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The Effect of Emotional Intelligence on Job Security Among Employees in the Construction Sector

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the impact of emotional intelligence on the perceived job security of employees working in the construction sector. A descriptive–survey research design was employed. Data were collected using two standardized instruments: Singh's Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire, which measures self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management, and Ashford, Lee, and Bobko's Job Security Questionnaire. The instruments were adapted and validated for the local context, and their reliability was confirmed through Cronbach's alpha coefficients (0.855 for emotional intelligence and 0.703 for job security). The target population consisted of employees engaged in construction projects. Using Cochran's formula, 500 questionnaires were distributed, and 316 valid responses were obtained (85.44% male, 14.56% female; age range predominantly 18–30 years). Data analysis was performed using SPSS v26, employing Pearson correlation, simple and multiple linear regression, and K-means clustering to explore relationships and classify respondents by emotional intelligence and job security levels. The results revealed a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and job security ($r = 0.276$, $p < 0.01$). Among the emotional intelligence dimensions, self-management and social skills showed the strongest associations with job security. Regression analysis indicated that emotional intelligence significantly predicted job security even after controlling for demographic factors such as age, contract type, and work tenure. Cluster analysis showed that 59% of employees with high emotional intelligence reported high job security, while 43% of those with low emotional intelligence experienced low job security. The effect of emotional intelligence on job security was stronger among employees aged 18–30 years. Emotional intelligence plays a critical role in enhancing job security perceptions among construction employees. Developing self-management and social skills can buffer negative effects of contract type and tenure, fostering stability, satisfaction, and organizational resilience.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence; job security; construction sector; self-management; social skills; employee well-being.

Introduction

Job security has long been recognized as a pivotal dimension of organizational sustainability and employee well-being. In contemporary labor markets marked by digital transformation, restructuring, and economic volatility, employees' perceptions of job security are increasingly dynamic and deeply interconnected with psychological resources such as emotional intelligence [1, 2]. Job insecurity, conceptualized as the perceived threat to job continuity or valued job features, can provoke anxiety, reduce work engagement, and escalate turnover intentions if not addressed [3, 4]. Meanwhile, emotional intelligence (EI)—the capacity to perceive, understand, manage, and regulate emotions in oneself and others—has emerged as a powerful predictor of adaptive responses to organizational change and stress [5-7]. Integrating these two constructs offers critical insight into how employees navigate uncertainty and maintain performance despite external disruptions [8].

The concept of job security is multifaceted, encompassing both the perceived threat of total job loss and the potential erosion of valued job features such as pay, autonomy, and growth opportunities [1, 2]. Loss of job security triggers psychological strain, disengagement, and reduced organizational commitment [4, 9]. It also affects job embeddedness and increases turnover intentions, particularly in public organizations where stability is traditionally expected [4, 10]. Moreover, national employment protection policies and unemployment benefits influence perceptions of security; in contexts with weaker protection or informal employment contracts, insecurity intensifies [3]. Recent studies highlight how disruptive technologies such as blockchain may reshape job stability, compelling organizations to develop foresight models to anticipate and manage employee attitudes toward security [11, 12].

Emotional intelligence has gained increasing prominence as a predictor of individual adaptability in uncertain work contexts. As defined by Mayer and Salovey, EI integrates the abilities to accurately perceive emotions, use emotions to facilitate thinking, understand emotional meaning, and regulate emotions to promote personal growth [5, 6]. Singh [7] operationalized EI into measurable domains such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social skills, enabling its empirical investigation across various industries. Empirical evidence suggests that employees with high EI cope more effectively with stress, maintain positive interpersonal relationships, and are better equipped to respond to organizational change [8, 13]. They display higher resilience in sectors prone to risk and instability, such as construction, where EI has been shown to reduce occupational stress and enhance safety behaviors [13].

The relationship between EI and job security is theoretically grounded in the idea that emotionally intelligent employees interpret workplace uncertainty less threateningly and deploy adaptive coping strategies [8]. Higher EI helps individuals regulate fear of job loss, maintain constructive relationships, and seek solutions rather than disengaging. Empirical studies confirm that EI positively correlates with psychological ownership and job satisfaction, factors closely associated with perceived stability [14, 15]. Naz and Liaquat [14] found that emotionally intelligent employees demonstrate stronger feelings of ownership and commitment, which indirectly bolster security perceptions. García del Castillo-López and Pérez Domínguez [15] further demonstrated that EI enhances the work climate and reduces job stress, fostering satisfaction and mitigating insecurity.

In uncertain environments such as construction and infrastructure development, where short-term contracts and fluctuating workloads are prevalent, EI becomes especially critical [13, 16]. Employees with strong self-management and social skills maintain performance and psychological stability despite unpredictable conditions. The evidence also shows that the protective effect of EI is pronounced among younger workers (18–30 years), a group particularly vulnerable to insecurity due to limited tenure and career experience [16].

Organizational context significantly influences the interplay between EI and job security. Supportive work climates and leadership styles that value emotional capabilities can buffer insecurity [17, 18]. Wonda [17] highlighted that emotionally intelligent leadership enhances overall performance and psychological safety in public sectors, while Winata [18] demonstrated that combining EI with situational leadership and positive organizational culture strengthens commitment and mitigates stress. Similarly, Setio [19] found that work motivation mediates the relationship between EI and employee performance, indirectly reinforcing job stability perceptions. Ali [20] also emphasized that self-efficacy mediates the relationship between EI, stress, and burnout, suggesting that psychologically empowered employees feel more secure even under pressure.

Emerging technologies challenge traditional job security paradigms, but EI can act as a protective psychological factor. Foresight models developed for technology-driven change, such as blockchain adoption, show that anticipating shifts and fostering emotional adaptability can reduce resistance and anxiety [11, 12]. In digitalizing economies, where flexibility and innovation are essential, developing EI within human capital strategies becomes a competitive advantage [16]. This is particularly relevant in contexts with contractual volatility and competitive labor markets, such as Iran's construction sector, where psychological stability can directly affect safety, productivity, and retention [9, 13].

Although extensive scholarship has examined job security and emotional intelligence separately, fewer studies have integrated these constructs in high-risk and transitional industries. Prior findings suggest EI can moderate the adverse effects of insecurity [8, 14], yet sector-specific investigations remain limited. Moreover, most existing studies emphasize general job satisfaction or commitment but rarely explore how distinct EI dimensions—such as self-management and social skills—uniquely relate to job security perceptions [7, 13].

This study addresses these gaps by empirically examining the impact of emotional intelligence on perceived job security among employees in the construction sector, a context characterized by contract instability, project-based employment, and environmental stressors.

Methodology

To obtain the indicators of emotional intelligence and job security, questionnaires were designed because many standardized instruments have already been developed in previous research, and compared to methods such as interviews or field observations, questionnaires allow targeting a larger statistical population.

To evaluate emotional intelligence, the Singh (2004) questionnaire was used, which includes four domains: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social skills. The items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). For job security, the Ashford, Lee, and Bobko (1989) questionnaire was used, and the items were also rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

It is worth noting that the questions were translated to facilitate comprehension and to make them relevant to the context of this research; some items were reverse-coded, and their scores were adjusted accordingly.

The target population comprised employees working in the construction sector. The Cochran formula was used to determine the appropriate sample size for questionnaire distribution. In this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated separately for each of the variables—emotional intelligence, job security, and employees' readiness for change.

The questionnaire was distributed to more than 500 individuals, and 316 completed responses were collected. Among respondents, 270 were male (85.44%) and 46 were female (14.56%). Regarding age, 190 participants (60.13%) were between 18 and 30 years, 101 participants (31.96%) between 30 and 45 years, and 25 participants (7.91%) above 45 years. In terms of employment type, 196 participants (62.03%) held short-term contracts and 120 (37.97%) long-term contracts. Work experience showed that 150 participants (47.47%) had less than one year of service, 96 (30.38%) had one to three years, and 70 (22.15%) had more than three years. Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 26.

To determine relationships among research variables and assess the degree of dependency or correlation between them, Pearson's correlation coefficient was applied.

Another method used to analyze the collected data was regression analysis to predict one variable based on one or more other variables. Both simple linear regression and multiple linear regression were applied in this study.

Additionally, to better interpret the results, data were categorized into different groups using K-means clustering. This method identifies cluster centers and assigns each data point to the cluster to which it has the shortest distance.

Findings and Results

The reliability of the overall questionnaires and each of the constructs—emotional intelligence, job security, and readiness for change—was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for Questionnaires

Questionnaire	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Emotional Intelligence	21	0.855
Job Security	11	0.703

Based on the results, both questionnaires showed acceptable reliability. The slightly lower reliability of the job security questionnaire may be attributed to item diversity and the presence of reverse-coded items. While reliability could be improved by removing certain items, the current alpha values fell within acceptable ranges, so no modifications were made.

Table 2 presents the overall descriptive statistics of the research variables, including range, standard deviation, minimum, maximum, and score intervals.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	Range	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Possible Maximum
Emotional Intelligence	102.673	10.13277	54.00	101.00	105
Job Security	25.137	5.01366	26.00	48.00	55

After scoring the questionnaires, the total scores were entered into SPSS. Pearson correlation coefficients were computed for the main constructs, and the results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Correlations among Research Variables

	Emotional Intelligence	Job Security	Work Tenure	Contract Type	Gender	Age
Emotional Intelligence	1	.276**	.028	-.166**	-.224**	.203**
Job Security	.276**	1	-.077	-.140*	-.100	-.219**
Work Tenure	.028	-.077	1	.203**	.075	.363**
Contract Type	-.166**	-.140*	.203**	1	.324**	.078
Gender	-.224**	-.100	.075	.324**	1	-.154**
Age	.203**	-.219**	.363**	.078	-.154**	1

**p < 0.01; *p< 0.05

As shown in the table, the main constructs—emotional intelligence and job security—have a significant positive correlation at the 0.01 level.

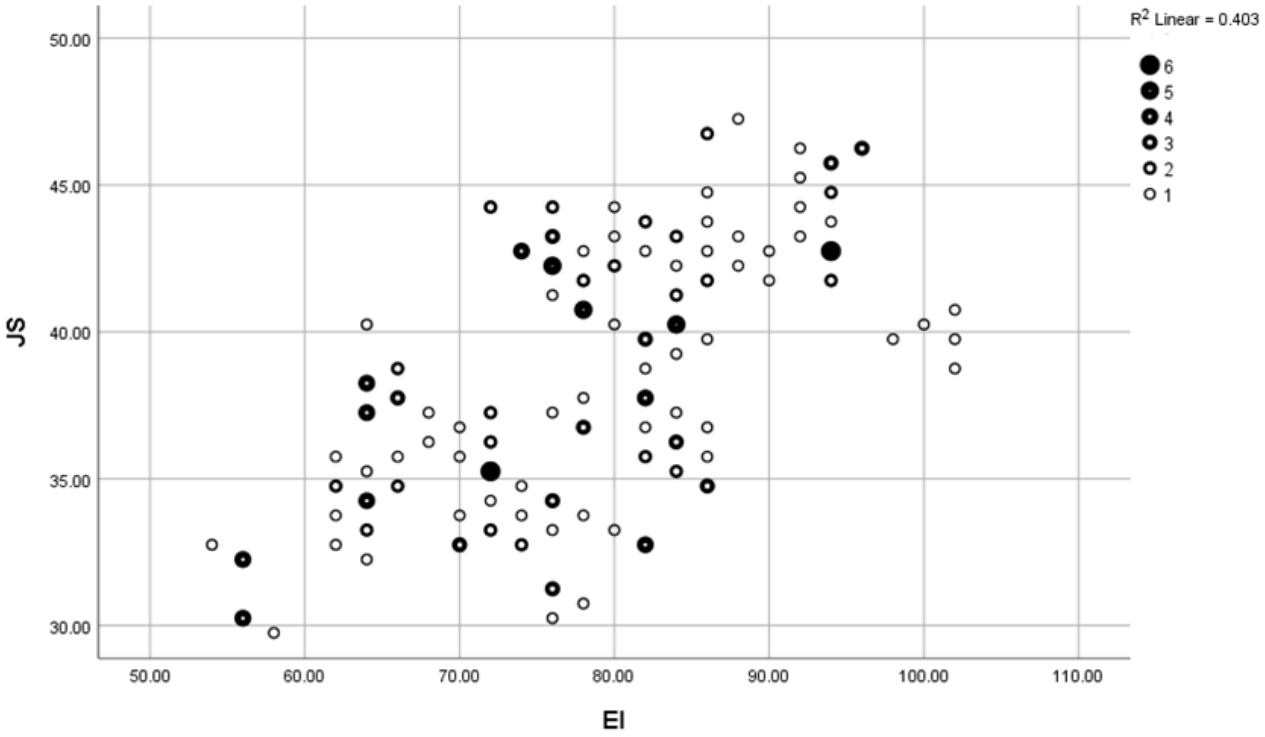
The results indicate that emotional intelligence positively correlates with job security, work tenure, and age, while it shows a negative correlation with contract type. Job security exhibits the strongest positive relationship with emotional intelligence and gender, and its strongest negative relationships with age and work tenure. These findings emphasize that enhancing

employees' emotional skills can significantly improve perceived job security, even when external factors such as contract type or work experience exert negative influences.

Further refinement of the data revealed that the relationship between emotional intelligence and job security was stronger among employees aged 18–30 years.

Figure 1

Distribution of Responses



In the second stage of correlation analysis, instead of overall emotional intelligence, its four subdimensions—self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social skills—were examined to identify which dimensions have the greatest impact.

Table 4.

Correlations among Emotional Intelligence Subdimensions and Job Security

Job Security	Self-Awareness	Self-Management	Social Awareness	Social Skills	Age	Gender	Contract Type	Work Tenure
Job Security	1	.141*	.284**	.176**	.239**	-.219**	-.100	-.140*
Self-Awareness	.141*	1	.670**	.372**	.454**	.232**	-.187**	-.193**
Self-Management	.284**	.670**	1	.298**	.592**	.204**	-.187**	-.203**
Social Awareness	.176**	.372**	.298**	1	.297**	.196**	-.089	.074
Social Skills	.239**	.454**	.592**	.297**	1	-.011	-.216**	-.141*

p < 0.01 (**) and p < 0.05 (*)

According to these Pearson correlation results, among the four dimensions of emotional intelligence, self-management and social skills showed the strongest relationships with job security.

The scores of each indicator of emotional intelligence and job security were classified into three categories—low, medium, and high—using the K-Means clustering method in SPSS. The range of each category and the number of individuals in each group are presented in the table below.

Table 5

Classification of Respondents by Emotional Intelligence and Job Security

Variable	Category	Range	Number of Individuals
Emotional Intelligence (EI)	Low	54 ≤ EI ≤ 71	69
	Medium	72 ≤ EI ≤ 85	174
	High	86 ≤ EI ≤ 101	73
Job Security (JS)	Low	26 ≤ JS ≤ 34	96
	Medium	35 ≤ JS ≤ 40	110
	High	41 ≤ JS ≤ 47	110

Table 6

Cross-Classification of Respondents by Emotional Intelligence and Job Security

	High EI	Medium EI	Low EI
Low JS	19	47	30
Medium JS	11	67	32
High JS	43	60	7

The above table shows that most individuals with low emotional intelligence had low or medium job security, and only 7 people (10.14%) among them reported high job security.

Out of the 73 individuals with high emotional intelligence, 43 people (59%) also reported high job security. However, 19 people (26%) among them had low job security, representing approximately 6% of the total respondents.

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study set out to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and job security among employees in the construction sector, an industry known for its volatile working conditions and contract instability. The results revealed a significant positive correlation between EI and job security, confirming that employees with stronger emotional competencies perceive their work environment as more stable and secure. Among the subdimensions of EI, self-management and social skills emerged as the strongest predictors of job security. Cluster analysis further highlighted that employees with high EI levels were more likely to report high job security, while those with low EI were predominantly concentrated in the low- and medium-security categories. Notably, the protective influence of EI on job security was stronger among younger employees aged 18–30 years, indicating that emotional competencies play a particularly crucial role for early-career individuals navigating precarious employment conditions.

These findings align with the conceptual understanding of job security as a multifaceted construct encompassing both the threat of total job loss and the erosion of valued job features [1, 2]. When workers possess emotional resources such as self-awareness and self-regulation, they are better able to cope with ambiguity and reorganize their perceptions in the face of potential changes. Prior research has shown that employees who perceive high insecurity often experience psychological strain and decreased organizational commitment [4, 9], but the present results suggest that EI mitigates these adverse outcomes by equipping employees with adaptive coping mechanisms. This aligns with Jordan et al.'s [8] assertion that EI moderates emotional and behavioral reactions to insecurity, reducing defensive disengagement and fostering constructive adaptation.

Another important insight from this study is the differentiated impact of EI dimensions. Self-management, the capacity to regulate one's emotions and remain composed under stress, demonstrated the strongest correlation with job security. This confirms Alsulami et al.'s [13] findings in the construction industry that emotionally self-regulated workers experience lower

stress and maintain safer, more stable work behaviors. Social skills also showed a strong positive link to security perceptions, reflecting that the ability to build positive interpersonal relationships and supportive networks acts as a psychological buffer against the threat of instability [14, 17]. When employees can communicate effectively, seek assistance, and maintain healthy peer and supervisor relations, they are more likely to feel protected and valued, even when contracts are short term or project-based.

The stronger relationship observed between EI and job security among younger employees is another noteworthy outcome. Early-career professionals typically have limited tenure, weaker organizational ties, and lower resilience to job-related uncertainty [16]. High EI can compensate for this vulnerability by fostering confidence, adaptability, and proactive career behaviors. This supports the argument by García del Castillo-López and Pérez Domínguez [15] that EI enhances work climate and reduces stress, which is especially important for younger cohorts building professional identity. The results also complement research on psychological ownership, suggesting that emotionally intelligent young employees can feel more invested and secure within organizations despite the lack of permanent contracts [14].

Moreover, the study's findings contribute to the discussion on organizational culture and leadership as contextual moderators. Supportive climates and emotionally intelligent leadership have been shown to foster commitment and psychological safety [17, 18]. While our analysis focused on individual EI, the results suggest that employees' personal competencies interact with these contextual factors. For instance, the buffering effect of EI might be amplified in environments where supervisors value open communication and empathy, consistent with Setio's [19] and Ali's [20] arguments that EI contributes to motivation and self-efficacy, reducing burnout and stress. Organizations that couple individual EI development with supportive leadership may therefore achieve stronger job security perceptions across the workforce.

Finally, the results must be interpreted within the emerging technological and economic transformations affecting job stability. As noted by Ghazizadeh and colleagues [11, 12], technologies such as blockchain and automation are reshaping employment structures and heightening insecurity. In such disruptive contexts, EI becomes a strategic psychological resource enabling employees to handle change constructively. By anticipating and preparing for technological shifts, organizations can leverage EI training to minimize fear and resistance, thereby sustaining productivity and stability [16].

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research was conducted within the construction sector, which has unique characteristics such as high physical risk, project-based contracts, and cyclical employment patterns. These factors may limit the generalizability of the findings to other industries with more stable or service-oriented structures. Second, the use of self-report questionnaires introduces potential response biases, including social desirability and overestimation of emotional competencies. Although standardized and validated instruments such as Singh's EI measure [7] and Ashford's job security scale [2] were used, subjective reporting remains a concern. Third, the cross-sectional design prevents establishing causality. While the findings suggest that EI influences perceptions of job security, it is also possible that feeling secure enhances one's ability to regulate emotions over time. Longitudinal designs would be needed to confirm the directionality of these relationships. Additionally, demographic factors such as organizational level, education, and socio-economic background were not deeply explored but may influence both EI development and job security perceptions.

Future studies could expand this research by examining the interplay of emotional intelligence and job security across multiple industries, including knowledge-based sectors, healthcare, and technology-driven organizations. Comparative studies could reveal whether the buffering effect of EI is stronger in volatile environments or whether similar patterns appear in more stable employment contexts. Additionally, future research should adopt longitudinal or experimental designs to clarify causal pathways, tracking how EI training interventions influence job security perceptions over time and during organizational change. Exploring mediators and moderators such as psychological ownership, self-efficacy, and leadership style would deepen understanding of the mechanisms linking EI to security. Another promising avenue is to integrate digital transformation variables, as emerging technologies reshape job roles and demand new emotional capacities. Investigating how organizational foresight and change management strategies interact with individual EI to sustain employee security during technological disruption would offer valuable practical insight.

Organizations should consider integrating emotional intelligence development into their human resource strategies, particularly in industries with high employment volatility. Training programs that enhance self-management and social skills can help employees cope with uncertainty and maintain psychological stability. Managers and supervisors should also be trained to model emotionally intelligent behaviors, fostering a supportive climate that mitigates insecurity. Recruitment and promotion processes can incorporate EI assessment to ensure alignment between job demands and employees' emotional capacities. Additionally, organizations preparing for digital transformation should invest in foresight planning and change management programs that combine technical upskilling with EI enhancement, helping employees adapt proactively to evolving roles. By embedding these practices, companies can cultivate resilient, confident, and committed workforces even in unpredictable labor markets.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. Written consent was obtained from all participants in the study.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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