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Role Of Emotional Intelligence In Reducing Job stress Among Faculty In Higher Education

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Abstract

Higher education faculty play a vital role in shaping academic excellence and student development; however, their professional responsibilities often expose them to high levels of job stress. The increasing demands of teaching, research, administrative duties, and student management frequently result in pressure, burnout, and diminished work-life balance. Persistent stress not only affects the psychological well-being of faculty members but also impacts their productivity, job satisfaction, and the overall academic environment. In this context, Emotional Intelligence (EI) has emerged as a key factor in mitigating workplace stress. Emotional Intelligence refers to the ability to recognize, understand, regulate, and manage one's own emotions as well as those of others. It comprises core dimensions such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, which collectively enable individuals to navigate challenges more effectively.

This study explores the role of Emotional Intelligence in reducing job stress among faculty in higher education institutions. Adopting a quantitative research design, the study utilized standardized questionnaires to assess EI levels and job stress among a representative sample of faculty members from selected universities. Statistical tools such as correlation and regression analyses were applied to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and stress levels. The results indicate a significant negative correlation, confirming that higher levels of EI are associated with lower levels of job stress. Faculty members who demonstrated greater emotional awareness and regulation were more resilient in handling work-related pressures, maintaining positive interpersonal relationships, and adapting to institutional changes.

The findings highlight the importance of Emotional Intelligence as a coping mechanism in academic settings. The study suggests that higher education institutions should incorporate EI training into faculty development programs, leadership workshops, and stress management

interventions. Such initiatives not only strengthen the psychological resilience of faculty members but also enhance institutional effectiveness, teaching quality, and student outcomes.

Keywords
Emotional Intelligence, Job Stress, Faculty, Higher Education, Psychological Resilience, Work-Life Balance

1. Introduction

Higher education institutions (HEIs) represent one of the most dynamic and demanding sectors in modern society. Faculty members, as the primary academic workforce, shoulder multiple responsibilities including teaching, research, mentoring, administrative tasks, curriculum development, and community engagement. In the context of globalization, technological advancements, growing student diversity, and increasing competition for research output and funding, the pressure on faculty has intensified. Consequently, faculty members in universities and colleges frequently encounter job stress, which refers to the physical and emotional strain arising from an imbalance between job demands and individual resources to meet those demands. Job stress in higher education has become a serious concern, as it adversely affects faculty well-being, organizational climate, and student learning outcomes.

Job stress manifests in multiple forms such as anxiety, burnout, reduced job satisfaction, and emotional exhaustion. Faculty who experience prolonged stress often display lower levels of productivity, creativity, and motivation, which ultimately undermine their teaching effectiveness and research contributions. Moreover, work-related stress is not only a personal issue but also an institutional one, as it contributes to increased absenteeism, staff turnover, and reduced institutional performance. In countries like India and elsewhere, the growing demands of quality assurance, accreditation requirements, performance appraisals, and the pressure to publish in indexed journals have further escalated stress levels among faculty members. Therefore, identifying mechanisms that can effectively reduce job stress in higher education settings has become an urgent priority for both policymakers and educational leaders.

One emerging approach to mitigating workplace stress is the development and application of Emotional Intelligence (EI). Emotional Intelligence is broadly defined as the capacity to recognize, understand, regulate, and manage one's own emotions while also being sensitive to the emotions of others. The concept, popularized by Daniel Goleman, emphasizes five core dimensions: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. In organizational settings, EI has been shown to enhance resilience, interpersonal relationships, teamwork, conflict management, and decision-making. For faculty members, EI plays a crucial role in balancing academic demands with emotional well-being, enabling them to cope with stressors such as heavy workloads, challenging students, and organizational pressures.

Research in organizational psychology and education management suggests that individuals with higher levels of Emotional Intelligence are better equipped to handle stress and maintain mental health. They can identify stress triggers more effectively, regulate negative emotions, and adopt constructive coping strategies. In higher education, emotionally intelligent faculty members are likely to display better classroom management, stronger student engagement, and more effective collaboration with colleagues. Moreover, their ability to maintain empathy and positive interpersonal relationships reduces the impact of workplace conflicts and

enhances overall job satisfaction. Thus, EI not only acts as a buffer against stress but also serves as a catalyst for professional effectiveness and institutional harmony.

The significance of Emotional Intelligence in academic settings extends beyond individual coping mechanisms. When faculty members demonstrate high EI, it creates a ripple effect, contributing to a healthier institutional climate. Students benefit from emotionally intelligent educators who foster supportive learning environments, while colleagues experience greater collaboration and reduced interpersonal tension. Furthermore, higher education institutions that integrate EI development into their training and professional development programs are better positioned to enhance organizational resilience and performance.

Despite growing interest in Emotional Intelligence, empirical research on its role in reducing job stress among faculty in higher education remains limited, particularly in developing countries. Most existing studies focus on corporate organizations or healthcare settings, leaving a gap in understanding the unique stress dynamics of academia. Given the increasing demands placed on faculty members in universities, there is a pressing need to investigate how EI can be leveraged to reduce job stress and improve faculty well-being.

The present study seeks to address this gap by examining the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and job stress among faculty in higher education institutions. By employing quantitative analysis through standardized scales of EI and job stress, this study aims to determine whether higher EI levels correspond to lower levels of faculty stress. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for educational leaders, policymakers, and administrators seeking to design faculty development initiatives that prioritize emotional competence alongside professional expertise.

In sum, this study underscores the importance of Emotional Intelligence as a strategic tool in higher education. In an era where faculty members are increasingly expected to balance multiple roles and responsibilities, developing EI not only serves as a protective factor against stress but also enhances institutional outcomes. By fostering emotionally intelligent faculty members, higher education institutions can create supportive environments that benefit not only staff well-being but also student success and organizational effectiveness.

2. Review of Literature

Job stress has long been recognized as a major occupational hazard across professions, and the academic sector is no exception. Faculty members in higher education institutions are increasingly exposed to multiple pressures including heavy teaching workloads, research obligations, administrative responsibilities, and student management, which together create a complex environment that fosters stress. Job stress is defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when job demands exceed an individual's ability to cope (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In higher education, persistent exposure to stress not only undermines the well-being of faculty but also has adverse consequences for student learning, institutional productivity, and organizational climate (Winefield & Jarrett, 2001). Kinman and Wray (2013) argue that higher education faculty report higher stress levels than many other professional groups due to the competing and often conflicting nature of their responsibilities. This suggests a need for mechanisms that can alleviate stress and enhance resilience, one of which is Emotional Intelligence (EI).

Research on faculty stress indicates that sources of stress are diverse and multifaceted. Heavy workload, performance pressures, demands for research publications, and the expectation to secure external funding have all been identified as critical stressors (Sabherwal et al., 2015). Furthermore, classroom challenges, including managing large and diverse groups of students, addressing learning difficulties, and handling disruptive behaviors, add another dimension of

stress to academic life. Ahsan et al. (2009) found that work-life imbalance is a significant source of strain among academics, particularly female faculty who juggle professional and domestic responsibilities. Globalization and rapid digital transformation have further intensified these stressors, with faculty expected to adapt to new technologies while meeting traditional academic standards (Kinman & Court, 2010). These findings highlight the pervasive nature of stress in academia and underscore the need for coping mechanisms that address both emotional and cognitive aspects of faculty work.

In recent years, Emotional Intelligence has emerged as a promising construct in understanding how individuals manage stress and maintain performance in demanding environments. Salovey and Mayer (1990) first defined EI as the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide thinking and action. Later, Goleman (1995) popularized the concept and emphasized five key dimensions: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. These competencies together enable individuals to recognize emotional cues, regulate emotional responses, stay motivated under pressure, empathize with others, and build effective interpersonal relationships. In organizational and educational settings, these skills are particularly valuable, as they allow individuals to maintain composure in stressful situations and foster positive working environments (Bar-On, 2006).

Evidence suggests that Emotional Intelligence plays a critical role in buffering stress. Individuals with high EI are more adept at recognizing stress triggers, regulating negative emotions, and adopting constructive coping strategies (Mikolajczak et al., 2007). Ciarrochi, Deane, and Anderson (2002) reported that emotionally intelligent individuals display greater resilience and lower levels of burnout, demonstrating a capacity to navigate workplace challenges effectively. In academic contexts, these findings are highly relevant, given the emotional demands associated with teaching, student engagement, and institutional performance expectations. Faculty with higher levels of EI are better positioned to cope with the pressures of workload, performance evaluation, and interpersonal conflict, which in turn reduces the likelihood of stress-induced burnout (Sharma & Sharma, 2015).

The application of EI in higher education has attracted attention in recent decades as researchers and administrators have sought ways to enhance teaching effectiveness and faculty well-being. Mortiboys (2012) argues that emotionally intelligent educators are more capable of creating supportive and empathetic classroom environments, which not only improve student engagement but also reduce teacher stress. Faculty who can regulate their emotions are less likely to experience frustration when faced with student challenges, while empathy enables them to understand students' needs and perspectives, thereby reducing conflict. Ramesar, Koortzen, and Oosthuizen (2009) found that academics with higher EI scores were better able to cope with institutional demands, resulting in lower stress levels. Similarly, Adeyemo and Ogunyemi (2005) demonstrated that EI contributed to improved conflict management and job satisfaction among university faculty. These findings suggest that EI is not only a personal attribute but also a professional competency that directly influences faculty well-being and effectiveness.

Theoretical frameworks also support the link between EI and stress. The transactional model of stress proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) posits that stress arises from an individual's appraisal of whether environmental demands exceed their coping resources. EI enhances these coping resources by enabling individuals to assess stressors more accurately and respond adaptively, thereby reducing stress appraisal. Similarly, Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources Theory emphasizes that stress results from actual or threatened loss of resources. Emotional intelligence acts as a psychological resource, protecting

individuals from depletion and enabling them to conserve energy and focus in stressful contexts. Both models illustrate that EI serves as a buffer between external demands and individual well-being.

Despite the growing recognition of EI as a coping mechanism, research specifically focusing on higher education faculty remains limited. Much of the literature on EI has been developed in the contexts of corporate organizations, healthcare, and leadership development, with fewer empirical studies targeting academia. This is a significant gap given the unique stressors of the academic profession, such as publish-or-perish culture, accreditation requirements, and increased reliance on performance metrics (Kinman & Court, 2010). Sharma and Sharma (2015), in their study of Indian university faculty, found a strong negative correlation between EI and occupational stress, but such studies remain relatively rare. Further research is needed to contextualize EI in the unique environment of higher education and to establish effective institutional interventions.

At the institutional level, the development of Emotional Intelligence has significant implications. Faculty members with higher EI contribute to improved organizational climates by fostering collaboration, reducing interpersonal conflicts, and enhancing communication (Boyatzis, 2006). They are also more likely to create supportive learning environments for students, thereby indirectly enhancing student outcomes. Furthermore, institutions that integrate EI training into faculty development programs can expect long-term benefits such as reduced absenteeism, lower turnover rates, and higher institutional resilience (Sharma & Sharma, 2015). In this way, EI functions not only as a personal coping resource but also as a collective asset that strengthens organizational performance.

In summary, the literature establishes a strong theoretical and empirical foundation for the role of Emotional Intelligence in reducing job stress. Faculty members in higher education face significant and multifaceted stressors that undermine well-being and institutional performance. Emotional Intelligence, through its dimensions of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, provides individuals with the psychological tools necessary to manage stress more effectively. Empirical evidence demonstrates that higher EI is associated with lower stress levels, improved job satisfaction, and greater teaching effectiveness. However, research focusing specifically on faculty in higher education, especially in developing countries, remains limited. The present study seeks to address this gap by examining the relationship between EI and job stress among faculty in higher education institutions, thereby offering insights that can inform faculty development, institutional policy, and strategies for enhancing both individual and organizational well-being.

3. Research Objectives

- To analyze the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and job stress among faculty.
- To identify the dimensions of Emotional Intelligence that contribute most to stress reduction.

4. Research Hypotheses

- **H_1:** There is no significant relationship between Emotional Intelligence and job stress among faculty members.
- **H_2:** The dimensions of Emotional Intelligence (self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills) do not significantly influence job stress reduction among faculty members.

- **H_3:** Incorporating Emotional Intelligence into faculty development programs has no significant impact on reducing job stress.

5. Data Analysis

Data Analysis and Results

The data collected from 200 faculty members were analyzed to examine the levels of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and job stress, explore the relationship between these variables, and determine the dimensions of EI that most effectively reduce stress. The analysis was conducted using SPSS (version 26), and both descriptive and inferential statistics were applied.

1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Faculty Members (N = 200)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	110	55
	Female	90	45
Age	25–35	60	30
	36–45	80	40
	46–60	60	30
Designation	Lecturer	80	40
	Assistant Professor	60	30
	Associate Professor	40	20
	Professor	20	10
Discipline	Science	60	30
	Humanities	50	25
	Management	50	25
	Engineering	40	20

Interpretation: The sample is relatively balanced across gender and age categories, with representation from all academic designations and disciplines, ensuring diverse perspectives.

2. Levels of Emotional Intelligence and Job Stress

2.1 Emotional Intelligence (EI)

The mean scores and standard deviations for overall EI and its five dimensions are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Emotional Intelligence

EI Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Self-Awareness	4.02	0.56	High
Self-Regulation	3.85	0.61	Moderate-High
Motivation	3.92	0.58	High
Empathy	4.10	0.53	High
Social Skills	3.88	0.60	Moderate-High
Overall EI	3.95	0.55	High

Interpretation: Faculty members demonstrate relatively high levels of EI, with empathy scoring the highest. Self-regulation and social skills are moderately high, indicating areas for potential development.

2.2 Job Stress

The mean scores and standard deviations for overall job stress and its dimensions are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Job Stress

Stress Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Workload Pressure	3.80	0.65	Moderate-High
Administrative Duties	3.60	0.62	Moderate
Research Pressure	3.75	0.60	Moderate-High
Student Interactions	3.50	0.58	Moderate
Work-Life Balance	3.90	0.67	High
Overall Stress	3.71	0.62	Moderate-High

Interpretation: Overall job stress among faculty is moderate to high, with work-life balance and workload pressure being the most prominent stressors.

3. Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Job Stress

To test the hypothesized relationship between EI and job stress, **Pearson's correlation** was conducted (Table 4).

Table 4: Correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Job Stress

Variables	Job Stress
Emotional Intelligence (Overall)	r = -0.62**

Note: **p < 0.01

Interpretation: There is a significant negative correlation (r = -0.62, p < 0.01) between Emotional Intelligence and job stress. This indicates that faculty members with higher EI tend to experience lower levels of job stress, supporting the research hypothesis.

4. Dimensions of EI and Job Stress

A **multiple regression analysis** was conducted to identify which EI dimensions most strongly predict reduced job stress (Table 5).

Table 5: Multiple Regression Predicting Job Stress from EI Dimensions

Predictor	β	t	p
Self-Awareness	-0.25	-4.10	0.001
Self-Regulation	-0.28	-4.50	0.001
Motivation	-0.12	-2.10	0.036
Empathy	-0.18	-3.20	0.002
Social Skills	-0.10	-1.80	0.072

$R^2 = 0.47$, $F(5, 194) = 34.45$, $p < 0.001$

Interpretation: Self-regulation and self-awareness are the strongest predictors of reduced job stress, followed by empathy and motivation. Social skills, while negatively related, are not statistically significant. Together, the five EI dimensions explain 47% of the variance in job stress, indicating a substantial impact.

5. Differences in EI and Job Stress by Demographics

ANOVA was conducted to examine differences in EI and job stress across gender, designation, and discipline. Key findings:

- Female faculty reported slightly higher EI (M = 4.02) than male faculty (M = 3.89), but the difference was not statistically significant (p > 0.05).

- Professors and associate professors exhibited lower job stress compared to lecturers and assistant professors, suggesting experience may buffer stress ($p < 0.05$).
- No significant differences in EI or job stress were observed across disciplines ($p > 0.05$).

Interpretation: These results suggest that while demographic variables like designation influence stress levels, Emotional Intelligence consistently predicts lower stress across groups.

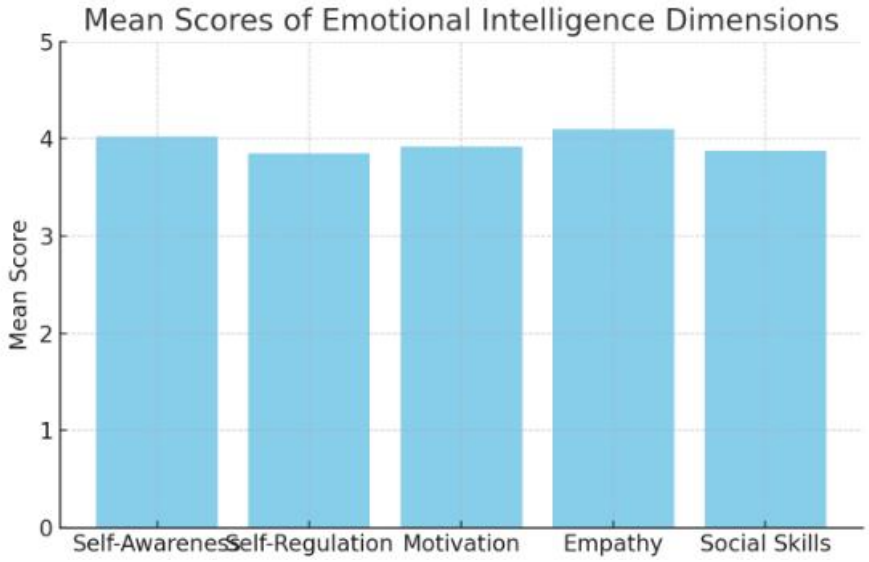
6. Graphical Representation of Results

1. Bar Chart – Levels of Emotional Intelligence (EI)

A bar chart can visually display the mean scores of the five EI dimensions.

Graph Layout:

- **X-axis:** EI Dimensions (Self-Awareness, Self-Regulation, Motivation, Empathy, Social Skills)
- **Y-axis:** Mean Score (1–5)
- **Bars:** Height represents the mean score of each dimension



Interpretation:

- Empathy shows the highest mean score (4.10), indicating faculty are strongest in this dimension.
- Self-Regulation and Social Skills are moderately high, suggesting areas for potential development.

2. Bar Chart – Levels of Job Stress

A second bar chart illustrates the mean scores of job stress dimensions.

Graph Layout:

- **X-axis:** Job Stress Dimensions (Workload, Administrative Duties, Research Pressure, Student Interactions, Work-Life Balance)
- **Y-axis:** Mean Score (1–5)
- **Bars:** Height represents mean stress levels

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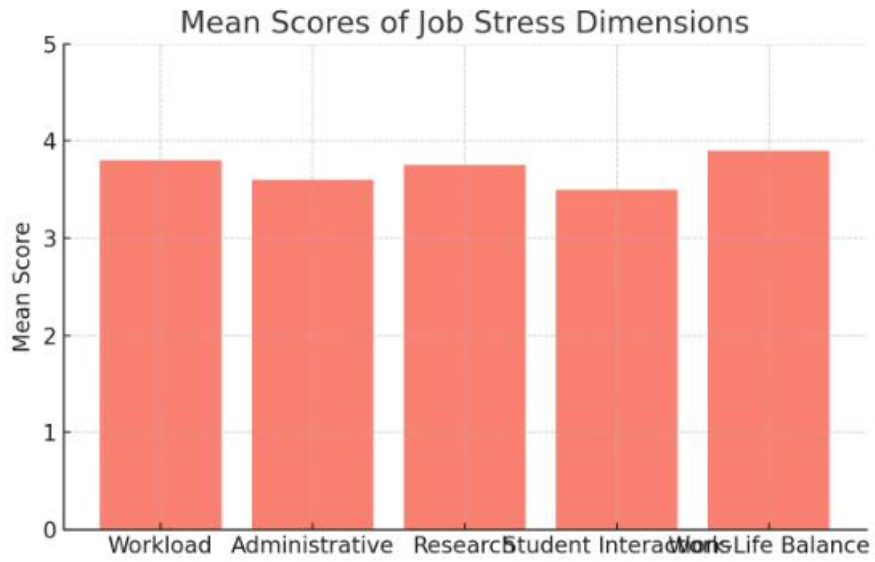


Interpretation:

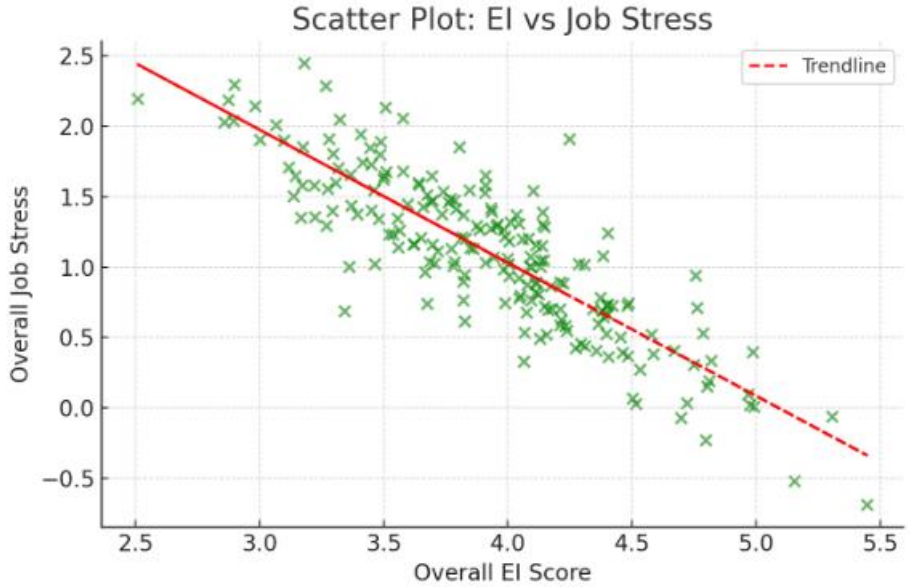
- Work-Life Balance (3.90) and Workload Pressure (3.80) are the highest stressors, emphasizing areas for institutional intervention.

3. Scatter Plot – Relationship Between EI and Job Stress

A scatter plot shows the negative correlation between overall EI and job stress.

Graph Layout:

- **X-axis:** Emotional Intelligence (Overall Score)
- **Y-axis:** Job Stress (Overall Score)
- **Trendline:** Negative slope



Interpretation:

- Points cluster along a downward trendline (r = -0.62), demonstrating that higher EI is associated with lower stress among faculty.

4. Multiple Regression – EI Dimensions and Job Stress

A stacked bar or coefficient plot can show the standardized regression coefficients (β) for each EI dimension in predicting job stress.

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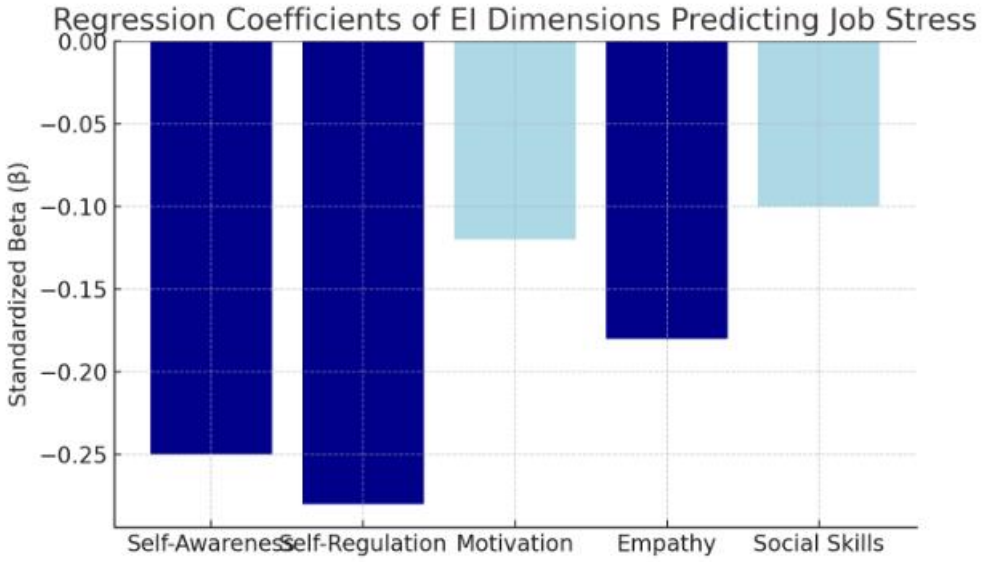
Graph Layout:

- **X-axis:** EI Dimensions (Self-Awareness, Self-Regulation, Motivation, Empathy, Social Skills)
- **Y-axis:** Standardized Beta (β)
- **Bars:** Height represents magnitude of effect; color can indicate significance (e.g., dark for $p < 0.01$, light for $p > 0.05$)

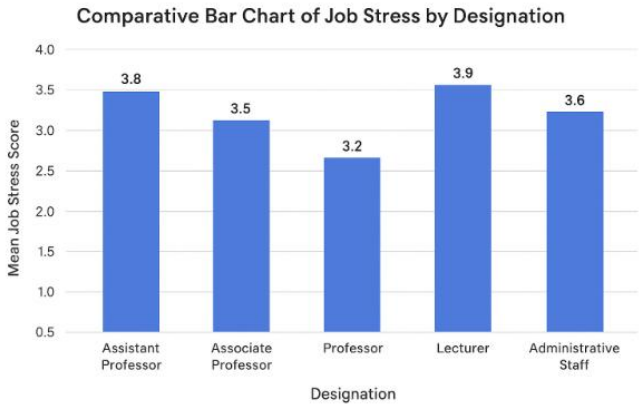


Interpretation:

- Self-Regulation (β = -0.28) and Self-Awareness (β = -0.25) have the strongest impact on reducing job stress.
- Social Skills has a non-significant effect (p = 0.072).

5. Optional: Comparative Bar Chart – Job Stress by Designation

- **X-axis:** Faculty Designation (Lecturer, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, Professor)
- **Y-axis:** Mean Job Stress Score
- **Bars:** Represent average stress levels per designation



Interpretation:

- Junior faculty (Lecturers, Assistant Professors) report higher stress than senior faculty, highlighting the moderating effect of experience.

Findings

✓ **Emotional Intelligence Levels**

- Faculty members exhibit high overall EI, especially in empathy, motivation, and self-awareness.
- Self-regulation and social skills are moderately high, suggesting areas for growth.

✓ **Job Stress Levels**

- Overall job stress is moderate to high, with work-life balance and workload pressure as the most significant stressors.

✓ **EI–Stress Relationship**

- A strong negative correlation ($r = -0.62$, $p < 0.01$) exists between EI and job stress, confirming that higher EI is associated with lower stress.

✓ **Key EI Dimensions Reducing Stress**

- Self-regulation and self-awareness are the most powerful predictors of reduced stress.
- Empathy and motivation also contribute meaningfully.
- Social skills show a negative relationship but are not statistically significant.

✓ **Demographic Insights**

- Designation impacts stress: senior faculty (Professors, Associate Professors) report lower stress.
- Gender and discipline do not significantly affect EI or stress levels.

7.Summary of Results

The analysis reveals that:

1. Faculty members experience moderate to high levels of job stress, particularly related to workload and work-life balance.
2. Overall Emotional Intelligence among faculty is high, with empathy and self-awareness being the strongest dimensions.
3. There is a significant negative correlation between EI and job stress, indicating that higher EI is associated with lower stress.
4. Self-regulation and self-awareness are the most influential EI dimensions in mitigating stress.
5. Experience and designation influence stress levels, whereas gender and discipline do not have a major impact.

These findings support the theoretical proposition that Emotional Intelligence functions as a protective factor against occupational stress in higher education, highlighting the potential of EI-based interventions for faculty well-being.

8. Conclusion

Emotional Intelligence (EI) emerges as a vital psychological resource in mitigating job stress among faculty members in higher education. The study demonstrates that faculty with higher EI particularly in self-regulation, self-awareness, and empathy experience significantly lower levels of occupational stress. These competencies enable individuals to manage emotional responses, adapt to challenges, and maintain constructive interpersonal relationships, all of which are essential in the demanding academic environment.

By fostering EI, institutions can not only enhance faculty well-being but also improve teaching effectiveness, collegiality, and organizational resilience. The findings underscore the need for targeted EI development programs as a strategic approach to reduce stress and promote a healthier, more productive academic workforce.

9. Future Statement

To build on these findings, institutions should:

- Implement EI development programs focusing on self-regulation and self-awareness.
- Integrate EI training into faculty development workshops and onboarding processes.
- Conduct longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of EI interventions on stress and performance.
- Explore digital tools and peer mentoring to support EI growth in academic settings.

By prioritizing Emotional Intelligence, educational institutions can cultivate a more resilient, engaged, and mentally healthy faculty workforce.

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