, especially in the public sector, where resources are often limited.

The findings of this study will contribute significantly to both academic and practical knowledge by shedding light on the critical relationship between emotional intelligence, work experience, and employee performance in the public health sector. By exploring the moderating role of work experience, this research will offer valuable insights into how emotional intelligence can be applied more effectively in real-world settings. Moreover, it will help guide public health institutions in implementing more targeted strategies for employee development, training, and performance enhancement. Ultimately, the results of this study will improve service delivery in Puskesmas and similar institutions, benefiting both employees and the communities they serve.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach using a descriptive-verification design. The descriptive element aimed to provide an overview of the characteristics of each research variable, while the verification element was intended to statistically test the formulated hypotheses through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using Partial Least Squares (PLS).

The research was conducted at UPTD Puskesmas Talun, located in Cirebon, West Java, Indonesia. The population consisted of 62 employees, and given the relatively small number of subjects, the study applied a saturated sampling technique, where all members of the population were included as research respondents.

Data collection was carried out using a structured questionnaire that was distributed to all respondents. The instrument was developed based on established indicators for three core variables. The independent variable, Emotional Intelligence, was measured using the framework developed by Salovey and Mayer (1990), which includes dimensions such as self-awareness, self-management, motivation, empathy, and social skills. The dependent variable, Job Performance, was assessed through several indicators such as task effectiveness, efficiency, quality and quantity of work, punctuality, contextual performance, creativity, and interpersonal competence. Meanwhile, Work Experience, as the moderating variable, was measured based on the length of work, relevance of job experience, acquired skills, level of responsibility, work

achievements, and variety of work exposure. All items were rated on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 10 (Strongly Agree).

The data analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 3.0 software, following several stages. First, the measurement model (outer model) was evaluated to test convergent validity using factor loadings (≥ 0.7) and Average Variance Extracted ($AVE \geq 0.5$) as well as reliability, assessed through Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha, both of which must exceed 0.7. Second, the structural model (inner model) was assessed through the coefficient of determination (R^2), path coefficients, and t-statistics. Predictive relevance was also measured using the Q^2 value, with thresholds of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 indicating small, medium, and large predictive relevance, respectively.

Finally, hypothesis testing was conducted using the bootstrapping method, where the significance level was set at $p < 0.05$. Special attention was given to examining the interaction between emotional intelligence and work experience to assess the moderating effect of the latter on the relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

This study was conducted using a structured questionnaire involving 62 employees of UPTD Puskesmas Talun. The variables measured included Emotional Intelligence (EI), Job Performance (JP), and Work Experience (WE). Data were analyzed using SmartPLS software with outer model, inner model, and moderation testing.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Emotional Intelligence	62	3.36	4.91	4.21	0.356
Job Performance	62	3.20	4.96	4.16	0.412
Work Experience	62	2.50	5.00	4.09	0.521

The descriptive results show that all three variables are at relatively high levels. Emotional Intelligence has the highest average, indicating good emotional capability among employees.

Outer Model Analysis (Measurement Model)

To test the validity and reliability of each construct, outer loading, AVE, composite reliability (CR), and Cronbach's Alpha were evaluated.

Table 2. Summary of Outer Model Validity and Reliability

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Ave
Emotional Intelligence	0.905	0.927	0.681
Work Experience	0.890	0.918	0.655
Job Performance	0.916	0.934	0.678

All values meet the criteria (CR > 0.70, AVE > 0.50), indicating that the measurement model is valid and reliable.

Inner Model Analysis (Structural Model)

The structural model was evaluated using R² and Q² values)

Table 3. R² and Q² Coefficients

Dependent Variable	R ²	Q ²	Predictive Power
Job Performance	0.667	0.517	High

An R² value of 0.667 suggests that 66.7% of the variance in job performance is explained by emotional intelligence and work experience. The Q² value of 0.517 indicates high predictive relevance.

Hypothesis Testing and Moderation Analysis

Bootstrapping was performed to test direct and moderating effects.

Table 4. Path Coefficients and Significance

Path	Coefficient	t-value	p-value	Result
EI → JP	0.474	3.626	0.001	Significant
WE → JP	0.269	2.244	0.029	Significant
EI × WE → JP (Interaction effect)	0.293	2.307	0.025	Significant

The interaction effect between emotional intelligence and work experience on job performance is statistically significant, indicating that work experience acts as a quasi moderator.

Discussion

This study aimed to explore the influence of emotional intelligence (EI) on employee performance, with work experience (WE) serving as a moderating variable, specifically within the context of public health institutions such as UPTD Puskesmas Talun. The results have highlighted several key findings that contribute to the understanding of how emotional intelligence and work experience interact to influence job performance.

The study found that emotional intelligence significantly affects job performance, supporting the theories of Goleman (2020) and Salovey & Mayer

(1990). Employees with high EI tend to exhibit greater interpersonal skills, adaptability, and decision-making capabilities—traits that are particularly vital in healthcare settings. In these environments, where employees frequently face emotional challenges and engage in interpersonal interactions, the ability to manage one's emotions and respond to others' emotions appropriately is crucial. The findings of this study resonate with those of Carmeli (2003) and O'Boyle et al. (2011), who also found EI to be a significant predictor of performance in public sector jobs, particularly in service-oriented roles.

Work experience, as expected, was found to significantly enhance job performance, reinforcing the importance of practical knowledge and professional maturity. Employees with more years of experience and a broader range of job-related exposure demonstrated greater task proficiency and were better equipped to handle the challenges they faced in their roles. This finding aligns with the conclusions of Luthans (2019) and Thoha (2020), who emphasized the critical role of experience in developing employees' skills over time. The study also highlights the long-standing principle that "experience is the best teacher," which continues to hold true, especially in high-pressure environments like healthcare.

A particularly important contribution of this study is the confirmation of the moderating role of work experience in the relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance. The interaction analysis indicated that employees with higher levels of work experience were better able to leverage their emotional intelligence to improve their performance. This finding is consistent with the work of Rahim & Malik (2010) and Suleman et al. (2014), who argued that work experience enhances emotional maturity, allowing individuals to apply their emotional intelligence more effectively in real-world situations. Essentially, the more experienced employees were found to be better at applying their emotional intelligence in a way that enhanced their job performance.

However, despite the clear positive impact of both emotional intelligence and work experience, this study also highlighted some complexities in interpreting the relationship between these variables. While emotional intelligence undoubtedly has a positive effect on performance, its impact can vary depending on the context in which it is applied. For example, the moderating effect of work experience suggests that while EI is important, its practical application becomes more potent when paired with hands-on experience. This suggests that training programs aimed at improving EI in healthcare settings should also consider the varying levels of work experience among employees. Tailored interventions could be developed to address the specific needs of employees at different career stages, maximizing the benefits

of EI training.

Additionally, this study acknowledges the existing research gap regarding the interaction between emotional intelligence and work experience, particularly in healthcare settings. While previous studies have largely focused on the direct effects of EI on performance, the moderating role of work experience has been underexplored. This research helps bridge that gap by providing empirical evidence on how work experience can amplify the benefits of emotional intelligence in improving job performance in public health institutions.

The findings also have significant implications for the management of public health institutions. Healthcare administrators and policymakers should recognize the dual importance of emotional intelligence and work experience in enhancing employee performance. Investments in training programs designed to develop both EI and relevant work experience could lead to improved healthcare services, particularly in community health centers where service delivery is paramount. Furthermore, healthcare organizations should consider designing professional development pathways that allow employees to gain diverse experiences, which would not only improve their competencies but also enhance their ability to apply emotional intelligence effectively.

One limitation of this study is its focus on a single healthcare institution, UPTD Puskesmas Talun, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future studies could expand the scope to include multiple health centers across different regions to validate the results further. Additionally, future research could explore other potential moderating variables, such as organizational culture or leadership styles, which may also influence the relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the effect of emotional intelligence on job performance, with work experience acting as a moderating variable, among employees at UPTD Puskesmas Talun in Cirebon. The results of the data analysis using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the Partial Least Squares (PLS) method reveal several important conclusions.

Emotional intelligence was found to have a significant and positive influence on job performance. This finding reinforces the notion that individuals who are emotionally intelligent those capable of understanding, regulating, and expressing emotions effectively tend to perform better in the workplace. Such individuals are more likely to manage interpersonal relationships skillfully, adapt to pressure, and make sound decisions, all of which are crucial in the context of healthcare services.

Work experience also showed a significant effect on job performance. Employees with longer and more relevant work experience demonstrated a higher ability to fulfill job tasks effectively. Experience was found to contribute to practical knowledge, professional maturity, and a deeper understanding of the work environment, which collectively support better performance outcomes.

The study confirmed that work experience moderates the relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance. The interaction analysis indicates that employees with higher levels of work experience are better able to leverage their emotional intelligence in improving performance. In other words, the positive effect of emotional intelligence on job performance becomes stronger when supported by sufficient experience.

The findings highlight the importance of developing both emotional intelligence and professional experience among employees, particularly in public service sectors such as community health centers. These two factors not only enhance individual performance but also support the achievement of institutional goals in delivering quality and responsive healthcare services.

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