



## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND JOB STRESS AMONG MIDWIVES WORKING IN THE MATERNITY

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### ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** A large part of the population midwives and mental health are in the medical community. This study aimed to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and job stress were midwives working in maternity hospitals in the province.

**Methods:** In this study, a sample of midwives in maternity hospitals in 2016 and University Hospitals of Medical Sciences was randomly selected using cluster sampling method. The researcher attended in these centers to distribute questionnaires among 260 midwives, and nurses completed the questionnaire. Using statistical were analyzed software SPSS-21 and the  $r \leq 0/001$ .

**Results:** The data analysis showed that emotional intelligence includes self-motivation, self-awareness, self-control, empathy and social skills are correlated with job stress. Also, linear regression analysis showed that emotional intelligence as the ability to predict job stress are among midwives.

**Conclusion:** Some forms of emotional intelligence protect the individual from stress and leads to better compatibility. Emotional intelligence, protective factor against stress and facilitating and contributing factors for mental health counts.

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### Introduction

Job stress is a major cause of physical and psychological effects in personnel and reduced productivity in organizations [1] and is considered a major factor in causing disease and increased absence from work [2]. Midwives account for large share of health care workers and more than 80 percent of women's health care is provided by midwives which emphasize the importance of mental health of midwives working in maternities [3]. Because it requires high skill and concentration during task execution as well as strong teamwork collaboration and providing night care to patients, midwifery profession creates a lot of stress [4]. With the increase in work-related accidents and delays and absences from work, job stress will be increased in midwife and health centers resulting in a decline in productivity and organizational commitment and decreased quality of patient care [5]. Midwives that are under high stress are likely to experience 30% more work related stress. Job stress occurs when an individual's expectations and demand exceed an individual's coping ability and powers. Research results show that job stress and mental and physical weakness among midwife working in maternity ward lead to health problems and the

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inability to perform the duties, vulnerability in professional communications, decreased quality of health care and ultimately reducing dissatisfaction and turnover. In addition, stress has a direct relationship with job satisfaction and practice of midwives working in hospitals and health care sectors and is one of the factors affecting their health and safety [6-9]. Champan believes that ongoing organizational changes such as increased demand for health services, medical diagnoses and new therapies and increasing expectations and demands of patients and their relatives from medical centers are among the most important stressors in the profession of midwifery [10]. Moreover, according to the results, it has been shown that factors such as increased workload [11, 12], low support of managers of health care workers especially midwives [13, 14], lack of control of midwives in the workplace [15, 16], lack of reward and incentives [2, 17], uncertainty in the job description [10], low teamwork [18] and role conflict [19, 20] cause tension and stress among the midwives working in maternity ward. The differences in individual characteristics such as personality and coping style are the most important factors in work stress on individuals. In other words, what might be perceived as a stressor by one person might not be seen as a stressor by another. This viewpoint is related to preventive strategies that focus on business strategies to adapt to different situations [21]. To maximize and improve manpower efficiency and effectiveness in organizations and job productivity, the concept of emotional intelligence is one of the psychological issues that has been drawn the attention of many psychologists in recent years. The term emotional intelligence was firstly appeared by Golemans as the capability of individuals to recognize their own and other people's emotions, accepting other people's views and controlling relationships and social interactions [22]. Goleman's emotional intelligence view is based on the four areas of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management. Emotional intelligence can be defined as a kind of emotional information processing that includes proper evaluation of emotions in ourselves and others, appropriate expression of emotions and emotional adjustment [23]. Evidence reveals that emotional intelligence influences on job satisfaction among employees. Awareness of interpersonal and intrapersonal emotions helps to regulate negative emotions and feelings and improve one's performance and it seems that employees with high emotional intelligence can experience more job satisfaction [24-26]. The results of various studies on university staff, nurses and students in Iran have shown that there is a relationship between job stress and emotional intelligence; however, no significant relationship was found between individual emotional intelligence subscales with job stress [27-33]. Thus, according to the importance of emotional intelligence and its components to control as well as adjusted reduction of pressure and stress on the staff of other organizations, the present study seeks to investigate and respond to the question of whether there is a relationship between emotional intelligence and its dimensions with job stress in midwife working in maternity. So far, in Iran, no survey has been conducted about the issue, I decided to conduct the present study.

## Method

This cross-sectional study was carried out in 2017 on midwives working in maternity hospitals affiliated with the University of Medical Sciences in Khuzestan province. According to studies, the sample size was determined 260 midwives. This study utilized the two-stage sampling; the researcher firstly used a cluster sampling and then simple random sampling, so that the hospitals in counties covered by the Ahwaz Medical Sciences were identified and were considered for each cluster and then hospitals with active maternity wards were randomly selected according to labor statistics months ago and the required sample size among these clusters. Inclusion criteria included having at least Midwifery degree, work experience more than 2 years in maternity, working as a midwife in a hospital maternity ward and the desire to participate in the study. Exclusion criteria were failure to fill out the questionnaire completely, having a history of chronic, medical and psychological disease or having wife and children with disabilities, medications for mental disorders such as depression, antipsychotics, experiencing a traumatic event such as the death of relatives in the six previous months.

Data collection tools included three questionnaires: Self-made questionnaire for the socio-demographic characteristics:

This questionnaire will be used to evaluate information about age, marital status, duration of marriage, number of children, educational level, work experience, fixed or rotating shifts, job's wife, wife's education, the monthly income of participating in the project, the income earned by the spouse, self-report methods by participants.

2. Siberia Schering Emotional Intelligence Standard Questionnaire (1996): This test contains 33 items that have been scored with 5 Likert scale. The main form of this test has two sections and 70 items; the first part includes 40 questions which out of which been 7 items have been removed, leaving 33 items remained in the scale. Part II consists of 30 items that have been removed because they did not fully comply with Iranian culture. This test measured five areas of self-motivation, self-awareness, self-control, empathy and social skills.

1. Job Stress Questionnaire Philipp Reis:

Philip Rice's job stress scale (1992) includes 57 items. This scale has been translated and validated by Hatami (1998). The scale consists of three subscales of interpersonal relations, physical conditions and occupational interests. This test has no time limit, but most participants complete it within 30 minutes. This test will be scored in a Likert 5 scale (1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = very often). In order to test emotional intelligence and job stress among staff working in hospitals in the country, validity and reliability of the above have been approved previously [34-35]. Questionnaires were filled out by employees using self-report method.

**Findings****Table 1.** Distribution the frequency of demographic characteristics among midwives participating in the study

Variables	Groups	Frequency	Percent
Age	20 to 30 years	70	26.9
	31 to 40 years	127	48.8
	41 to 50 years	57	21.9
	more than 51 years	6	2.3
Educational level	Associate	36	13.8
	Bachelor	219	84.2
	Master	5	1.9
Years of service	Less than 5 years	76	<b>29.2</b>
	6 to 10 years	90	34.6
	11 to 15 years	41	15.8
	16 to 20 years	36	13.8
	more than 21 years	17	6.5
Marital status	married	178	68.5
	single	82	31.5
N= 260			

According to Table 1, the majority of employees involved in the study were aged 31 to 40 years, 49 percent had a bachelor's degree (84%) with a 6 to 10 years of service (35 percent) and married (68.5 percent). no association was found between age, work experience, education level and marital status and job stress.

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics of emotional intelligence and job stress variables

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation
Job stress	130.11	23.81
Emotional Intelligence	111.84	14.26
self-motivation	30.50	4.94
Consciousness	20.31	3.79
Self-control	24.28	3.93
Sympathy	19.99	4.16
social skills	16.75	3.62

Table 2 shows the results showed that the mean and standard deviation for job stress and emotional intelligence were equal to 130.11 and 23.81 and 111.84 and 14.26, respectively.

**Table 3.** Correlation between the relationship between emotional intelligence and its dimensions with job stress among midwives working in maternities

Emotional Intelligence	correlation coefficient	significant level
Job stress		
self-motivation	<b>-0.175</b>	0.005
Self-awareness	<b>-0.231</b>	0.001
Self-control	<b>-0.255</b>	0.001
Sympathy	<b>-0.243</b>	0.001
social skills	<b>-0.315</b>	0.001
Emotional Intelligence	<b>-0.344</b>	0.001
<b>N=260</b>		

Pearson correlation coefficient was used to analyze the results. The highest impact on job stress was associated with the variable social skills and the least impact was associated with self-motivation.

Variable	Index	Non-standard factors	Standardized coefficients			
		B	standard error	Beta	t value	Significance level
Emotional Intelligence		-0.574	0.098	-0.344	-5.87	0.001
a: The dependent variable of occupational stress						

By improving one emotional intelligence unit, -0.574 percent job stress will be promoted among midwives working in who studied maternities. The t test regarding the regression coefficient in the table also shows that this coefficient was factor (sig =0.001) and is effective in predicting job stress.

## Discussion

In this study, no significant correlation was found between age, educational degree, work experience, marital status and the results were in line with the study by Fahim Devin [36] and did not match the results by Kaylonkou [37], which can be attributed to different statistical tools for data collection. In this study, the average job stress scores among studied subjects were higher than normal levels (130.15 from 175), and this could be due to job stress factors studied in the maternity wards. The average job stress in this study is higher than the average stress job in the studies by Mansoor. et al [38], Sabooteh [39], Hafizi [30], which can be influenced by factors such as the study environment, the high number of clients, the occurrence of unexpected events for both mother and fetus, stressful periods at work and tension associated with too much physical labor, lack of personnel, handling emergency situations and obtaining the right decision, especially when access to others is impossible or difficult, physical factors in the environment such as heat, coldness, artificial lights, too much noise. Studied midwives had good and desirable emotional intelligence which this finding is alignment with the studies by Fahim Devine et al. (2007), Delpassand and colleagues (2011), Mullaie et al. (2012) (40-40) [36] and also is consistent with the finding of the study by Kim and Han (2015), in which the mean emotional intelligence score among nursing students was reported acceptable in a scoring range (1 to 7) by researchers [42]; however, it was inconsistent with the results of the study by Roshdie Mohammed and Ramzi Yousef (2014) in relation to emotional intelligence and conflict management styles between the nursing managers in Assiut University Hospital, where more than half of nursing managers had good emotional intelligence [43]. Perhaps this difference may be explained that mere management job and lack of an appropriate training after employment in the organization have led to the diminished correct use of emotional intelligence, and its decline. According to the findings of this study, emotional intelligence is inversely related to job stress (-0.344), implying that midwives with less emotional intelligence, experience higher job stress. There is a significant negative relationship between the subscales of emotional intelligence including self-motivation, self-awareness, self-control, empathy and social skills with job stress which among these, social skills and empathy subscales have higher negative correlation and the lowest relation is associated with the self-motivation subscale. These results are consistent with studies by Khodahafez and Baezzt, but are not consistent with the results of the study by Mansour which this lack of consistency can be due to different measurement tools in this study. People with higher social skills are able to cope better with stress and problems related to it, and they protect themselves

against their negative consequences and harms [44]. Boosakou et al. came to the conclusion that emotional intelligence is an essential variable to lower levels of stress and frustration and to raise the level of trust and courage and the pessimists people gained lower emotional intelligence scores [45]. Mikolajek and Loomint study showed the impact of training emotional intelligence concepts on cognitive reactions to stressful events [46]. Said ardekani et al also found that emotional intelligence factors can explain the changes related to job stress [47]. Additionally, other studies have shown that training various emotional intelligence interventions is effective to reduce stress and anxiety in people [48-50]. Agastooov et al. indicated that nurses with high emotional intelligence had reported less stress and finally, the researchers came to the conclusion that emotional intelligence is a protective factor against stress and facilitates health [51]. All these studies confirming the findings in this study demonstrate that there is a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and job stress. Job stress is a common and unavoidable phenomenon in the workplace of midwife; if it not properly managed, it can be lead to horrible consequences for individual and organization such as the absence from work, the clashes between employees and severe displacement, health problems and disabilities in fulfilling duties, vulnerabilities in communications, reduced quality of care and ultimately reducing dissatisfaction and leaving the profession [52]. It can be stated that emotional intelligence refers to a set of non-cognitive skills and abilities that will increase midwives' ability to successfully cope with environmental stresses, particularly job stress. Emotional intelligence has been of particular importance in the success of midwives and these skills allow them to be able to think better under harsh conditions and avoid wasting time by emotions such as anger, anxiety and fear; they simply calm their mind and thus open the way for internal insight and creative ideas [53]. Midwives with high emotional intelligence can make better decisions on emotions and feelings, and are able to focus their mind on the goal. Low emotional intelligence is also affecting the happiness and health of midwives and makes difficult for them in dealing with problems and conflicts [54].

### Conclusion

The findings of this study can provide a guide for midwifery managers to manage better, more efficient in the maternity wards. Acknowledged by job stress among midwives for conflict resolution and stress in the workplace, they can be aware of the cause and the root of many problems in the maternity, including decreased productivity, reduced job satisfaction, job burnout, possible harms to mother and fetus, voluntary leave and stress. According to the findings of this study, it is recommended to hold emotional intelligence training courses in hospitals in the Ahvaz province. It is also recommended to include such subjects as curriculum for midwifery course. This study was the first study on the relationship between emotional intelligence and job stress on midwives. Although this research study was carried out in the maternity ward of the hospital in the province, we should be cautious in generalizing results to other organizations.

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