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NURSES' EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, BEHAVIOR AND THE MEDIATING ROLE OF JOB STRESS IN LEBANON

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NURSES' EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, BEHAVIOR AND THE MEDIATING ROLE OF JOB STRESS IN LEBANON

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to examine the influence of emotional intelligence, namely self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and management's relationship on the nurse's behavior within the Lebanese context. It specifically examines the indirect effect of the nurses' EI and its sub skills on behavior, exit, voice, loyalty, neglect, through the mediating role of job stress. A total sample of subjects consisted of 365 registered nurses actively working in the Lebanese hospitals during the COVID 19 period. Mediation was tested using Baron and Kenny (1986)'s framework. The findings demonstrate that the EI elements (Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and management's relationship) had a significant positive effect on nurses' behavior. Another finding revealed the negative effect of emotional intelligence with the subskills, namely SA, SM, SoA, and SK, on job stress. In particular, SM was the most important factor in decreasing stress. Moreover, SM had a greater negative influence on job stress than SA did, followed RR and the least one is the SoA. In addition, the results proved the existence of the negative partial mediation of job stress among the four skills of emotional intelligence and behavior. This result highlights the importance of skills like emotional intelligence to maintain the good behavior of the nurses.

Keywords

Emotional Intelligence, nurses' behavior, Job Stress, COVID 19, Lebanon

1. INTRODUCTION

Does the nurse's emotional intelligence affect their behavior at the workplace? Which skill among the four aforementioned (namely self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and management's relationship) affect the nurse's behavior the most? Does the job stress affect negatively their behavior? These main research questions conduct the research paper, which studies emotional intelligence and job stress in explaining the nurse's behavior at the workplace. Peter Salovey and John Mayer are the first scholars who highlighted the importance of emotional intelligence and its effectiveness on several facets such as satisfaction, turnover, performance (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). To the best of our knowledge, research in the field had gained a considerable neglect in the Middle Eastern context, specifically in Lebanon.

The term emotional intelligence (EI) generally refers to a set of skills/competences, and/or capacities that permit its possessor to be aware of not only one's emotional states but that of others (Abbasi et al., 2018). This also includes the ability to control or harness emotions to create a positive effect on an individual's ability to survive the stresses and needs of the environment (Abbasi et al., 2018). Since Goleman introduced the term in 1995, it has gained a considerable level of momentum in both the sphere of mainstream culture as well as the business (Mattingly & Kraiger, 2019). In turn, within the last twenty years, EI has managed to become a prominent topic in the field of academia with particular attention to education, psychology, and management (Pradhan & Nath, 2012). With regards to organizational research, emotional intelligence has become the most practical construct (Tamta & Rao, 2017). EI is divided into four branches or skills and consists of: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social skills (Mayer, Salovey, Caruso, & Sitarenios, 2001).

Generally, in the context of service industry, it is known that the customer has the priority above all the other services, where the employee is supposed to serve the needs of the customer by keeping every other thing aside which causes job stress, as it might be a primary cause of negative behavior such as organizational turnover (Dudenhöffer and Dormann, 2013). Among the service sector, nursing is deemed to be one of the most stressful career choices (Reeves, 2005). Contemporary studies have demonstrated that levels of chronic stress amongst nurses vary between 37.8 and 74.8% and as such, stress levels were considered to be continuously at or above average (Chen, Li, Cao & Wang, 2020). To that effect, it has been found that stress continuously stems from common stressors such as the daily interaction with colleagues, including fellow nurses, medical practitioners, and patients and the condensed work schedule due to staff shortage. Moreover, other stressors might be internal work conflicts with physicians, as a result of a poor communication with senior members, dealing with the deceased, and the instability related to rotational shifts being moved between units and schedules (Lambert et al., 2001).

With nurses experiencing such heightened levels of negativity, they are in need of a technique or approach that reduces their stress to a desirable tolerable level. One of the many approaches that an individual may potentially adopt in order to effectively deal with such a heightened level of stress as well as its percussions is emotional intelligence (Kheirmand & Kheirmand, 2016 as cited in Rakhshani et al., 2018). The concept of emotional intelligence has become increasingly appealing to scholars from a plethora of academic backgrounds (Lambert et al., 2007).

The stressful environment has generally affected all Lebanese citizens, but more specifically the healthcare sector. This stress originates from having to deal simultaneously with the stress arising from the crisis, extra work duties, and the emotional burdens which surface from their direct contact with unwell patients. For Lebanese nurses, the working conditions are not seemingly at their optimal level economically or even in terms of safety levels. The demanding reality facing the Lebanese healthcare professionals will most likely lead to psychological symptomatology in the long term, particularly giving rise to different negative consequences on their attitude and behavior as well (Fawaz & Samaha, 2020).

The immense frustrations and anger experienced by healthcare business constituents results in staff members developing the sense of not belonging or a feeling of being uncommitted to the organization (Rakhshani et al., 2018). Staff behavior such as the overall organizational citizen behavior will be altered, and their turnover intention will be higher (Mosadeghrad, 2013). Therefore, the current events facing the healthcare workers could be considered as a violation of

their due rights. Layoffs, salary cutdowns, and putting extra load on remaining staff will subject them to much stress, while struggling to handle under the pressure and keeping a positive attitude, in order to continue their noble responsibility.

The role of emotional intelligence could enable workers to control their emotions, and reduce the negative effect of stress, as well as providing the worker with the correct meditation abilities to behave better behavior (Hrefish & AL-Hadraw, 2020). Therefore, considering Mayer and Salvo, 1997 model, with the four abilities (self-awareness, SA), control and regulate own emotions (Self-management, SM), perceive the emotions of others (Social-awareness, SoA) and utilize the emotions to manage and maintain the relationship with others (Relationship management, RM), will motivate and enable the nurses to overcome the stress faced in their workplace. This study is supposed to promote practical propositions to hospitals management, by putting forward aspects of EI that assist in reacting to situation of stressful nature and avoiding the destructed behavior.

Therefore, the study's main foci is the nurses' emotional intelligence. It assumes that nurses with high emotional intelligence are more able to comprehend the requisists of their job, to handle their job stress and to control their behaviors as such. The study aims to:

- Research the direct influence of the sub skills of EI on behavior.
- To analyze the mediation role of job stress on the relationship between EI and nurses' behavior

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL MODEL

2.1 Emotional Intelligence in the Nursing Sector

Research on emotional intelligence in the healthcare sector, more precisely in the nursing field, has focused largely on its relationship with the job stress. Salovey et al.'s (2002) research has indicated that people with high feeling show a better self-esteem, interpersonal satisfaction, and a lower stress vulnerability. Studies conducted with nurses or nursing students have shown that emotional intelligence is a skill that minimizes the negative stress consequences (Montes-berges & Augusto, 2007). EI is a factor that helps both to minimize the undesired outcomes as well as to enhance the well-being of an employee (Duran et al., 2004). Therefore, individuals who possess strong social awareness are more able to recognize how to behave appropriately in different social situations (Karimi et al., 2013).

Lym et al. (2018) studied the effect of emotional intelligence on the organizational citizenship behavior directly and indirectly, through the mediating role of leader trust. A conclusion can be drawn is that there exists a partial and indirect influence of the nurses' emotional intelligence on organizational citizenship behavior through leader trust.

In the same context, another study was conducted on nurses revealed that nurses, with a high ability to both curtail their negative emotional states and prolong positive emotional states, show higher level of overall health and maintaining consequences (Augusto Landa & Lopez-Zafra, 2012). Emotional intelligence has a positive effect on predicting the positive impact on nursing caring behavior, whereas according to the study EI failed to predict the nurses' burnout (Sunaryo et al., 2017).

Srivastava & Sullivan (2019) has shown that there exists a negative correlation linking emotional intelligence to job burnout, while a positive one was found between emotional intelligence and employee silence (voice behavior). All the aforementioned studies have recognized that emotional intelligence can reduce stress, affect burnout and organizational citizenship behavior as well as increase the wellbeing, satisfaction and performance of nurses, whether they are at work, community or in a nursing educational environment.

2.2 Model Development and Hypotheses

2.2.1 Emotional intelligence, job stress and behavior

Mayer & Salovey (1997) defined EI as "the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth" (p.10).

Emotional intelligence has five elementary fields (Goleman (1995), Mayer and Salovey (1995)). These five competences were later reduced to the four known skills: self-awareness (SA) is the capability to identify one's own emotions and monitor them continuously, self-management (SM) which revolves around the ability to handle one's emotions, and in turn enhances one's self-awareness, social awareness (SOA) is the ability to identify the other person's emotions and social management or relationship management (SOM) is the ability to be in a functional relationship and refers to the ability to manage the other person's emotions (Goleman, 2001).

The nature of the stress is discussed based on three approaches: the engineering approach, physiological and psychological approach (Cox & Griffiths, 1995). In the first approach, stress is considered as a stimulus and an environmental characteristic. In the second physiological approach, stress is defined as a biological change that a person feels when facing a stressful state (Cox & Griffiths, 1995). Whereas the third approach considers stress as an interaction between the individual and his environment rather than a stimulus or response (Cox, Griffiths & Rial-Gonzales, 2000).

Lazzeri (2017) described behavior as the occurrence of an organism's action or reaction which performs at particular moments and places. This study implements the EVLN model initiated by Rusbult et al. (1982), that compiles the response of exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect behavior. Exit involves thinking or actually quitting, transferring and searching for a different job. Voice refers to improving the conditions by taking action to solve problems. The process might include suggesting solutions, discussing problems with a supervisor or workmates, seeking assistance from an outside agency like a union. Loyalty means to optimistically keep waiting for conditions to better improve by supporting the organization and hoping for improvement or practicing good citizenship. Neglect refers to passively allowing conditions to get worse through less interest or effort, lateness or absence, using company time for personal business, or contributing to an increased error rate (Rusbult, et al., 1988).

2.2.2 Relationship between emotional intelligence and behavior

Arbatani and Mousavi (2012) examined the relation between EI, and behavior. Analyzed the conceptualization of emotional intelligence (EI) (based on Goleman's competency model) at various levels of management. He revealed that workers with a higher degree of EI show lower levels of intra-individual conflict. Emotional intelligence demonstrated by staff members has a huge effect on the actions and conduct of the workers they keep and bring within the organization (Arbatani & Mousavi, 2012). Seyal & Afzaal (2013) considered the relation between emotional intelligence and organizational citizenship behavior among the executives of SMEs whilst taking into consideration the demographics role played in respect with EI. They showed that both the EI and the OCB are strongly associated and that all demographic variables, except gender, are important with the EI of executives. The crucial role emotions have on organizational citizenship behavior has been highlighted in a more recent study for Jung & Yoon (2012). Another more recent study has shown that there is a negative correlation between emotional intelligence and job burnout, while a positive one was found between emotional intelligence and employee silence (voice behavior) (Srivastava & Sullivan, 2019). These results are consistent with the findings derived by Ruuvalcaba-Romero et al. (2017), Wang et al. (2018), McAndrews & Harbrookshire (2020) and Gopinath & Chitra (2020). Building on previous results, the current paper assumes that nurses' emotional intelligence is positively associated with their behavior in the workplace.

H1.1: Self-awareness (SA) positively influences nurses' behaviors in Lebanon.

H1.2: Self-management (SM) positively influences nurses' behaviors in Lebanon.

H1.3: Social awareness (SOA) positively influences nurses' behaviors in Lebanon

H1.4: Social Skills (SS) positively influences nurses' behaviors in Lebanon.

2.2.3 Relationship between EI, job stress and behavior (The Indirect relationship through job stress)

The ability to manage one's emotions results in leveraging the ability to cope with stress, avoiding becoming overwhelmed with negative thoughts and emotions. Furthermore, the ability to interpret and understand human feelings will lead to the ability to recognize and capture signals which trigger behavior of self-regulation. As such, emotional intelligence can be a tool to influence behaviors in the workplace (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Similarly, workers who possess a high level of emotional intelligence are considered to be capable of developing practical ways to moderate the potential effects of stress. On the other hand, individuals who exhibit less emotional intelligence are less likely to be able to deal with such cases of stress. Staff possessing higher levels of emotional intelligence are able to have a positive effect and raise the morale of others when in a group dynamic (Schutte, Malouff, Hall, Haggerty, Cooper, Golden & Dornheim, 1998). Moreover, it has been noted that job performance is known to improve once individuals decide to practice emotional intelligence.

To that effect, EI plays a great role in encouraging an individual to have control over his or her thoughts and consequently manage stress in an adequate manner. EI also enhances an individual's performance under pressure. Finally, it enables individuals who possess it at a high level to adapt to change and variation on work modalities that could arise (Seibert, Kramer & Linden, 2001). In specific, it was established that self-management is one of the most important traits with regards to emotional intelligence. Individuals possessing such a trait have the ability to control their mind set and as such, are capable of tackling and handling job stress and frustration generated at the workplace in a positive manner (Rahim, 2010). Managers can utilize self-awareness to identify their positioning within the company and consequently increase productivity.

Yamani, Shahabi & Haghani (2014) found that the relationship between components of self-awareness and self-management were also of significance. Similarly, it was found that EI directly impacts stress; in addition, the effects of EI's were shown in the sphere of maladaptive coping (Enns, Eldridge, Montgomery & Gonzalez, 2018). Software developers with high levels of EI were found to possess more skills within their trade. Moreover, they were found to have higher confidence levels and work capabilities compared to their team members (Rezvani & Khosravi, 2019). In a related study, based on the COR theory, it was shown that when an employee has high emotional intelligence as an ability, he/she will be able to manage his/her job stress, and express emotions of satisfaction and dismay (Nauman, Raja, Haq, & Bilal, 2019).

Several researchers have identified that job stress is the central reason for most employees to leave an organization (Kashif et al., 2017). For example, the employees in the service industry are exposed to stress more than others as they have to serve and fulfill the customer needs, which is a major contributor to organizational turnover (Dudenhöffer & Dormann, 2013). In accordance with role theory, stress is linked to the achievement of multiple roles. As such, individuals who seek to achieve their role as an organizational member through demonstrating personal initiative, on top of achieving their work targets, may feel that their job position is incredibly stressful (Kashif et al., 2017).

According to a study by Bolino & Turnley (2005), it was found that the higher levels of organizational citizenship behavior more specifically individual initiative the higher the role overload will be (Bolino & Turnley, 2005). The more positive the individual is, the higher the probability that he or she will be involved in behaviors that are beneficial to the organization during work hours as well as empowering to fellow employees. Such individuals, despite the stress originating from their superiors, are persistent in demonstrating supportive behavior towards their leadership (Liu et al., 2019). In terms of its relationship with work stress, emotional intelligence has received increased recognition from researchers and practitioners (Goleman, 1995; Mayer &

Salovey, 1997; Abraham, 2000). The influence of emotional intelligence on satisfaction and psychological wellbeing was explored by Urquijo, Extremera, & Villa (2016) who considered the mediating impact of the stress based on the correlation between three elements, namely, emotional intelligence, life satisfaction and psychological well-being (Urquijo et al., 2016).

There is an evident correlation between emotional intelligence and behavioral patterns on the one hand, and the mediating impact of work stress on the other. It has been verified that emotional intelligence influences job stress and its micro-components. This study suggested that workers who display a high degree of emotional intelligence indicate less job stress, and thereby reporting a lower level of frustration. Employees who exhibit a low degree of emotional intelligence record a high degree of job stress in a similar manner, and thereby showing a greater level of frustration, low corporate responsibilities and greater willingness for turnover. Therefore, this study aims to test the below hypotheses:

H2: Job stress mediates the relationship between Emotional intelligence and nurses' behaviors in Lebanon

H2.1: Job stress mediates the relationship between self-awareness and nurses' behaviors in Lebanon

H2.2: Job stress mediates the relationship between self-management and nurses' behaviors in Lebanon

H2.3: Job stress mediates the relationship between social-awareness and nurses' behaviors in Lebanon

H2.4: Job stress mediates the relationship between social skills and nurses' behaviors in Lebanon

The literature review on job stress, emotional intelligence, and behavior guided us to develop the research framework which is outlined in Figure 1.

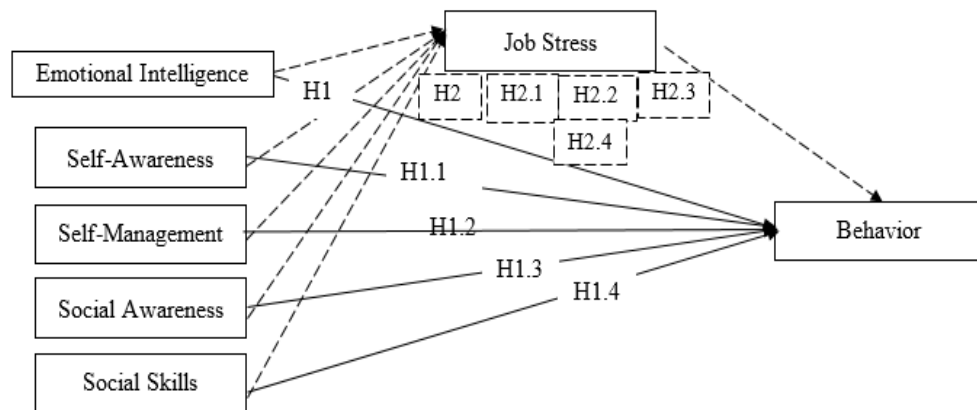


Fig.1: The hypothesized research model of emotional intelligence and behavior

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Data Collection and Procedure

The study investigates the effect of emotional intelligence on behavior and job stress in Lebanese hospitals for the year 2020 - 2021. The data resulting from this study was collected by the means of a questionnaire, that was distributed in person or online, via social media such as Facebook or WhatsApp, to nurses working in hospital located in all Lebanese areas. A total number 365 of registered nurses, from both Lebanese private and public hospitals, participated in this study. The questionnaire survey targeted nurses who were mainly working under the most stressful situation and in critical sections in their hospitals such as COVID 19, cardiology and cancer departments. Additionally, the questionnaire was distributed post having the IRB from the BAU.

3.2 Instrument Development

In this study, the data was gathered and measured while utilizing the applied the work of Scutle, Malouff, and Bhullar (2009). The study examined the four dimensions of the employees' self-Awareness, self-management, social awareness and social skills. The 33 item assessing emotions scale, based on a five-point Likert scale, was used to measure employees' emotional intelligence. Job stress was measured using (NSS) nursing stress scale (Lee, Holzmer & Faucett, 2007). It consisted of 33 questions with a five-points Likert scale. Behavior was measured using the EVLN model scale, implemented by Hagedoorn, Van Yperen, Van de Vliert, & Buunk (1999). Their model consists of four components: exit (four-item), voice (six-item), loyalty (four-item) and neglect (five-item), that are based on a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire also contains questions to acquire characteristics of the respondents. They revealed information such as the gender of the respondent, the age, their level of education and information related to the job like experience, position occupying and the geographical area.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Preliminary Analysis

Reliability refers the consistency of data if taken on a different situation. Cronbach's alpha determines the internal consistency of items in a survey instrument to gauge its reliability. It is considered to be a measure of scale reliability. The study scale has an overall reliability $\alpha = 0.850$, which is an acceptable reliability as it is above 0.7 (> 0.7) (Sekran and Bougie, 2016). For testing the multicollinearity, the correlations among the variables were tested (see table 1). All the coefficients were < 0.9 . Thus, there is no redundancy among variables.

Moreover, a calculation of the variance inflation factor (VIF) is accepted and showed that all coefficients are < 5 , indicating the absence of multicollinearity (O'brien, 2007, [Zikmund et al., 2013](#)).

4.2 Descriptive statistics of sample

Demographically, 33 % of the respondents were male and 67 % female. 98 % of them were between 20 and 50 of age. As for experience, 73 % had more than 5 years of experience within the field and 27% had less than 5 years of experience in the nursing sector. Correlation results matched the expected direction, therefore providing support for some of the study hypotheses (Table 1). For instance, Self-awareness was positively related to behavior with $r = 0.393$, $p < 0.001$ and negatively related to stress with $r = -0.791$, $p < 0.001$. Self-management is negatively related to job stress with $r = -0.805$, $p < 0.001$, and positively with behavior $r = 0.398$, $p < 0.001$. Social awareness was positively related to behavior with $r = 0.362$, $p < 0.001$, and negatively related to job stress with $r = -0.601$, $p < 0.001$. Relationship management was negatively related to job stress $r = -0.757$, $p < 0.001$, and positively related to behavior $r = 0.358$, $p < 0.001$. Finally, EI was positively related to behavior $r = 0.413$, $p < 0.001$, and negatively related to job stress $r = -0.824$, $p < 0.001$.

Table 1 reports the results of the means, standard deviations and correlations between variables.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1- Self-awareness	-	.885**	.707**	.820**	-.791-**	.393**	.957
2. Self-Management	.885**	-	.749**	.814**	-.805-**	.398**	.965
3. Social awareness	.707**	.749**	-	.686**	-.601-**	.362**	.812
4. Relationship management	.820**	.814**	.686**	-	-.757-**	.358**	.892
5. Stress	-.791	-.805-**	-.601-**	-.757-**	-	-.301-**	.824
6. Behavior	.393**	.398**	.362**	.358**	-.301-**	-	.413
7. EI	.957	.965	.812	.892	-.824	.413	-
Mean	3.44	3.82	2.69	3.92	1.67	1.65	3.59
St. Deviation	.714	.649	.788	.681	.923	1.178	.643

4.3 Regression Results

Hypotheses of the study were tested by simple and multiple regression analyses. Pearson correlations indicated that all the hypothesized relationships, the direct relationship between emotional intelligence skills, EI and behavior were supported. Self-awareness was positively related to behavior $\beta = 0.393$, ($p < 0.01$). Providing support to H1.1. Self-management was positively related to behavior $\beta = 0.398$, ($p < 0.01$). Providing support to H1.2. Social awareness was positively related to behavior $\beta = 0.362$, ($p < 0.01$). Providing support to H1.3. Relationship management was positively related to behavior $\beta = 0.358$, ($p < 0.01$). This provides support to H1.4. EI was positively related to behavior $\beta = 0.413$, ($p < 0.01$). Providing support to H1. As for the direct relationship between emotional intelligence and job stress were also asserted. Self-awareness was negatively related to job stress $\beta = -0.791$, ($p < 0.01$). Self-management was negatively related to job stress $\beta = -0.805$, ($p < 0.01$). Social awareness was negatively related to job stress $\beta = -0.601$, ($p < 0.01$). Relationship management was negatively related to job stress $\beta = -0.757$, ($p < 0.01$). EI negatively related to job stress $\beta = -0.824$, ($p < 0.01$). Stress is directly negatively related to behavior $\beta = -0.301$, ($p < 0.01$).

4.4 Testing Mediation

For testing the hypotheses, the three steps of Baron and Kenny (1986) were followed.

Table 2 shows the results of the regressions performed. The first step is to regress self-awareness on nurse's behavior. The results of the linear regression showed that self-awareness significantly predict nurse's behavior with $\beta = 0.383$, ($p < 0.01$).

Then, job stress (the mediator variable) was regressed on Self-awareness. Results showed that Self-awareness is a significant predictor of job stress with $\beta = -0.791$, ($p < 0.01$).

Finally, both self-awareness and stress were entered as predictors in the third model. Since the standardized coefficient of self-awareness is still significant when both perceptions of self-awareness and stress were entered as predictors. Therefore, stress does not mediate the relationship between self-awareness and behavior. This H2.1 was rejected. Same steps are repeated for the Hypotheses (H2.2, H2.4 and H2). The results showed that there no significant indirect effect through the job stress, thus there is no mediation. Therefore; the hypotheses are not supported.

Table 2: The mediating effect of job stress on the relationship between EI, self-awareness, self-management and relationship management and behavior

Variables	β_1	β_2	β_3
Behavior			
SA	0.383 (0.000)	-0.791 (0.000)	0.413 (0.000)
Stress			0.026 (0.753)
Variables	β_1	β_2	β_3
Behavior			
SM	0.393 (0.000)	-0.805 (0.000)	0.413 (0.000)
Stress			0.056 (0.493)
Variables	β_1	β_2	β_3
Behavior			
RM	0.358 (0.000)	-0.757 (0.000)	0.304 (0.000)
Stress			-0.071 (0.347)
Variables	β_1	β_2	β_3
Behavior			
EI	0.413 (0.000)	-0.824 (0.000)	0.515 (0.000)
Stress			0.123 (0.144)

Social awareness was regressed on nurse's behavior. The results of the linear regression showed that social- awareness significantly predict nurse's behavior with $\beta = 0.362$, ($p < 0.01$). Then, job stress (the mediator variable) was regressed on social-awareness. Results showed that social-awareness is a significant predictor of job stress with $\beta = - 0.602$, ($p < 0.01$).

Finally, both social-awareness and stress were entered as predictors in the third model. Since the standardized coefficient of social- awareness is no longer significant when both social- awareness and stress were entered as predictors. Therefore, stress partially mediate the relationship between social- awareness and behavior. This H2.3 was supported.

Table 3: The mediating effect of job stress on the relationship between Social awareness and behavior

Variables	β_1	β_2	β_3
Behavior			
SoA	0.362 (0.000)	-0.602 (0.000)	0.283 (0.000)
Stress			-0.131 (0.032)

5. DISCUSSION

This paper sought to discover the effects of nurses' EI on their job behavior mediated by the job stress. EI is divided into four dimensions: Self-awareness (SA), Self-management (SM), social awareness (SoA) and social skills (SK). This study observed that all dimensions – SA, SM, SoA and RM have a significant positive effect on behavior (Dixit & Singh, 2019; Srivastava & Sullivan, 2019; Jung & Yoon, 2012). Thus, all the skills have a positive effect on behaviors, that is to say that, when nurses begin to comprehend other people's emotions while controlling, efficiently using and modifying their own emotions, can control their behavior. Another finding revealed the negative effect of emotional intelligence, with the subskills namely (SA, SM, SoA, and SK) on job stress, thus asserting the prior literature (Cooper, 1997; Schutte, Malouff, Hall, Haggerty, Cooper, Golden & Dornheim, 1998; Abraham, 2000; Jun & Yoon, 2015). Research results revealed that EI's ability to perceive self-emotions efficiently help nurses better adapt to stress and handle it more easily. Particularly, EI in SM was the major factor in reducing stress. Furthermore, SM had a larger negative effect on job stress than that of SA. RR followed while SoA had the had least. In other words, the interpretation of the results shows that nurses' capability to comprehend, control and regulate their own emotions have an advantage while handling stress. The assumption on which this finding is based is that only individuals who are capable of recognizing and comprehending their emotions are able to comprehend the emotions of others and as such, employing and moderating emotions. Moreover, job stress negatively, partially mediated the relationship between nurse's social awareness and behavior. When nurses experience high level of stress, it will affect negatively their behavior, and the indirect effect of EI social awareness will be less than its direct effect on behavior due to the presence of the job stress. This result highlights the importance of skills like emotional intelligence to maintain the good behavior of the nurses.

Theoretical Implications

The review of literature showed the significance of emotional intelligence, therefore it was not surprising to see that this study had contributed to the behavior literature, for it had tackled the ability model suggested by Mayor and Salvoy (1997), along with its four skills, and confirmed it. The study foregrounded the positive effect of the four skills of emotional intelligence on nurse's behavior in the Lebanese workplace and asserted the negative effect of emotional intelligence on job stress as well, which have been proposed in the previously mentioned studies. The negative mediating role of job stress can be seen clearly, wherein the indirect effect of emotional intelligence on nurses' behavior was decreasing due to the presence of the job stress.

Managerial Implications

The research provides hospitals and nurses with practical suggestions for better identifying the emotional intelligence skill. The latter will help them best tolerate their job stress that they experience daily, and which affects their behavior at work.

For the case of the Lebanese nurse, the results revealed that EI affects behavior, through its four skills: mainly self-management, self-awareness, followed by social awareness and relationship management. Therefore, hospitals' management should consider coaching nurses, by for grounding the emotional intelligence skills and building strategies that maximize their self-management, social awareness and relationship management.

Moreover, training staff on emotional intelligence skills, particularly how to use and implement them in their own life as well as their working life, is vital. That would allow nurses and hospital staff to accept and tolerate stress and focus on their job, and most importantly avoid the bad behavior.

Limitations and Future Research

The study has a variety of limitations that deserve to be taken into consideration about the topic: The number of subjects in this study is limited to 365 of registered nurses, working in critical sections in hospitals such as COVID 19, cardiology and cancer departments only, which would only represent a sample of the population and this would hamper the generalization of findings. The study depends heavily on the emotional intelligence model that incorporates the four skills. Future researchers might think of adding other skills of EI motivation, empathy and using another EI scale. The aim of this research is limited to investigate the role of EI and JS among the nurse, without taking into consideration the differences between the supervisor and registered nurses' responses. Thus, a comparative study would provide a better understanding of the effect of EI and JS on the nurses at their different level or positions. The research studied the mediating role of job stress only, but it is suggested that future studies incorporate other potential mediator such as stress coping, leadership style, the role of moderator as well as the gender and the work experience.

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