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Article

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International Journal of Management and Economics

Provided in Cooperation with:

SGH Warsaw School of Economics, Warsaw

Suggested Citation: Sandroto, Christine Winstinindah; Fransiska, Jessica (2021) : The importance of emotional intelligence for the sales associates profession as a mediation between job stress and job satisfaction, International Journal of Management and Economics, ISSN 2543-5361, Sciendo, Warsaw, Vol. 57, Iss. 4, pp. 331-342,
<https://doi.org/10.2478/ijme-2021-0012>

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/309746>

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Empirical Paper

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The importance of emotional intelligence for the sales associates profession as a mediation between job stress and job satisfaction

<https://doi.org/10.2478/ijme-2021-0012>

Received: October 5, 2020; Accepted: May 26, 2021

Abstract: Sales associates need emotional intelligence (EI) in dealing with job stress and perceived job satisfaction. So far, there has been no research that explains the effect of job stress on job satisfaction with EI as a mediating variable in the sales associate profession. This study examines EI's role in managing job stress allows sales associates to achieve job satisfaction. The population in this study is comprised of sales associates in Jakarta-Indonesia, who work in malls that target middle to upper-class level customers, with a sample size of 100 respondents. The sampling technique used was accidental sampling; the analysis uses the simple mediation model with the macro process through SPSS process 22.0 for Windows using ordinary least squares and logistic regression path analysis modeling. The finding reveals that the higher the level of EI, the stronger the extent to which the relationship between job stress and job satisfaction is mediated.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, job satisfaction, job stress, sales associate

JEL Classification: D23, L84, M53, O15

1 Introduction

Job satisfaction is a condition that organizations must strive for because it affects organizational output, such as turnover intention, absenteeism, work performance, and commitment [Masihabadi et al., 2015; Esmaeilifar et al., 2020]. Job satisfaction is positively related to life satisfaction, good compliance with organizations' goals [Lambert et al., 2005; Lambert et al., 2007], and quality of service [Lee, 2018]. Job satisfaction is an essential criterion for an organization and its employees [Masihabadi et al., 2015; Yeh and Hsieh, 2017]. Job satisfaction is reflected in employees' reactions to situations and conditions at work [Yeh and Hsieh, 2017]. The dimensions of job satisfaction are the job itself, relationships with superiors, relationships with coworkers, working conditions, rewards, and recognition [Sharma, 2017].

Many factors determine job satisfaction. The work itself, personality, attitudes, and values affect job satisfaction, but job satisfaction itself has the most significant influence on job satisfaction [Griffin et al., 2017]. Lee [2018] suggests that training in emotional intelligence (EI) skills can increase job satisfaction. Previous studies stated the impact of job stress on job satisfaction. Job stress will lead to low job satisfaction [e.g., Masibahadi et al., 2015; Beason, 2015; Uysal, 2019; Jin and Lee, 2019; Esmaeilifar et al., 2020].

Many studies declare that EI correlates with other variables. Some of them are as follows: Guy & Lee [2015], examines how EI mediates emotional labor; Knezevic et al. [2021], research EI and job satisfaction as predictors of emotional labor; Lu et al. [2020] discuss the dynamic role of EI on the relationship between emotional labor and job satisfaction; Lee [2018] stated how EI relates to job satisfaction and burnout. Lee et al. [2020] researched EI, job satisfaction, emotional exhaustion, and subjective well-being; Hur et al. [2014] discuss the mediating

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effect of EI and the role of chronological age and work experience on emotional labor; Delpechitre and Beeler [2018], write about the impact of EI on salespersons' influence on emotional labor strategies and customer outcomes, and many others.

Research on EI has also been conducted in professions and work fields, including the following: salespersons [Delpechitre and Beeler, 2018], public service [Guy and Lee, 2015; Lee, 2018; Lu et al., 2020], travel agencies [Knezevic et al., 2021], elementary school English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers [Kang, 2020], high school athletic directors [Lee et al., 2020], HR professionals [Santos et al., 2015], team members [Liu and Liu, 2013], leaders in public human service [Ruestow, 2008] and tourism [Prentice et al., 2020], attorneys [Beason, 2015], and employed persons [Peters, 2016]. This research explains that there are many organizational and professional fields where employees need EI to succeed.

A salesperson's EI is the ability to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions to facilitate interaction with customers [Delpechitre and Beeler, 2018]. A job as a sales associate is synonymous with a salesperson who works explicitly in malls and serves customers. Sometimes there is a stereotype that salespeople are trying to solicit customers dishonestly by providing inaccurate information about products or services and excessive information about advantages that are not in conformity with reality [Delpechitre and Beeler, 2018]. This stereotype needs to be changed, wherein EI is the basis for sales success [Delpechitre and Beeler, 2018]. The authors argue that EI is needed for salespeople in general and specifically for sales associates. This argument supports the notion that every job that places employees who must relate to others requires managing emotions [Guy and Lee, 2015]. Of course, jobs held by sales associates require them to relate to people, especially customers; every day needs emotional management. The job and duties of a sales associate may vary in each company. However, in general, he/she represents the company and assists customers with tailoring customer needs and finding the right product or service. As the company representative who is face-to-face with customers, sales associates are responsible for handling each customer and answering all customer questions regarding the products and services. A sales associate must continuously update their knowledge of products, services, and company policies to serve customers optimally.

Accompanying customers in the store and serving customers when making transactions finally make customers to undergo a pleasant and satisfying shopping experience. Handling complaints is an integral part of the sales associate's job. Sales associate service starts with welcoming the customer the first time they step into the store, then helping the customer by answering any questions they have about the purchase they want to make. They are also in charge of assisting customers with item exchanges, refunds, and resolving other common complaints.

So far, there is no previous study that explains the effect of job stress on job satisfaction with EI as a mediating variable in the sales associate profession. Peters [2016] has tested the relationship between job stress and job satisfaction with EI and organizational citizenship behavior as mediating variables. He found that job stress has no negative effect on job satisfaction, and EI and organizational citizenship behavior partially mediate the relationship between job stress and job satisfaction. A stressful sales associate's job can affect job satisfaction, but that relationship should be mediated by EI.

The research purpose is: Does EI mediate the effect of job stress on job satisfaction of sales associates?

2 Literature review

2.1 Job stress on job satisfaction

Rosen and Hochwarter [2014] define job stress as stress related to one's job. Five stressors that can cause significant job stress include work-home conflict, role ambiguity, work overload, privacy invasion, and job insecurity [Moore, 2000; Rutner et al., 2008; Ayyagari et al., 2011]. Major personal factors of job stress are exhaustion, burnout, cynicism, self-doubt, and lack of work knowledge. Environmental factors of job stress are job demands, lack of support, organizational factors, autonomy, role ambiguity, role conflict workload, and interpersonal conflict [Beason, 2015].

Job satisfaction is defined as an emotional or affective reaction to a job [Janssen, 2001; Morris and Venkatesh, 2010] or individual attitudes about their job [Avolio et al., 2004; Chen et al., 2017]. Factors that affect job satisfaction are the job itself, salary or wages, supervision, promotion opportunities, and coworkers [Luthans, 2006; Robbins and Judge, 2017]. Luthans [2006] also stated that an emotional response to a job situation is called job satisfaction, and it is often determined by how well results meet expectations. Suppose organizational members feel job dissatisfaction. In that case, they will have a negative attitude toward work, supervisors, and coworkers; but, if they feel they are treated well and are paid reasonably, they tend to have positive attitudes toward work. Job satisfaction represents some attitudes that relate to one another, which are the essential characteristics of the job about which people responded. According to Robbins and Judge [2017], some of the consequences of dissatisfied employees are exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect.

Aluculesei et al. [2015] stated that job stress affects both employees and management, and job stress is an essential determinant of employee's job satisfaction. Job stress can affect job satisfaction. The correlation between job stress and job satisfaction is negative [Fairbrother and Warn, 2003]; on the other hand, Ahsan [2009] shows that the relationship between work pressure and job satisfaction is negative. Previous research found that increases in job stress tend to decrease job satisfaction [Beason, 2015]. The existence of job stress will reduce job satisfaction [Lambert and Paoline, 2010]. Several other studies have also stated that job stress is related to job satisfaction [Bakker and Demerouti, 2007; Morris and Venkatesh, 2010]. Masihabadi et al. [2015] argued that job stress has a negative effect on organizational commitment and job satisfaction, and through organizational commitment, job stress has a negative effect on job satisfaction.

2.2 EI and job stress

The ability to perceive, access, and generate emotions to assist thought, understand emotions, and reflectively regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth is the definition of EI [Mayer and Salovey, 1997]. EI can be explained as someone's ability to recognize and manipulate emotional information and understand to manage self and others [Lopes, 2016].

Emotion is believed to perform many vital functions, such as prioritizing incoming information, focusing attention on matters of immediate concern, and motivating individuals to take the necessary actions. EI is not determined at birth [Goleman, 1995]. The five domains of EI are self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, social skills, and empathy. It is self-awareness if someone can recognize emotions when they occur. Self-awareness means being alert to moods or thoughts about moods or not getting lost in emotions. Self-awareness is a quality characterizing a person who can realize emotions or self-awareness of emotions and is not blind to his/her own emotions, including labeling each emotion felt appropriate. Recognizing these emotions or self-awareness of emotions is the basis of EI. Self-regulation; someone who can regulate themselves can also manage and express emotions. Self-motivation; organizing emotions is very closely related to self-motivation and being creative. People who can control their emotions are the foundation of success in all areas. Self-motivated people tend to be more productive and effective at whatever they do. Empathy is feeling what other people feel, understanding their perspectives, and being in harmony with various people. People who have empathy can pick up on hidden social signals, realizing what other people need or want. Such persons are suitable for nursing, teaching, sales, and management jobs. Social skill places emphasis on the premise that people who are capable of social relationships are emotionally intelligent. Emotionally intelligent people will build relationships with other people; they can enjoy friendship with sincerity. These qualities mark people who excel in real life and the workplace: stars and those whose intimate relationships flourish. These are also the hallmarks of compassion, altruism, character, and self-discipline – essential capacities needed in society. EI is not determined at birth [Goleman, 1995].

EI can be described in a "Four-pronged Model" [Mayer et al., 2004]: Branch 1 reflects the perception of emotions and involves the capacity to recognize emotions in others' facial expressions and body postures. Branch 2 demonstrates the capacity of emotions to influence thinking. Branch 3 reflects the capacity to analyze emotions, appreciate the tendencies over time, and understand their results. Branch 4 involves managing emotions (as an aspect of personality). Within each branch lies a range of skills ranging from

simpler to more sophisticated. People with fair operational use of EI will be more effective thinkers than those with low usage.

Controlling emotions when things get stressful can be a challenge. The presence of stress in everyday life compromises our ability to regulate emotions effectively. Indeed, negative influence suggests playing a critical role in our failure to exercise self-regulatory control over our thoughts and behavior. However, the direct relationship between physiological stress response and cognitive control of emotions had not been studied. In that study, we attempted to explore how cognitive regulation of emotions is affected by acute stress induction [Otto et al., 2013]. Nikolaou and Tsaousis [2002] and Burnett and Pettijohn [2015] found that EI has a negative effect on job stress. This study explains that employees who can manage their emotions well tend to have a low level of work stress. Higher EI can improve leadership skills and management performance [Van Wart, 2010]. Wisker and Poulis [2014] use four dimensions of EI: self-emotional appraisal, use of emotion, regulation of emotion, and other's emotional appraisal. The results showed that the four dimensions were positively related to adaptive selling behavior, but only the other's emotional appraisal positively correlates with sales performance.

2.3 EI and job satisfaction

Research conducted by Seyal and Afzaal [2013] shows that all EI dimensions affect job satisfaction. EI can create pleasure in the workplace, influence efficient management and job satisfaction, and contribute to emotional development. Ealias and George [2012]; Rezvani et al. [2016]; and Lopez and Extremera [2017] have studied and also shown that EI has a positive effect on job satisfaction. Employees who have high EI are aware and can control emotions well in the workplace and affect job satisfaction. EI is vital for emotional labor and job satisfaction [Knezevic et al., 2021]. EI positively correlates with job satisfaction, creativity, and job performance [Lassk and Shepherd, 2013].

In research conducted by Seyal and Afzaal [2013], it is stated that the dimensions of EI affect job satisfaction. EI is considered a strong predictor of job satisfaction. Besides, Shooshtarian et al. [2013] found a relationship between EI and employee performance and job satisfaction. Employees with EI and high emotional control abilities will produce high performance and job satisfaction because they are good at assessing and regulating their emotions and aware that emotions affect a person's behavior and work results.

Not all dimensions of EI affect job satisfaction, but only self-awareness, which is important in enhancing job satisfaction. In this case, emotional self-awareness contributes to job satisfaction with public service workers [Guy and Lee, 2015].

2.4 EI, job stress, and job satisfaction

In the workplace, EI is seen more as an ability and not as a personality trait [Guy and Lee, 2015]. Individuals' ability to perceive, understand, and express emotions coupled with the ability to generate and regulate feelings must be involved in optimizing the application of EI [Salovey and Mayer, 1990; Mayer and Salovey, 1997].

Peters [2016] examines the relationship between job stress and job satisfaction, with EI and organizational citizenship behavior as mediating variables. Data processed with Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modeling PLS-SEM found that job stress had no negative impact on job satisfaction, but EI and organizational citizenship behavior partially mediated.

The mediation analysis stage is to introduce EI into the model as a mediating variable. The mediation analysis results show that job satisfaction and EI decrease when work pressure increases, while job satisfaction increases when EI is higher. Based on the above, the hypothesis put forward is as follows:

Hypothesis: The higher the level of EI, the stronger the extent to which the relationship between job stress and job satisfaction is mediated.

3 Methods

3.1 Participants

Jakarta is the capital city of Indonesia. Jakarta in 2019: the population was 10,557,810 inhabitants (rate of growth is 1.19% per year), and the population density was 15,900 people each km². Total number of economically active people amounted to 5,157,878; provincial minimum wages and inflation amounted to 3,940,973 rupiahs and 3.23%, respectively. The human development index (HDI) was 80.76% and still ranked the highest HDI in Indonesia's provinces. [Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi DKI Jakarta, 2020].

The duties and responsibilities of a job as a sales associate have become factors that trigger stress. Sales associates are required to be able to meet store sales targets and individual sales targets. Through an interview session with several sales associates, the researchers found an overview of a store's target. When an outlet has a sales target of 500,000,000 rupiahs per month and five sales associates in the store, each sales associate has a sales target of 100,000,000 rupiahs per month. The outlet also has an average transaction unit of three quantities per bill, which means that sales associates must sell at least three products in one transaction or one account. We conclude intense competition between sales associates, even in the same store, to achieve individual sales targets.

This study's sampling method is non-probability sampling, which is that not all subjects have an equal opportunity to be chosen as a sample [Kerlinger and Howard, 2000]. The sampling technique used was accidental/convenient sampling. This technique is used because researchers do not know with certainty the number of populations accurately.

Data collection was carried out by distributing questionnaires to respondents in February–March 2020. The questionnaires were distributed to respondents who worked as sales associates in malls targeting middle to upper-level customers in downtown Jakarta. Investigators directly contact sales associates outside of working hours or during breaks and ask their willingness to participate in this survey voluntarily, and the confidentiality of data is guaranteed. Those who were selected as respondents were asked to fill out a complete questionnaire accompanied by the investigator. This process begins with the investigator explaining the purpose of this study, asking the respondent's willingness to voluntarily be involved in the research, explaining how to fill out the questionnaire, and explaining the meaning of the statement if there are items that the respondent does not understand. If there are sales associates who, after reading the items in the questionnaire, change their minds and object to participating, they can return the questionnaire to the investigators. The questionnaire distributed by the author contains questions equipped with answers in the form of a Likert scale. This study distributed questionnaires to 123 respondents, but 23 were excluded because of incomplete answers. The proportion of valid answers was, therefore, $100/123 = 81.3\%$.

Demographic analysis of the sample shows that 56% are male and 44% female. Age was in the following range: between 21 years and 25 years, 64%; less than 20 years old, 21%; and the rest are between 26 years and 30 years old. Education: 84% are undergraduate degrees, and others are diploma and senior high school. Marital status: 94% married and do not have children. Meanwhile, monthly revenue is 54%, ranging from 3 million to 5 million rupiahs (1 IDR equal about 0.000068 USD).

3.2 Instrument

The instrument used to measure EI, job stress, and job satisfaction in this study is a questionnaire. The questionnaire used is a valid and reliable instrument because it has been tested in previous studies. The questionnaire, which is originally in English, is translated into Indonesian to be understood well by respondents. The questionnaire consists of four parts. The first part covers socio-demographic characteristics. The second part is the questionnaire of EI. The third part is the job stress questionnaire, and the fourth part is the job satisfaction questionnaire. The questionnaire distributed contains questions equipped with answers, using a Likert scale 1–6, from strongly disagree (1) to agree strongly (6).

Reasoning that takes into account emotions is mentioned as EI [Mayer and Geher, 1996]. Measurement of EI variables adapted from EI questionnaire [Leadership Toolkit: (EI) Emotional Intelligence

Questionnaire, [2019]], consists of five dimensions, namely self-awareness, motivating oneself, managing emotions, social skills and, empathy, with a total of 16 items. Example of items: Soon, I realize when I lose my temper, I understand why my actions sometimes can offend others, I am good at reconciling differences with others, etc. The validity and reliability test results for EI show that the scale used was valid and reliable (correlation coefficient EI ranging from 0.332 to 0.597, significant at $\alpha = 0.05$; Cronbach's alpha EI coefficient = 0.736).

The job stress variables referred to in this study include five dimensions that can cause job stress: work-home conflict, work overload, invasion of privacy, role ambiguity, and job insecurity [Peters, 2016]. Measurement of job stress variables is made using instruments adapted by Peters [2016], consisting of 18 items. Examples of items: Worrying about what is going on at home makes it difficult for me to do my job; it often seems that I have too much work for one person; I feel my company could violate my privacy by tracking my work activities using technology, etc. The validity and reliability test results for job stress variables show that the scale used was valid and reliable (correlation coefficient job stress ranging from 0.325 to 0.680, significant at $\alpha = 0.05$; Cronbach's alpha coefficient job stress = 0.745).

The job satisfaction variable questionnaire was adapted from Winata [2017] based on the theory stated by Colquitt et al. [2015]. Job satisfaction has five dimensions, namely: satisfaction with the work itself, coworker satisfaction, supervision satisfaction, promotion satisfaction, and pay satisfaction, consisting of 20 items. Examples of items: I am satisfied with the work I do and my pay and I am satisfied with the way I relate with my coworkers, I am satisfied with the competence of my supervisor in making decisions, etc. The validity and reliability test results for job satisfaction variables show that the scale used was valid and reliable (job satisfaction's correlation coefficient ranged from 0.490 to 0.712, and significant at $\alpha = 0.05$; Cronbach's alpha job satisfaction coefficient = 0.755).

3.3 Statistical analysis

The analysis method to test this research model uses The Simple Mediation Model [Hayes, 2013] with Macro Process, which is processed through SPSS Process 22.0 for Windows using ordinary least squares and logistic regression path analysis modeling.

4 Results

4.1 Analysis of the simple mediation model (Preacher-Hayes)

To test the mediation variable to determine how it affects the relationship between the independent and dependent variables, the authors conducted a path analysis test. It was the Preacher-Hayes (the simple mediation) model, using Model = 4; Y = job satisfaction; X = job stress; and M = EI.

From Table 1, we found that the correlation coefficient between job stress and EI is 0.2533 with a determination coefficient of 0.0641. The correlation coefficient between job stress and EI on job satisfaction is 0.4423, with a correlation coefficient of 0.1957. On the total effect with the outcome of job satisfaction, the correlation coefficient is 0.0267, and the determination coefficient is 0.0007.

It can be seen that the positive and significant effect of job stress on EI is from the value of $p = 0.0110 < \alpha = 0.05$ with a coefficient of 0.1628. Furthermore, there is a positive and significant influence between the EI variable on job satisfaction based on the $p\text{-value} = 0.0000 < \alpha = 0.05$ with a coefficient of 0.8216. There is no significant difference between job stress and job satisfaction based on the value of $p = 0.7923 < \alpha = 0.05$ with a coefficient of -0.0309 .

The direct effect of the independent variable (job stress) on the dependent variable (job satisfaction) is not significant; $p\text{-value} = 0.1340 > \alpha = 0.05$ with a coefficient of 0.2011.

Table 4 shows the results of the indirect effect: the job stress (independent variable) on job satisfaction (dependent variable) and EI (mediating variable). It can be seen that the output results above produce

Table 1. Model Summary of test results

Model	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	P
Outcome EI	0.2533	0.0641	65.0043	6.7161	1.0000	98.0000	0.0110
Outcome job satisfaction	0.4423	0.1957	182.9371	11.7975	2.0000	97.0000	0.0000
Outcome job satisfaction (total effect model)	0.0267	0.0007	224.9553	0.0697	1.0000	98.0000	0.7923

EI, emotional intelligence.

Table 2. Test results

Model	Description	coeff	se	T	p	LLCI	ULCI
Outcome EI	Constant	66.9099	4.9246	13.5869	0.0000	57.1372	76.6826
	Job stress	0.1628	0.0628	2.5915	0.0110	0.0381	0.2875
Outcome job satisfaction	Constant	38.5400	14.0290	2.7472	0.0072	10.6963	66.3837
	Job stress	-0.1646	0.1089	-1.5112	0.1340	-0.3809	0.0516
	EI	0.8216	0.1695	4.8486	0.0000	0.4853	1.1580
Outcome job satisfaction (total effect model)	Constant	93.5165	9.1611	10.2080	0.0000	75.3366	111.6965
	Job stress	-0.0309	0.1169	-0.2641	0.7923	-0.2628	0.2011

EI, emotional intelligence.

Table 3. Direct effect of X on Y

Effect	SE	T	p	LLCI	ULCI
0.2011	0.1089	-1.5112	0.1340	-0.3809	0.0516

Table 4. Indirect effect of X on Y (Hypothesis test results)

	Effect	Boot SE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
EI	0.1338	0.0559	0.0203	0.2791

EI, emotional intelligence.

BootLLCI = 0.0203 and BootULCI = 0.2791, so it means that the EI variable has a significant effect as a mediating variable. The EI variable fully mediates the effect of job stress on job satisfaction, and we conclude that the hypothesis is accepted. It is proven: the higher the level of EI, the stronger the extent to which the relationship between job stress and job satisfaction is mediated.

5 Discussion

This study aims to test whether EI mediates job stress on the job satisfaction of sales associates. We find that job stress and job satisfaction have a significant influence through EI as a mediation. It means that EI can strengthen the relationship between job stress and job satisfaction. These findings are in line with Peters's [2016] research, which shows that employees who are high in EI are less likely to be dissatisfied with their work when faced with stressful situations at work than employees who are low in EI. This study also adds to the list of studied professions, which require EI to increase job satisfaction. The professions that were studied before included salespersons [Delpechitre and Beeler, 2018], public service [Guy and Lee, 2015; Lee, 2018; Lu et al., 2020], travel agencies [Knezevic et al., 2021], elementary school EFL teachers [Kang, 2020], high school athletic directors [Lee, et al., 2020], HR professionals [Santos et al., 2015], team members

[Liu and Liu, 2013], leaders in public human service [Ruestow, 2008] and tourism [Prentice et al., 2020], attorneys [Beason, 2015], and employed persons [Peters, 2016]. Thus, it is important to improve EI from sales associates because it can mediate job stress on job satisfaction. Previous studies have also suggested that a salesperson's EI is an important skill needed by a salesperson to enhance customer outcomes [Delpechitre and Beeler, 2018].

According to Goleman [1995], EI is not fixed at birth. EI is an ability and thus can be developed through education and management training programs [Goleman, 2001; Guy and Lee, 2015; Delpechitre and Beeler, 2018]. Providing training about how to improve EI may increase job satisfaction [Lee, 2018]. Other than that, having a mentor at work will help to improve EI. EI training must adjust to the needs of sales associates, on a dimension that is needed to improve. So, training is not generally to improve abilities in EI but to achieve a more specific dimension of EI. Sales coaching also needs to be emphasized in the training of sales associates. This training should regulate their emotions and the means to use them and the customer's emotions. The role-play method in training is essential because it can help understand customer emotions, be empathetic, and then express genuine emotion [Delpechitre and Beeler, 2018].

Besides, it is better if companies have sales associates with high EI through training and development and the recruitment and selection process. For companies to find sales associates who can handle stress and have high EI, a fair recruitment process should be carried out. The recruitment process is the earliest stage in obtaining prospective employees according to company needs. Therefore, companies should not ignore psychological tests, depth interviews, and reference checks during the recruitment process. To find those with high EI is very important, especially in the dimensions of self-awareness and emotion regulation [Lee, 2018], because this can reduce emotional exhaustion and increase customer satisfaction [Knezevic et al., 2021]. EI is also important to apply in the following stages of sales associates in the organization, and this is supported by Ruestow's [2008] argument that EI can be implemented in the selection, training, placement, and promotion processes, as well as to evaluate employee career success.

Sales associates are jobs that interact directly with customers. Sales associates cannot avoid greeting and handling demanding customers because they have to serve every customer who enters the store. Moreover, the respondents of this study are sales associates who work in malls that target the upper-middle level, where customers want to be treated special because the products they are going to buy are expensive and show the respondent's social class. Sometimes this type of customer is more demanding than customers who buy mass products. Therefore, sales associates need to reduce their emotions when serving customers who are dissatisfied or facing unexpected events. When the sales associate can control his emotions, it will be easier for the sales associate to think effectively to find the right solution to the customer's complaints. Sales associates who have high EI abilities can understand customer emotions and the emotional changes that occur and regulate their emotions.

Meanwhile, suppose the sales associate has low EI. What can happen is that the sales associate will ignite his emotions in the end; the behavior and actions taken by the sales associate significantly affect the good reputation of the company. This condition is almost similar to job salespersons in general [Delpechitre and Beeler, 2018] and public service workers because public service jobs involve an intense emotional focus on being served [Lee, 2018; Lu et al., 2020]. According to Lu et al. [2020], service workers require emotive skills, such as perceiving others' emotions and managing their own emotions, mentioned as EI. They need to code and decode every emotion and manage emotions to deal with work's emotional demands. All of this ultimately will increase job satisfaction.

Although EI is essential to improve, not all EI dimensions affect job satisfaction. There are three dimensions of EI: emotional self-awareness, emotion regulation, and emotional other awareness, but only emotional self-awareness affects job satisfaction [Guy and Lee, 2015]. Our study's dimensions of EI are not entirely the same as Guy and Lee [2015], but self-awareness is one of the emotional dimensions we studied. Referring to the research results by Guy and Lee [2015], we propose that in EI training for sales associates, the self-awareness aspect should be emphasized more because it affects job satisfaction the most. This result is reinforced by Lee [2018], which emphasizes that people who work in public services may consider assessing EI, especially in emotional self-awareness and emotion regulation dimensions.

The authors argue that increasing EI in sales associates, especially in the dimension of self-awareness, will minimize the stereotype that salespeople are trying to find customers by being dishonest about products

or services and providing excessive information about excellence that deviates from reality [Delpechitre and Beeler, 2018]. Suppose a sales associate does not have high EI in perceiving and uses his emotions. In that case, emotion regulation will lead to automatic emotions that can lead to negative perceptions from customers [Delpechitre and Beeler, 2018]. Wisker and Poulis [2014] found that all dimensions of EI are positively related to adaptive selling behavior. The ability of a salesperson to perceive, understand, regulate, and authentically express emotions should impact the customer's attitude and behavior in the pre-purchase stage of the sales process [Delpechitre and Beeler, 2018]. An increase in EI will make sales associates behave more genuinely and authentically. This good EI will be felt by customers or buyers, which in the end, makes customers feel comfortable being served by these sales associates. In the end, EI and the ability to express emotions are recognized as important aspects of sales success [Weitz et al., 2001].

6 Limitation and suggestion for further research

This study contributes to the EI domain, but we realize that there are some limitations. This study does not identify how EI skills relate to the performance of emotional work, which is called emotional labor. Emotional labor is emotive behavior in the workplace and is implementing EI to fulfill work demands. Emotional labor is essential in the workplace; this involves emotive sensing, evaluating the emotion, choosing the best response, and ultimately behaving most appropriately with the emotions expressed [Guy and Lee, 2015]. EI, if practiced in skill, will generate emotional labor. So, to display labor performance, an individual needs to have EI. The higher a person's EI, the greater the precision with which he should display his emotional labor. Future research can be improved by adding an emotional labor variable.

Guy and Lee [2015], in their study, found that only self-awareness positively affects job satisfaction from the EI dimension; this indicates that employees who have self-awareness will be more satisfied with their work. Thus, emotional self-awareness plays a vital role in achieving employee job satisfaction. Unfortunately, our research did not examine the mediation effect of EI per dimension, so it is unknown whether the EI dimensions related to job satisfaction are only self-awareness or there are other dimensions also relate. For future research, we suggest that the effects of EI can be examined per dimension.

In the future, for a complete assessment, the tool for assessing the emotional level of sales associates is not only based on self-assessment. However, it can also be equipped with observations from experts and other psychological test tools. Future research could include sales associates in Jakarta and all major cities in Indonesia. The result can compare between cities. Research could also be implemented for sales employees in other industrial fields. The results of this study cannot be generalized to all areas of sales, especially in this era when many sales are not face-to-face but online.

7 Conclusions

Based on the results, we conclude that the higher the level of EI of sales associates in Jakarta, Indonesia, the stronger the extent to which the relationship between job stress and job satisfaction is mediated. Thus, it is important to improve sales associates' EI because it can mediate job stress on job satisfaction. EI is an ability and can improve through training programs. EI training should adjust to the needs of sales associates, on a dimension that needs improvement. Future research should identify how EI skills relate to emotional labor.

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