

Evaluating the Influence of Emotional Intelligence on Occupational Stress Regulation Among Healthcare Professionals in Kerala

V.V. Nanma ^{a*}, Dr.T. Amutha ^b

^{a*} *Research Scholar, Department of Business Administration,
Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India.
E-mail: 20phbap004@avinuty.ac.in, Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-1742-2015>*

^b *Assistant Professor (SG), Department of Business Administration,
Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India.
E-mail: amutha_mba@avinuty.ac.in, Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4242-4069>*

Abstract

Nurses operating in medical establishments often have to deal with high levels of workload, emotional labor, shifts, interpersonal issues, and decision-making processes, thus necessitating occupational stress management strategies. Emotional Intelligence (EI) can offer the emotional and interpersonal skills needed by nurses to manage work-related stresses. Nevertheless, there has been little research done on the effect of EI dimensions on stress management by nurses in Kerala. The study used a quantitative research methodology for investigating the impact of five different EI constructs – self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills – on stress management among nurses in medical institutions in the state of Kerala. The primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire from 100 nurses during the period of October-December 2024. Internal consistency of the scale used for measuring the variables showed an acceptable value of Cronbach's alpha, which was 0.776. The KMO value, which is 0.791, shows that sampling is adequate. There were positive correlations between stress management and each of the five dimensions of EI. The highest correlation was established for motivation ($r = 0.714$), followed by empathy ($r = 0.697$), self-awareness ($r = 0.696$), social skills ($r = 0.646$), and self-regulation ($r = 0.642$). There was strong explanatory power of the dependent variable by the multiple regression model ($R = 0.765$; $R^2 = 0.663$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.654$). This means that the five dimensions of emotional intelligence accounted for 66.3% of the variability in stress management. Social skills were the most influential predictors ($\beta = 0.490$), followed by motivation ($\beta = 0.287$) and self-awareness ($\beta = 0.232$). This study reveals that EI is a significant predictor in determining the stress management abilities of nurses. EI training programs, especially in social skills, motivation, and self-awareness, could be of great value in nurse education.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Stress Management, Nurses, Occupational Stress, Healthcare Professionals, Social Skills, Kerala.

Introduction

Healthcare practitioners, especially nurses, operate in extremely challenging settings involving constant emotion management, decision-making, communication skills, and interaction with patients. Such challenges at work may lead to stress, dissatisfaction at work, burnout, and low well-being. Emotional Intelligence (EI) is an essential personal skill that allows people to identify, understand, manage, and react adequately to one's emotions as well as those of other people. In nursing practice, such skills help communicate effectively, establish good interpersonal relationships, make decisions, and cope with stressful working conditions.

The importance of this study is in tackling stress in nurses in the particular setting of the healthcare sector in Kerala. Nurses who work in the medical institution may have to face challenges like heavy workload, shift work, varying needs of patients, scarcity of resources, and emotional exchanges. Knowledge of the emotional skills needed to manage stress could be of great use in the nursing profession, hospital administration, professional development, and nursing education (Surendran & Nikhil, 2026). While emotional intelligence has gotten much focus concerning stress, coping, well-being, and job outcomes, little effort has been put into exploring its contributions to the management of stress among nurses in Kerala.

The most important aspect of this paper is the empirical investigation of five components of emotional intelligence, including self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, as well as their association with the ability of nurses to manage stress. This paper also explores their collective predictive value and specifies the components of EI that have the greatest predictive value regarding stress management.

The rest of the structure is as follows: Section 2 includes a literature review. Section 3 includes the conceptual model, research problem, research objectives, and hypotheses. Section 4 covers the research methodology. Section 5 describes the data analysis and empirical findings. Implications, limitations, and future directions are provided in Section 6. Section 7 concludes the study.

Literature Review

Increasingly, emotional intelligence (EI) has been seen as an essential personal resource for dealing with occupational stress and ensuring psychological well-being among healthcare workers. There have been studies that show that EI helps people to identify, regulate, and cope with emotions, which is especially important in the context of emotionally challenging workplace conditions such as workload, interpersonal relations, and emotionally challenging conditions (Jacob et al., 2026; Ravi et al., 2021; Mikolajczak et al., 2007). The studies conducted with nurses and other healthcare professionals have shown the relevance of EI to stress management, resilience, and psychological well-being (Malayil et al., 2024; Devaraj et al., 2024).

Further studies carried out among nursing students and healthcare professionals have revealed that individuals with high EI have better coping skills and lower levels of stress perception (Thundiparampil et al., 2023; Parvathy & Smitha, 2020). In addition, research carried out among physicians has also investigated the role of EI in relation to quality of life and work performance issues (Rana et al., 2022; Manoharan et al., 2022). Recent developments have taken the study of EI into issues of well-being, job satisfaction, leadership and positive workplace outcomes (Salim & Muraleedharan, 2026). The above findings reveal that EI is not a single issue of psychology but can lead to many occupational outcomes.

In addition, the literature shows that the effects of stress can be affected by the larger organizational context as well as personal variables. Both emotional labor and burnout have been related to job satisfaction among nurses, and work-life balance has been related to employee wellbeing (Kumar & Velmurugan, 2025; Kamboj et al., 2025; Soumyaja et al., 2022). The findings from studies of stress perception and resilience in the healthcare professions further confirm the necessity of looking at EI within the context of stress-related psychological resources (Srinivasan et al., 2025; Krishna, 2025; Duică et al., 2024). There is additional evidence from research on students and other occupational groups as well (Thomas & Reyes, 2024; Neethu & Lokesh, 2021; Jo et al., 2025).

As a whole, the literature has found a positive relationship between EI and coping and well-being outcomes, as well as stress management. On the other hand, it should be noted that there is an insufficient number of works that have concurrently analyzed the contribution of five specific EI dimensions – namely, self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills in stress management of nurses who work in the medical organizations in Kerala. Most of the current studies concentrate either on students, doctors, or the wider population of healthcare workers, and even the well-being or job satisfaction is discussed in these studies.

Conceptual Model

The conceptual model (Fig 1) discusses the role played by the elements of Emotional Intelligence (EI) in stress management among nurses in medical colleges in Kerala. The independent variables in the model are the five basic components of EI, namely self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Self-awareness also allows nurses to realize and comprehend their feelings, which helps them understand the causes of stress. Self-regulation can assist individuals in successfully managing their emotions and maintaining adaptive and stable states in conditions of stress. Motivation gives the strength to tackle professional and personal ambitions, especially during challenging times, and empathy increases emotional fortitude by building a sense of what other people are experiencing. Social skills can be used to build a good relationship, promote teamwork, and solve conflicts, which are significant in managing stress at the workplace.

The dependent variable in the model is the ability of nurses to manage and mitigate work-related stress (Stress management), which is the capacity to cope with stress. According to the theory, the impact of all EI variables on stress management is direct and positive, and nurses can stay emotionally stable and achieve good performance. In addition, the integration of different EI aspects leads to a complex way of coping with stress.

The model provides a systematic method of studying the effects of improving emotional intelligence in enabling nurses to easily manage stress, which subsequently results in higher productivity, job satisfaction, and overall well-being in the challenging environment in Kerala Medical College.

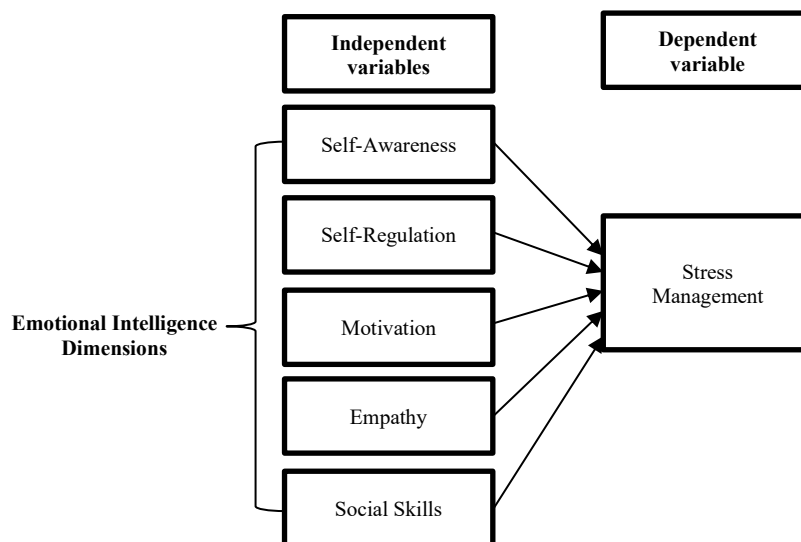


Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework of Emotional Intelligence and Stress Management among Nurses

Research Problem

In addition, there are no studies conducted on the relationships between the various aspects of EI and the total impact it has on stress management. The awareness of these connections is essential to crafting specific interventions and training of nurses to increase their emotional stability, job satisfaction, and general quality of life. This may be a pertinent issue, but it has not been empirically studied in medical institutions in Kerala. The proposed research will fill this gap by analyzing the impact of the Emotional Intelligence dimensions on stress coping among nurses, the relationships that follow, and the benefits that will be brought by these relationships.

The researcher has formulated the following research questions that will address the key characteristics of the study, based on the discussion of the problem.

Research question: How do Emotional Intelligence factors (self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills) relate to stress management among nurses in Kerala medical colleges?

What are the associations of the Emotional Intelligence aspects, and how can they assist in good stress management in nursing?

The question is, what are the advantages of applying Emotional Intelligence to stress management in nurses of medical colleges in Kerala?

Objectives

1. To discuss how the dimensions of Emotional Intelligence affect the stress management of nurses in the Indian medical colleges in Kerala.
2. To evaluate the interdependencies among Emotional Intelligence dimensions and stress management, and determine the benefits coming out of such interdependencies.

Hypotheses of the Study

According to the growing complexity and demands of the nursing career, stress management has come to form an important research area, particularly in the most pressure-related setting like medical colleges. Emotional Intelligence (EI) has emerged as an exciting indicator of the manner in which people perceive, process, and respond to stress. Increased levels of Emotional Intelligence enable nurses to better cope with emotional issues, have resilience, and maintain positive relationships, which is essential in the management of stress.

In this paper, the researcher aims to explain the connection between the five main aspects of Emotional Intelligence self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills and stress management among nurses in medical institutions in Kerala. The hypothesis is that all dimensions of EI are positively related to stress management because each of the above-mentioned dimensions helps nurses to prevail over work-related problems and emotional pressure. The study also analyzes the combined effect of the dimensions through multiple regression and identifies the most significant predictors of stress management.

These assumptions are based on the theory that Emotional Intelligence increases levels of emotional control, social life, and decision-making abilities, which translate to the effective management of stress. By examining these associations in an experimental manner, the study will probably produce pertinent results that can enhance stress control interventions among the nurses.

H1: There is a very strong positive correlation between self-awareness and stress management among nurses.

H2: Self-regulation and stress management do not show a positive significant relationship among nurses.

H3: The relationship between motivation and stress management among nurses is found to be significant and positive.

H4: Nurses possess a positive relationship of high strength between empathy and stress management.

H5: Social skills and stress management of nurses are associated positively and strongly

H6: The dimensions of EI (self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills) have a significant effect on stress management among nurses when considered together

Research Methodology

Research Design

The research design used in this study was the quantitative research design with a descriptive analytical approach that sought to establish the link between emotional intelligence and stress management among nurses in medical organizations in Kerala. This is because the research sought to measure the five components of emotional intelligence, which include self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, and establish their connection with stress management among nurses.

Population and Sample

This study was carried out on nurses who are employed in medical institutions/colleges in Kerala. The sample comprised 100 nurses in total. The data collection process took place from October to December 2024. The sample comprised nurses having various degrees of educational background, years of professional experience, and work shifts.

Research Instrument

The primary data were obtained through a questionnaire that was structured specifically to measure the five factors of emotional intelligence and stress management ability of the nurses. Self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills served as the independent variables, whereas stress management was the dependent variable. The questionnaire comprised 25 questions.

Reliability of the Instrument

Internal consistency of the survey was calculated using Cronbach's alpha. The Cronbach alpha coefficient value was found to be 0.776 for 25 items. This shows that the reliability of the measurement items is acceptable.

Validity and Sampling Adequacy

The sampling adequacy of the data for factor analysis was investigated using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistic as well as Bartlett's test of sphericity. The obtained value of KMO was 0.791, suggesting the adequacy of sampling for factor analysis. Unfortunately, the present manuscript lacks information regarding the value of chi-square, degrees of freedom, and p-value obtained from Bartlett's test.

Data Collection Procedure

The data were obtained from 100 nurses in the period between October and December 2024 using the structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was then analyzed in terms of its reliability and validity as a preliminary analysis.

Variables of the Study

Table 1: Variables and Dimensions of the Study

Variable	Role	Dimensions
Emotional Intelligence	Independent variable	Self-awareness, Self-regulation, Motivation, Empathy, Social Skills
Stress Management	Dependent variable	Overall ability to cope with/manage occupational stress

Table 1 displays the research variables and their respective functions. Emotional Intelligence is considered the independent variable and includes self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. The dependent variable is stress management, which is the ability of nurses to cope with stress at work.

Statistical Techniques

Analysis of the gathered data included the use of descriptive analysis, correlation analysis, and regression analysis. Descriptive analysis was used for describing the demographics of the respondents and the distribution of stress and levels of emotional intelligence. Pearson's correlation analysis was used to determine whether there is a relationship and the nature of such a relationship between each emotional intelligence dimension and stress management. Then multiple regression analysis was used to determine the collective predictive power of the five emotional intelligence dimensions and to identify the dimensions that made the strongest independent contribution to stress management.

According to the regression results, R was 0.765, R^2 was 0.663, and the adjusted R^2 value was 0.654, meaning that the five EI factors as a whole accounted for 66.3% of the variance in stress management among the subjects.

Analysis and Results

Descriptive Statistics

The current study's demographic profile of respondents gives an informational account of what kind of nurses are in medical colleges in Kerala and the degree of emotional intelligence of the nurses. The sample consisted of a balanced gender distribution (58 percent females and 42 percent males), which implied that the nurses of the study were well-balanced in a sensible manner as well. The majority of the nurses (45 percent) were between 26 and 35 years of age, followed by 30-45, 15-25, and 10-46. This means that the sample primarily consisted of relatively young nurses, and a large percentage of them were early in their careers.

Concerning the education level, the figures showed that 50 percent of the nurses possessed undergraduate degrees, a third of them had gone through postgraduate coursework, and a fifth had done diplomas. This implies that the sample is highly educated, with the majority being higher educated, implying the professional standard of nursing in the medical colleges of Kerala. In terms of job experience, 40 percent of the respondents had 1 to 5 years of experience, 35 percent had 6 to 10 years, 15 percent had 11 to 15 years, and 10 percent had more than 15 years. This distribution shows that most of the nurses in the sample are comparatively young practitioners with some experience in the field, but there are also more experienced nurses.

Regarding work shifts, one out of five nurses reported rotating shifts, one out of three reported day shifts, and one out of four reported night shifts. As the research indicates, many of the nurses in medical colleges of Kerala are experiencing the issue of shift work, which, potentially, can affect their stress levels and emotional intelligence in coping with stress. The prevalence rate of stress among nurses showed that 40% reported high daily stress, 35% were

moderately stressed, 15% were low in stress, and the remaining 10% were not regularly stressed. In this report, the incidence of stress in the nursing profession is demonstrated at the medical colleges in Kerala.

Regarding emotional intelligence, 45 percent of the nurses reported being very emotional, 35 percent in the moderate category, and 20 percent poor. This distribution shows a range of EI awareness, with a considerable percentage of nurses having high results on emotional intelligence, which may influence their coping ability with the stress of the experience. These findings indicate that the demographics of nurses in medical facilities in Kerala are diverse and that emotional intelligence is needed to deal with stress. The dispersion of education, work, and experience highlights the necessity of personalized training programs in emotional intelligence that would address the needs of nurses.

Correlation Analysis

Table 2: Correlation Analysis

Sl. No.	Hypotheses	Coefficient of Correlation	Interpretation
1	H1: There is a significant positive correlation between self-awareness and stress management among nurses.	0.696	Moderate positive correlation
2	H2: There is a significant positive correlation between self-regulation and stress management among nurses.	0.642	Moderate positive correlation
3	H3: There is a significant positive correlation between motivation and stress management among nurses.	0.714	Moderate positive correlation
4	H4: There is a significant positive correlation between empathy and stress management among nurses.	0.697	Moderate positive correlation
5	H5: There is a significant positive correlation between social skills and stress management among nurses.	0.646	Moderate positive correlation

In the correlation study (Table 2), all five categories of emotional intelligence — self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills — are moderately positively correlated with stress management. The best correlation was with motivation, which proved its relevance in increasing stress resistance in nurses. These findings demonstrate the topicality of integrating emotional intelligence training into the professional development programs of nurses, and the emphasis should be on the practical significance of emotional skills in order to decrease work-related stress.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Table 3: Emotional Intelligence Dimensions and Stress Management

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.765 ^a	.663	.654	2.35229

a. Predictors: (Constant), Self-Awareness, Self-Regulation, Motivation, Empathy, And Social Skills

Source: Survey Data

The regression model (Table 3) depicts that the R-squared of 0.663 implies that 66.3 percent of the variance in stress management of nurses can be attributed to the predictor variables: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. The adjusted R-square (0.654) shows that the model is reliable and generalizable, meaning that the model fits the data well.

Table 4: Coefficients: Emotional Intelligence Dimensions and Stress Management

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.347	1.036		4.218	.000
	Self-Regulation	-.078	.056	-.104	-1.443	.146
	Self-Awareness	.268	.056	.232	4.171	.000
	Motivation	.345	.091	.287	4.566	.000
	Empathy	0.030	.026	0.026	0.360	.002
	Social Skills	.595	.065	.490	9.471	.000

Source: Survey Data

The regression coefficients (Table 4) refer to the various effects of each of the EI dimensions on stress management. The relationship between self-regulation and stress management is negative and statistically insignificant, which means that the two variables have a low independent effect. Self-awareness positively and significantly relates to stress management since the stress management level rises with the level of self-awareness, as shown by its standardized coefficient of 0.232. Similarly, motivation has a positive and significant influence on stress, and the standardized coefficient is 0.287, which is necessary to deal with stress.

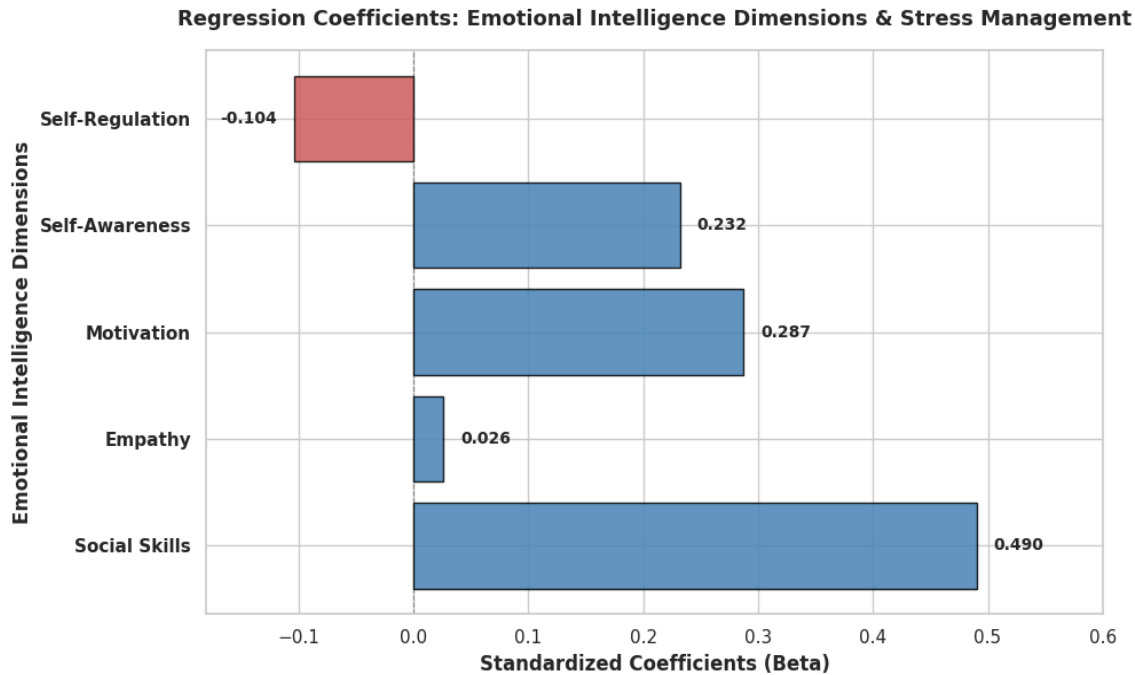


Fig. 2: Standardized Regression Coefficients of Emotional Intelligence Dimensions on Stress Management

Fig 2 shows the standardized regression coefficients (β) for all five emotional intelligence components on stress management. Social Skills ($\beta = 0.490$) has the highest positive influence, followed by motivation ($\beta = 0.287$) and self-awareness ($\beta = 0.232$). There is a low positive influence of empathy ($\beta = 0.026$), while there is negative influence of self-regulation ($\beta = -0.104$).

Empathy is indirectly related to stress management yet again the correlation is highly significant and stands out to demonstrate that empathy helps but not as much as the rest of the dimensions do. Social skills had the best and most positive correlation, and the standardised coefficient is 0.490. This shows that interpersonal skills are important in managing the stress at workplace, especially, in a stressing career such as nursing.

Discussion

These results indicate that there is an important relationship between emotional intelligence and stress management in nurses working at healthcare centers in Kerala. The five dimensions of emotional intelligence had a positive relationship with stress management, where motivation had the highest relationship ($r = 0.714$). The multiple regression analysis revealed that all the five dimensions were able to account for 66.3% of the variance in stress management ($R^2 = 0.663$). Social skills was the best predictor ($\beta = 0.490$), followed by motivation ($\beta = 0.287$) and self-awareness ($\beta = 0.232$).

Implications for clinical practice in nursing and hospital administration can be drawn from the study results. In particular, the EI improvement program can be designed based on areas such as interpersonal communication, motivation, emotional awareness, teamwork, and conflict resolution skills. The stress-management aspects can be incorporated in nursing education to improve nurses' resilience and capacity to cope with stress.

Nonetheless, there are several limitations in this study: a relatively small sample size (100 nurses), a local geographical limitation (Kerala region), and the cross-sectional design involving the use of a self-administered questionnaire. There is not enough information about sampling techniques and instrument development in this article. Future research

should consider larger and more varied sample size, longitudinal study design, reliable measuring tool, and comparison of results between different hospitals and geographical locations.

Conclusion

The current study explored the effect of emotional intelligence (EI) on the management of occupational stress among healthcare workers with special emphasis on nurses in Kerala. It can be seen from the findings of the study that there exists a significant association between EI and the capacity of the nurses to manage occupational stress. Among all five dimensions of EI, self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, all the dimensions had positive correlations with stress management. However, among these dimensions, the highest correlation was found with motivation ($r = 0.714$), empathy ($r = 0.697$), self-awareness ($r = 0.696$), social skills ($r = 0.646$), and self-regulation ($r = 0.642$).

From the multiple regression analysis, the predictive power of the model was further evidenced by $R = 0.765$, $R^2 = 0.663$, and adjusted $R^2 = 0.654$, implying that all the EI dimensions used in the study were able to explain about 66.3% of the variance in stress management. Among the variables analyzed, social skills ($\beta = 0.490$) proved to be the best predictor variable, followed by motivation ($\beta = 0.287$) and self-awareness ($\beta = 0.232$). On the other hand, self-regulation was shown to have a negative but non-significant coefficient ($\beta = -0.104$, $p = 0.146$).

In summary, the results show that there is an urgent need for developing the EI skills among nurses through training programs. In future studies, there will be a need to conduct longitudinal investigations using representative samples in order to test whether the development of EI skills may improve the ability to cope with occupational stress.

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