



The Moderating Role of Supervisory Support in the Relationship of Emotional Intelligence and Job Performance of Pharmaceutical Sales Representatives

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ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
<p>History <i>Revised format: February 2019</i> <i>Available Online: March 2019</i></p>	<p>The objective of this research paper is to find out the relationship of Job Performance (JP) with Emotional Intelligence (EI) of Pharmaceutical Sales Representatives (PSRs) of various pharmaceutical companies operating in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Pakistan). Another objective of this research investigation is to check the moderating role of Supervisory Support (SS) in the EI-JP link. Data was collected from 400 PSRs of companies operating in Pakistan through convenience sampling technique. Structural equation model (SEM) was utilized for data analysis. The results of the study revealed that those PSRs having high EI had high performance. Furthermore, SS does not moderate the EI-JP link.</p>
<p>Keywords <i>Emotional Intelligence (EI), Supervisory Support (SS), Job Performance (JP), Pharmaceutical Sales Representatives (PSRs)</i></p>	
<p>JEL Classification: J20, J28, J29,</p>	<p>© 2019 The authors, under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0</p>

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1. Introduction

In recent years there has been an increased emphasis on researching the role of EI in selling sector. Organizational psychologists have proved that employees' EI significantly determines job-related outcomes in the working environment (Abe, 2011; Davis, & Humphrey, 2012; Fadaei, & Kenari, 2014; Farnia, & Nafukho, 2016). Researchers have proved that EI is of prime importance for a sales job. Sales representatives' (SRs) performance is related to their ability to manage emotional and social problems and to brilliantly face the negative feelings produced by failures in sales (Brown, Cron, & Slocum, 1997). It should also be emphasized that their emotional intelligence level enables the salespersons to quickly resilience after receiving the emotional aftershocks that is a routine problem. Deeter-Schmelz and Sojka (2003) found that high performing salespeople unknowingly use their EI skills to be efficient in their work, and especially when they use the skill of empathy to know the customer's needs perform better. They also maintained that perceiving others' emotions, and self-awareness positively influences sales calls and their impression on the customers respectively. The ability of self-regulation helps them in focusing issues and working with customers.

Cho, Rutherford and Park (2013) maintained emotional aspects as a serious phenomenon in the sale sector. At the same time, Hur, Han, Yoo and Moon (2015) suggested that supervisory support could be studied in relationship of EI and JP of sales representative. In general, however, it is concluded that highly emotionally intelligent salespersons perform better in their work environment. Thus, this research was planned to study the moderating role of SS in the relationship of EI and JP of PSRs.

In Pakistani context, EI has been studied in relationship with OCB (Ali, 2009), students' academic performance (Nasir, 2011), employee turnover (Siddiqui, & Hassan, 2013), teachers' performance (Baloch, 2014), and medical students' stress level (Moghal, Yasien, Alvi, & Washdev, 2016). Researchers found that EI is positively related to JP (Batool, 2014; Ghuman, 2016; Haakonstad, 2011; Jorfi et al., 2010; Love, Edwards, & Wood, 2011; Shahhosseini, Silong, Ismail, & Uli, 2012). Some researchers found that emotional intelligence negatively related to JP (Mitrofan, & Cioricaru, 2014). Some researchers suggested that organizational factors need to be investigated as moderating factors in the relationship between EI and JP (Giorgi et al., 2014). Thus, SS was taken to study the relationship between EI and JP (Giorgi et al., 2014; Hur et al., 2015).

2. Literature Review

2.1 EI and JP

Suliman and Al-Shaikh (2007) found that EI infuses creative and innovate qualities; decrease frustration level, goal conflict, and work-family conflict. Sales representatives are supposed to work in a situation where emotional and social skills are essential. EI is a paramount optimizer of salespeople's performance (Haakonstad, 2011; Ugwu, 2011). Brown et al. (1997) maintained that managing emotional problems and negative feelings at the time of failure result in high performance (Brown et al., 1997). Higher the EI the greater the annual sales revenue (Kidwell, Hardesty, Murtha, & Sheng, 2011). Kidwell et al. (2011) also maintained that high EI level enables the sales force to retain customers. Research has proved that EI positively predicts sales performance and bad and good performers have the same level of EI in sale sector (Harris, 2009). Lindebaum and Cartwright (2011) maintained that EI may not yield desired outcomes.

A research study conducted by Jennings and Palmer (2007) found that EI development of sales representatives positively influences sales revenue of pharmaceutical companies. Jennings and Palmer (2007) took two groups, i.e. one is given with EI training program and the other one was control group. The EI and sales growth of the trained group was measured and then compared to the control group. The EI level of trained employees improved 18% as compare to control group which was decreased by 4%. Moreover, compare to control group, the sale revenue of the trained participants improved by an average of 12%. Bryant (2005) found that there is no relationship between EI and sales performance of employees at automotive retail stores.

This is clear from the findings of the aforementioned studies, that EI is a predictor of sales representatives' JP. But there might be some organizational factors, i.e. supervisory support that increases the relationship between the emotional aspects of sales representatives with their JP (Hur et al., 2015). Not only the sales sector, but EI is phenomenal factor vital for services sectors. EI positively influences organizational citizenship behavior (Ali, 2009; Yaghoubi, Mashinchi, & Hadi, 2011; Cohen, & Abedallah, 2015). Employees' EI positively predicts their impression at work environment (Cole, & Rozell, 2011). Researchers found that EI is positively related with performance of employees (Batool, 2014; Farnia, & Nafukho, 2016; Ghuman, 2016; Shamsuddin, & Rahman, 2014). Others found that EI positively predict job satisfaction of employees (Anari, 2012; Fadaei, & Kenari, 2014; Ghoniem, Elkhoully, Mohsen, & Ibrahim 2011; Ignat, & Clipa, 2012; Jordan, & Troth, 2011; Mousavi et al., 2012; Nezad, & Bahramzade, 2013; Randeree, & Chaudhry, 2012).

Moreover, applying the structural equation modeling (SEM) for data analysis, the issue of EI in relationship with JP of PSRs with the moderating role of SS in the pharmaceutical sector of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Pakistan) has not been addressed yet. Accordingly, the study in hand was designed to explore the said issues. No doubt, pharmaceutical industry plays a vital role in the economy of a nation through rehabilitation of individuals' health. As the pharmaceutical industry significantly contributes to the economy and health of Pakistan, the sale employees' EI and JP is worth investigating.

2.2 SS as Moderator

SS is an important aspect of perceived organizational support (POS). Research has proved that POS is important for the relationship between personal level psychological factors and job-related outcomes of employees (Hur et al., 2015). According to Hur et al. (2015), POS positively moderates the link of surface acting emotional labour strategy with job satisfaction, and the link of deep acting emotional labour strategy with job performance.

Simosi (2012) found that POS positively moderates the relationship between supervisory support and training transfer. Khan, Mahmood, Kanwal and Latif (2015) studied the mediating effect of POS on the link between SS and workplace deviance. Khan et al. (2015) contended that POS partially mediates the link between SS and workplace deviance, and employees perceive support when the organization ensures performance based rewards, growth opportunities, and employees' participation in decision making. At the same time, it is true to say that SS has also

been found important for the relationship between personal level factors and job-related outcomes of employees. Wickramasinghe (2012) found that supervisory support moderates the relationship between work schedule flexibility and job stress. Lu, cooper, and Lin (2013) found that the higher the SS the greater the negative relationship between presenteeism and exhaustion.

Nixon, Yang, Spector and Zhang (2011) added organizational support moderates the relationship between emotional labor strategies and job-related outcomes of employees in the retail sales sector and mobile phone companies. Chen, Sun, Lam, Hu, Huo and Zhong (2012) studied the interfering role of burnout, job satisfaction and SS in the relationship of emotional labor strategies and performance of employees employed at hotels in China. Chen et al. (2012) found that the SS moderates the relationship between emotional labor strategies and job satisfaction and burnout of hotel employees. Faheem and Saeed (2015) found that high SS positively strengthens the relation of behavior-based sales control system with employees' work engagement. Yragui, Demsky, Hammer, Dyck and Neradilek (2016) investigated the moderating role of family-supportive supervisor behaviour in relationship of workplace aggression with well-being and work. Yragui et al. (2016) found that supportive behaviours of supervisors lessen the turnover intention among the care providers employed in hospitals. Yragui et al. (2016) also added that supportive behaviours do not strengthen the link between coworker psychological aggression (CPA) and turnover intention, but positively moderated the relationship between CPA and physical symptoms.

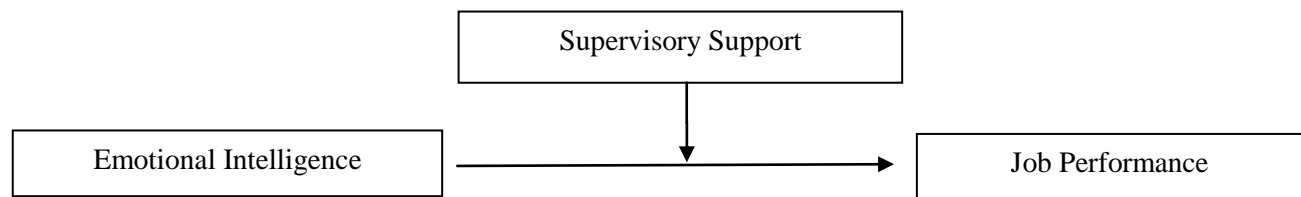
Yongxing, Hongfei, Baoguo and Lei (2017) studied the moderating effect of POS in the relationship between work engagement and performance. Yongxing et al. (2017) found that POS positively strengthened the link between work engagement and performance. Kim, Hur, Moon and Jun (2017) found a positive relationship between deep acting and job performance, which was positively moderated by the SS. Kim et al. (2017) further added that SS aggravate the negative relationship between surface acting strategy and job performance of flight attendants of an airline company of South Korea.

Jafri (2018) investigated the moderating role of SS in the relationship of trait EI and creativity. He found that job autonomy and SS positively moderated the relationship between EI and employee creativity relationship. On the basis of Hur et al.'s (2015) and Kim et al.'s (2017) suggestions, this study was designed to investigate the moderating role of SS in the relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance of PSRs. Thus, on the basis of the above discussed literature, it was hypothesized that;

H₁: EI is positively related with JP of PSRs.

H₂: SS positively moderates the relationship between EI and JP of PSRs.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



3. Methodology

3.1 Population, Sampling, and Sample Size

According to a recent report of Pakistan Pharmaceutical Manufacturers' Association (PPMA), there are 752 registered pharmaceutical companies employing more than 240000 employees operating in Pakistan (Waheed, 2017). As this research study aims to study the moderating role of SS in the relationship of PSRs' EI with their JP. In order to pursue the aim of this study, the PSRs of pharmaceutical companies operating in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (province of Pakistan) were chosen as population for the study. The convenient sampling is followed when the population is just too large that it is impossible to include every individual. Another reason for convenient sampling is that it's a fast, inexpensive, and easy and the [subjects](#) are readily available. As the regional offices of the pharmaceutical companies are situated in Peshawar, thus the data was collected from the PSRs of Peshawar region on the basis of convenience sampling technique. In order to collect the data from a sample of 384 PSRs (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970), 600 questionnaires were distributed among PSRs of Peshawar region, i.e. 300 questionnaires in the first phase and 300 questionnaires in the second phase. Among them only 421 questionnaires were received. 21

questionnaires were found useless/incomplete, thus withdrawn, and the rest 400 (66.67% response rate) was found complete in all respects, were utilized for data analysis.

3.2 Data Collection Tool

The tool of self-reported questionnaire was utilized to measure the EI, perceived SS and JP of PSRs. The questionnaire comprised of three parts, i.e. first was a covering letter, second part asks demographic information like age, education, experience, gender, job status, marital status, and company information, third part measures main variables of the study. Data were collected by visiting clinics and hospitals wherein PSRs were supposed to market their products. After ensuring the respondents' and companies' anonymity, and the confidentiality of the information provided, they were requested to provide the data. The purpose of the research study was introduced and questionnaire items were explained to the PSRs.

3.3 Measurement Scale

In order to measure the EI, SS, and JP of PSRs, existing scales were used. The widely utilized and accepted Schutte et al.'s (1998) 33-items tool was adopted for measuring PSRs' EI. A typical item is 'I expect that I will do well on most things I try'. For measuring SS of PSRs, DeConinck and Johnson's (2009) four items scale was adopted. In order to measure the criterion variable, i.e. JP of PSRs, four items tool was adopted used by Hur et al. (2015). Responses were collected and recorded on a five point Likert scales that ranged from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'.

4 Data Analyses

For measuring the moderating role of SS in the relationship of EI and JP of PSRs, the AMOS module was used for SEM and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Table 1 shows the minimum, maximum, mean value, standard deviation, and alpha (α) measured for EI, SS, and JP of PSRs with the help of descriptive statistics. The alpha (α) shows the reliability of the constructs, i.e. EI, SS, and JP were 0.79, 0.86, and 0.75 respectively, were found acceptable (Nunnally, 1978).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Reliability

Variable	Min.	Max.	M	S. Dev.	Alpha (α)
Emotional Intelligence	97	159	131.32	10.45	0.79
Supervisory Support	4	20	16.50	3.04	0.86
Job Performance	9	20	17.13	2.07	0.75

4.1 Measurement Model

Measurement model is the tool utilized to check the goodness of fit between the hypothesis developed and the data collected. In order to measure the variables of this research investigation, CFA was conducted.

4.2 CFA of the variables

CFA were run for EI, SS, and JP of PSRs. CFA was measured in the parameters of root mean square residual (RMR), goodness-of-fit index (GFI), comparative fit index (CFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and chi-square (χ^2). The model utilized is said to be fit when the value of RMR is equal or less than 0.080 (Hu, & Bentler, 1999), GFI is equal or less than 1.000 (Joreskog, & Sorbom, 1984), the CFI close to 1.000 (Bentler, 1990; McDonald, & Marsh, 1990), and RMSEA is equal or less than 0.08 (Browne, & Cudeck, 1993). Table 2 shows that all the values fall in the acceptable range, thus the models accepted.

Figure 2: Measurement Model of Supervisory Support

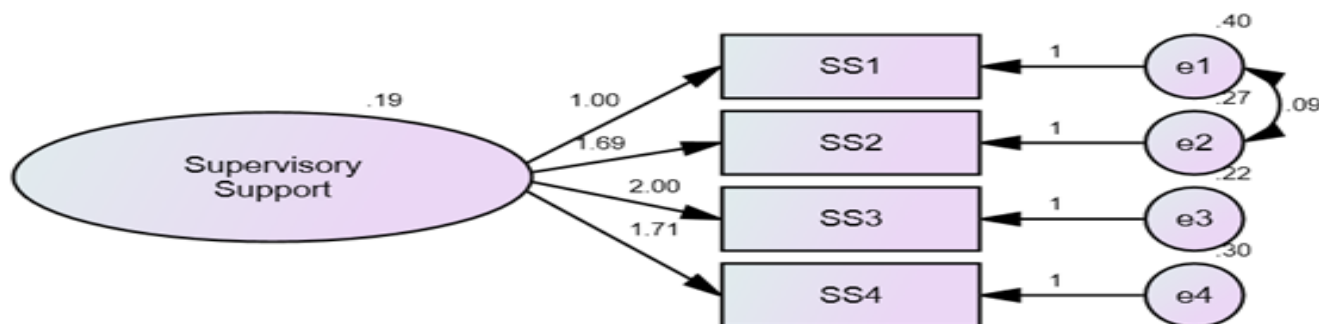


Figure 3: Measurement Model of Emotional Intelligence

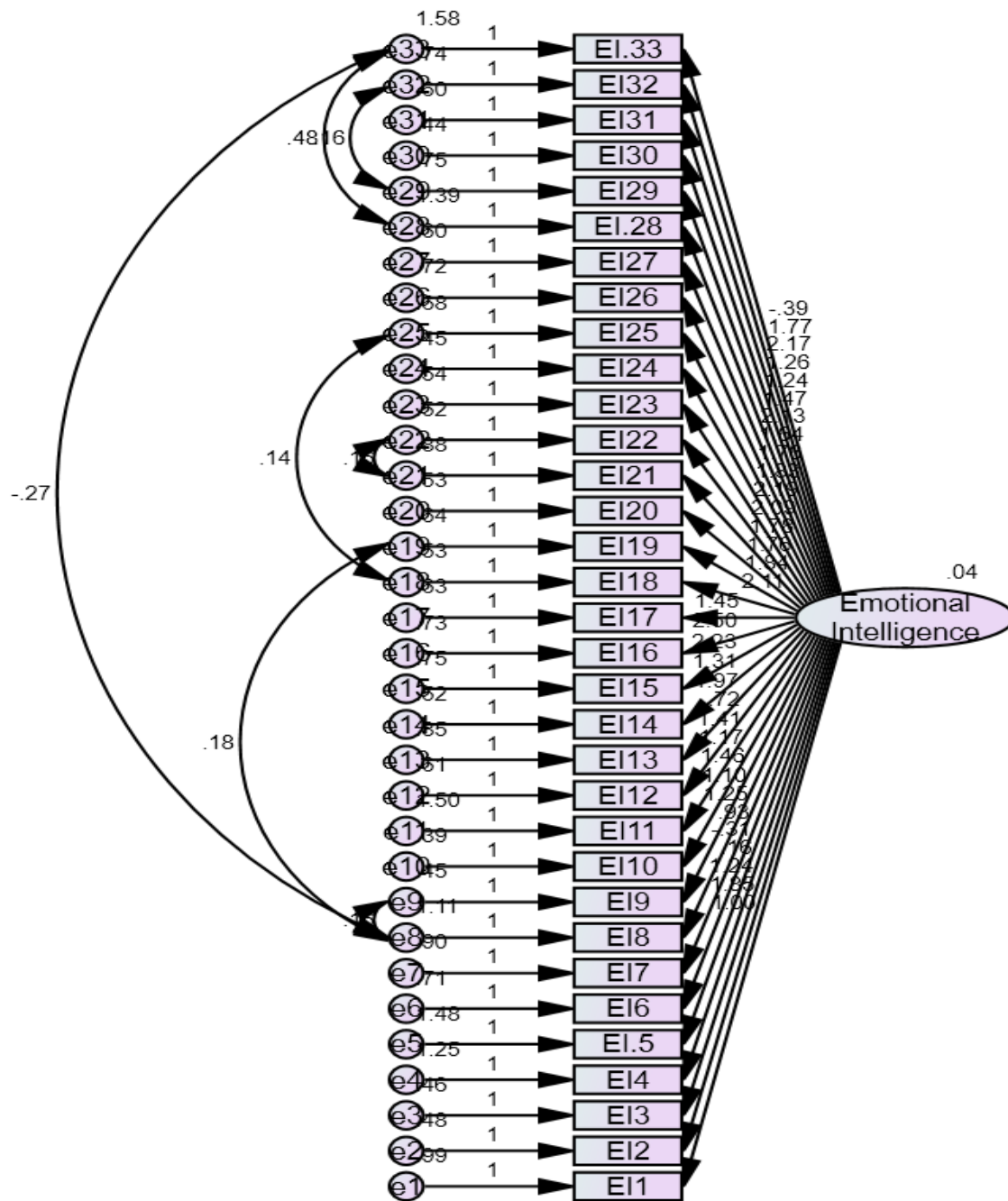


Figure 4: Measurement Model of Job Performance

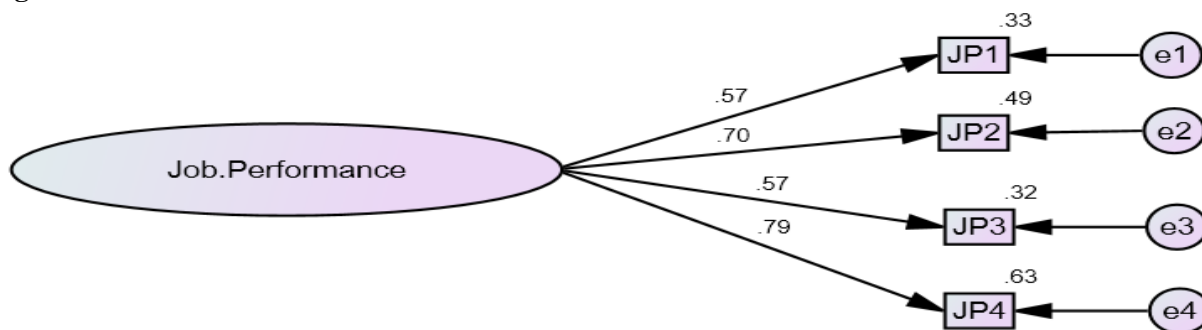


Table 2: Calculation of Measurement Model of Variables

Goodness of Fit Index	Acceptable Level	Fit Indices		
		Emotional Intelligence	Supervisory Support	Job Performance
RMR	≤ 0.08	0.056	0.004	0.006
GFI	A higher value indicates a better fit	0.846	0.999	0.997
CFI	≥ 0.900	0.901	1.000	1.000
RMSEA	≤ 0.08	0.059	0.018	0.010
Degrees of freedom	Should be positive	488.0	1.0	2.0
Chi-square	-	1168.622	1.904	2.079

Figure 5: Overall Measurement Model

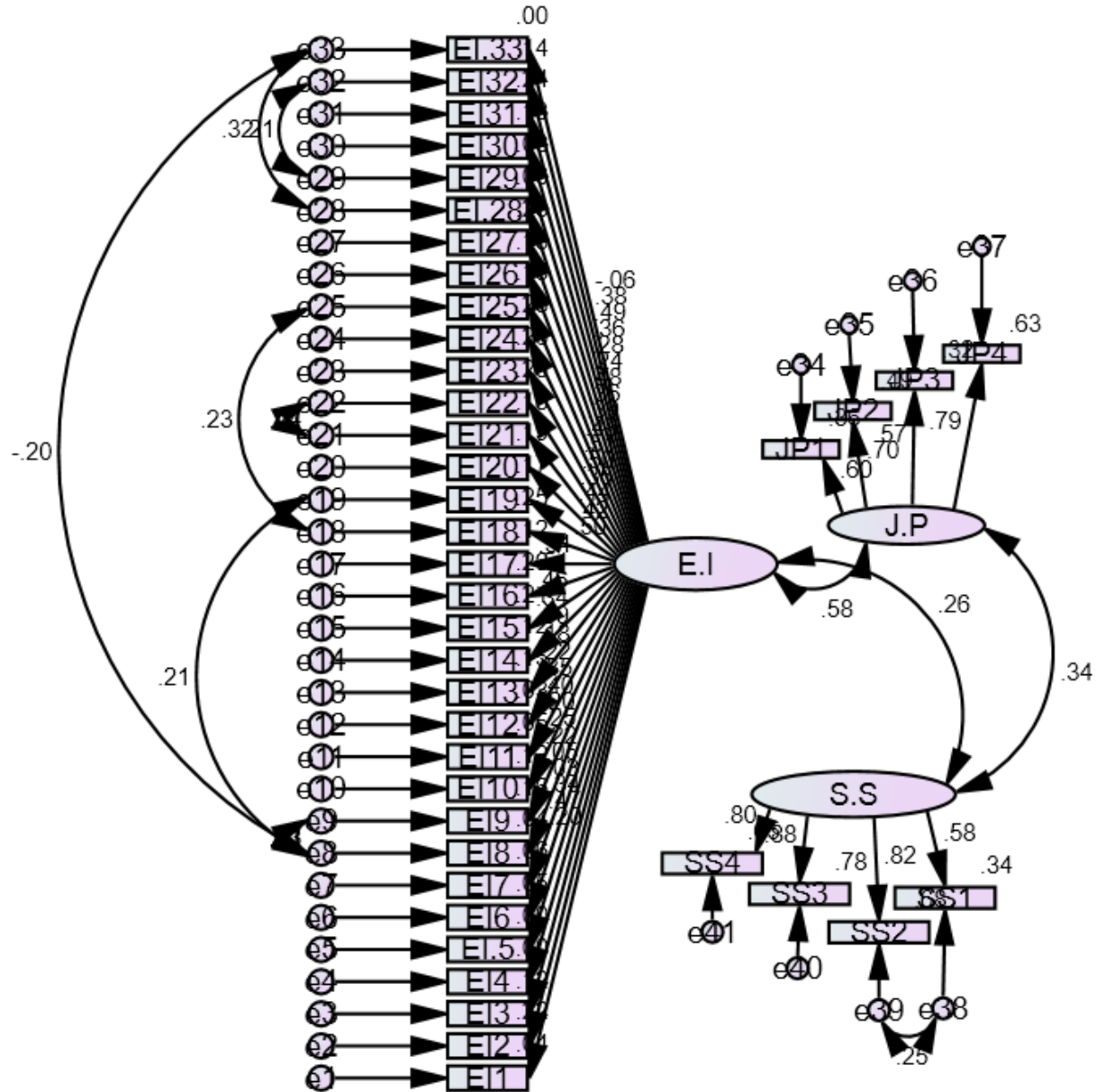


Table 3: Calculation of the overall Measurement Mode

Parameters with the Acceptable & Calculated Measures				Remarks
Goodness of Fit	Acceptable Level	Calculated Measures	Status	
RMR	≤ 0.08	0.054	Acceptable	Accepted
GFI	A higher value indicates a better fit	0.911	Acceptable	
CFI	≥ 0.900	0.930	Acceptable	
RMSEA	≤ 0.08	0.052	Acceptable	
Degrees of freedom	Should be positive	841	Acceptable	
Chi-square	-	1740.903	Acceptable	

4.3 Structural Model

Structural model of the variables was conducted and the values of CMIN, DF, GFI, CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and RMR were recorded. The values of these parameters were found acceptable as per suggestion of Hu and Bentler (1999), Joreskog and Sorbom (1984), Bentler (1990), McDonald and Marsh (1990) and Browne and Cudeck (1993).

Figure 6: Structural Model of the Variables

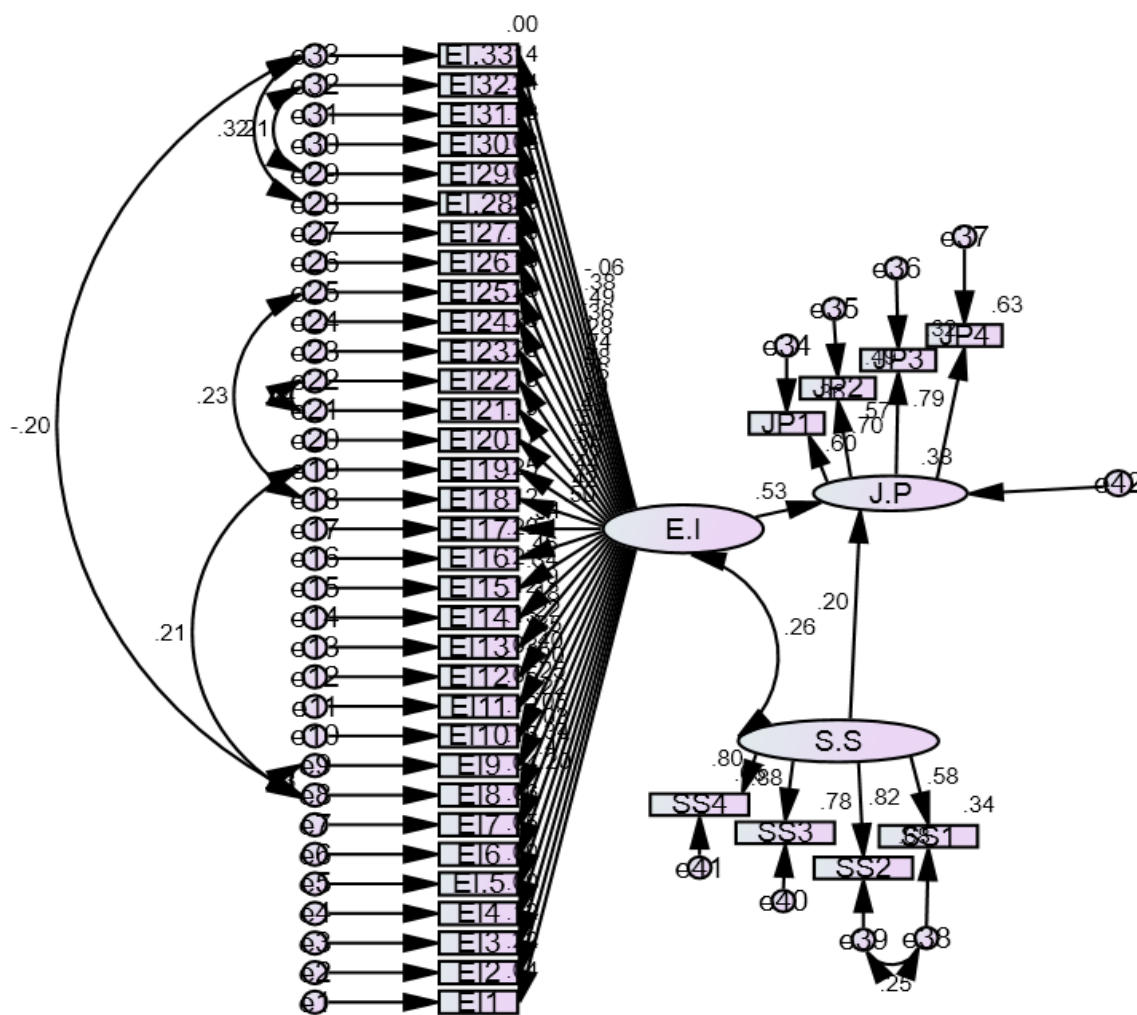


Table 4: Goodness-of-Fit for the Structural Model of the Variables

CFA Model	CMIN	DF	CMIN/DF	GFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	Standardized RMR
	1740.903	841	2.070	0.823	0.912	0.900	0.052	0.054

4.4 Hypothesis Testing

Regression analysis was conducted for measuring the moderating role of SS in the relationship of EI and JP of PSRs. The results of the regression analysis revealed that EI is significantly related with JP of PSRs. In order to

measure the moderating role of SS, the model of Baron and Kenny (1986) composed of three steps was applied. The results revealed that SS does not moderate the relationship between EI and JP of PSRs.

Table 5: Emotional Intelligence, Supervisory Support, and Job Performance

Dependent Variable: Job Performance			
Variable	R²	B	P
Emotional Intelligence	0.165	0.080	0.000
Supervisory Support	0.212	0.150	0.000
Emotional Intelligence * Supervisory Support	0.212	0.036	0.656

5. Discussion

The main aim of this research study was to analyze the relation between EI and JP of PSRs. The results show that EI positively predicts JP of PSRs. In other words, highly emotionally intelligent PSRs proved high performers. The results of the same EI-JP link are linear with the results of previous researches (Manna, & Smith, 2004; Hamilton, 2008; Harris, 2009). Research has also proved that emotional intelligence is important for customer orientation for PSRs (Pettijohn, Rozell, & Newman, 2010), sale success (Cruz-Moraza, 2013), and professional selling (McFarland, Rode, & Shervani, 2016). However, the result of the second objective i.e. moderating role of SS in EI-JP link contradicts with the results of past researches. This is said to be true that SS is a sort of POS, and researchers have proved that organizational support positively moderates the relationship of EI with employees' JP (Akhtar, Ghufuran, Husnain, & Shahid, 2017) and employee engagement (Akhtar, Ghufuran, & Fatima, 2017). For example, organizational support strengthened the relationship between EI and performance, which contradicts with the H₂ (SS does not moderate the relationship between EI and JP of PSRs). Specifically, increased involvement in EI was related with high JP among employees with no influence of SS. It is possible to say that employees with high level of perceived support expect higher socio-emotional rewards and well-being compare to those with lower perceived support (Nixon et al., 2011). Thus aptly speaking, if PSRs expect high SS, they may perceive EI as more stressful than those expecting low SS since they are likely to expect more compensation and rewards for their involvement in application of EI at workplace. Therefore, SS does not seem important for PSRs.

In addition, it could be maintained that supervisor's role is not elemental for job related outcomes of SRs. Researchers proved that SRs generally don't need direct supervision essentially implies that they should be self-motivated and committed to perform their job better (Simintiras, Lancaster, & Cadogan, 1994). Others found that gifts, drug samples, and sponsorship of physicians to conferences are the tactics influencing physicians' prescribing behavior which leads to PSRs' sale performance (Ingole, & Yegnanarayan, 2011). Ease in work completion, career development, internal environment, and no pressure feeling at work (Sahoo, Routray, & Dash, 2014), and education on drugs/products and marketing skills (Meshack, 2015) is paramount for better sales performance of PSRs.

6. Implication of the Research

This research investigation contributes to the study of sales force of pharmaceutical companies in several ways. First, this study looks into the matter of EI in sale sector of pharmaceutical companies working in Pakistan. Second, this research investigation determines the role of SS in the relationship of EI and JP of PSRs based on the suggestions of Hur et al. (2015). This study helps in the better management of psychological well-being of PSRs for tangible improvement in their JP. The predictive power of emotional intelligence for performance suggests the use of emotional intelligence measure as a selection tool by human resource managers.

On theoretical facet, the reliability coefficients for the scales employed provide the idea for future studies. The establishment and dimension of the affiliation between EI and JP extend its validity to the business environment of a developing country like Pakistan. The predictive strength of EI to provide an explanation for the corresponding variation of JP is a crucial contribution of the study to the prevailing frame of knowledge.

On practical aspect, the existing researches have proven that employees' overall performance can be expected on the basis of their ratings on EI, which additionally has advised using emotional intelligence measures as a diffusion device by human resource managers (Cadman, & Brewer, 2001; Fatt, 2002). Dulewicz and Higgs (2004) have shown that emotional abilities can be enhanced and developed through schooling courses. Fatt (2002) suggested that managers have to remember the contributions of EI as an essential thing for the improvement of employees. This research study indicated an excessive and effective relationship of EI with worker performance. As a result, management can design EI interventions to train and increase human assets to get work performance improved.

6.1 Limitations and Future Research

Future researchers should conduct a longitudinal study to look into the matter thoroughly. Career progression seems important in the field of pharmaceutical sales sector. So future researchers are advised to investigate the career progression, salary, co-worker support and other benefits like bonus and car choice as moderating or mediating factors in the same link of emotional aspects and job-related outcomes of PSRs. The role of other individual level elements like age, field education (pharmacy, biology, and biochemistry, etc), product knowledge, communication skills, organizational commitment and training could be investigated as moderator in the relationship of EI and JP.

7. Conclusion

The first objective of this research study was to find out the relationship between EI and JP of PSRs. The second objective of this research study was to find out the moderating role of SS in the relationship of EI and JP. The findings reveal that EI of PSRs is positively related to their JP. High level of EI enables PSRs how to use certain emotions to understand the customer needs, achieve sales targets, and increase market share and enhance their JP.

Surprisingly, it was found that SS does not moderate the proposed relation between EI and JP. It might be added that individuals do not expect SS. The individuals expecting SS, reciprocally needs to involve themselves in applying EI to know and understand the emotions of others as well as their own emotions to perform better may fall them in stress.

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