

The Potential Impact Of Covid-19 Upon Counter Productive Work Behavior Of Academic Staff: Moderating Role Of Emotional Intelligence

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Abstract

COVID-19, as a pandemic, has put the world into a predicament and it has affected almost every walk of life. The purpose of this study was to assess the moderating effect of Emotional intelligence (EI) on the relationship between Personality traits (positive and negative effect), Job stressor, on Counterproductive work behavior ensue due to pandemic.

An online survey was conducted from (N=301) academic staff from seven tertiary education sectors from southern region of Sindh (Pakistan). Quantitative Survey method were analyzed using the SPSS AMOS to test the moderation between variables during COVID-19.

The results showed that Job stressor and Personality traits with negative effect have a strong positive relationship with CWB whereas EI and Personality traits with positive effect negatively impact upon the CWB of academia staff of Sindh, besides the Emotional Intelligence plays as a significant moderating role. The research will be helpful for States academic policy makers and universities to formulate more inclusive strategies to control such behavior among the employees and will help in formulation of strategies.

Key words: COVID-19, Personality, Emotional intelligence, Counterproductive Work Behavior.

I. Introduction

Predicament, the whole world is facing due to pandemic (COVID-19), are still prevalent. The havoc wreaked by pandemic has impacted all walks and spheres of our lives and nudged us to the edge. The world is already on the brink of absolute chaos and anarchy (Restubog et al., 2020) The present situation of our planet is not at normal state, several walks of life have turned upside down due to the outbreak of the pandemic. The situation has dragged the attention of various researchers to pay attention to not only what is happening but also to study the consequences of current happenings. The study aims to analyze the behaviors of the academic staff, the generation makers, who have undergone numerous changes and thus it is significant to analyze their behaviors which may have lasting effects.

COVID-19, a disease affected by severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS-CoV-2) virus transformed the entire world, leaving long-term repercussions on every level. i.e., from the global economy to each individual. The outbreak of the novel corona virus (COVID-19) was declared a public health emergency of international concern by the World Health Organization in January and a global pandemic by March 2020 (WHO, 2020).

Thus, several countries around the globe advised its residents to remain at home, avoid close physical contact, and use social distance to protect themselves; similar sort of instructions were given out to all academic institutions, schools, colleges, and universities were not working physically and transmission of the knowledge to the students is being done via online means across globe (Zheng et al., 2020). According to the reports of (UNESCO, 2020), the ongoing Pandemic is affecting system of education worldwide, leading to almost closure of schools, universities, and colleges.

COVID-19 outbreaks elicit a variety of psychological and behavioral reactions (Kohút et al., 2021). The factors like fear, worry, insecurities, selfishness, uncertainty, stress, exhaustion, mistrust, arrogance, isolation, and less interactions with people increase the predisposition toward aberrant behaviours, as indicated in social control theory, and these aberrant activities generate Counterproductive Work Behaviors (Malik et al., 2020).

Recent survey by Guan et al., (2020) reported that 8.1 percent of China's general public was under moderate to severe stress during the COVID-19 crisis. The pandemic not only puts people's lives in jeopardy, but it also makes life difficult, stressful for them (Prentice et al., 2020).

Many researchers have revealed that the severity of stress varies from individual to individual, and responses of pandemic depend on personality traits (Kohút et al., 2021). One of the characteristics that influences stress assessment and response is personality. Some personality traits like (Conscientiousness and Extroversion) are significantly associated to stress in the pandemic crisis (Zajenkowski et al., 2020).

Current study intends to monitor the everlasting changes in academic staff's behavior due to COVID-19 by measuring the impact of personality and job stressor upon the counterproductive work behavior. Besides, the study adds a flavor of emotional intelligence as moderator among the academic staff of universities of Sindh. Following sub-sections will showcase the variable as constructs of the study based upon rigorous literature insight.

II. Literature Review

A. Job Stress and COVID-19

COVID-19, hits the humanity in several ways psychologically, behaviorally. According to the studies conducted by (Drigas & Papoutsis, 2020) researcher opined that these external factors threaten our capability to keep inner equilibrium as a result of this link, and small or long exposure to them may result in an inner condition that is recognized as stress, which, while serving as an adaptive function in times of adversity, can result in inducing emotions like fear and anxiety when it persists for an extended period of time.

Furthermore, every person's stress experience is highly heterogeneous, according to individual qualities (strength, weaknesses, and previous experiences) as well as environmental factors.

The work related stress is a great factor created within the organizational context and leads to Counterproductive work behavior in the employees (Spector, 1998). Further in the research studies of (Brown, 2012) Job stress is defined as a situational factor that resulting from the work settings is a byproduct of the situation and the employees can go through that at certain times in their lives. Many studies have shown that the stress resulting from the jobs has a bad impact on the organizational efficiency and that it may lead to CWB (Marcus & Schuler, 2004).

The employees who regularly go through the bad environment at their job mostly due to bad behaviors of the supervisors are more likely to indulge in bad behaviors. The impression that the stress has to damage the wellbeing of the employees is a major concern for the employees to have negative attitudes towards their work.

The academic jobs have a greater tendency to affect the person and make him vulnerable to CWB, the teachers have to go through bad experiences resulting from bad emotions and negativity and cause them to be subject to mental trauma (Chris, 2001). It has been observed commonly that teachers do not have a very positive outcome from their jobs due to hectic routine as well as other job stressors. They tend to have such attitudes because they do not get enough time out of their jobs to give to themselves.

B. Big5-Personality Traits

Personality is the set of emotions, thought processes, intellectual characteristics and their response to the emotions. It is a whole set of characteristics that is built through the formative phases of person's life (Mase, 2016). These traits are the ones that complete the personality of the person as a whole and ensure that the unifying aspect of the person is reflected in the personality.

A vast literature has empirically linked CWB to broad and narrow traits of personality (van Zyl & de Bruin, 2018). Big Five Personality traits are advised by the literature, these five dimensions of personality are Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, Openness to experience and extraversion (Iqbal & Hassan, 2016).

Among Big five personality traits, three traits have been shown to be related to CWB, namely, Agreeableness, Neuroticism, and Conscientiousness (Berry et al., 2007). The personality of an individual is always the result of the environment that he lives in and the reactions of the other people who interact with him.

C. Emotional intelligence as moderator

Emotional intelligence is the ability of an individual to regulate and express his emotions as per the needs of the situation. It includes exhibiting the emotional stability in the wake of strong stimulus (Mayer et al., 2008). The ability to control and express your emotions to the best of the occasion is one such thing that can be exhibited by the employees so that they can integrate their emotional intelligence with the job related environment. The ability of the employee to control his/her emotions is an significant virtue that can minimize Counter productive work behavior (Ugwu et al., 2017). Labeling and managing emotions is challenging for those who do not recognize and understand their feelings. As a result, the effective handling and management of stress becomes more difficult, resulting in the person's mental and physical health deteriorating (Drigas et al., 2020).

D. Counterproductive Work Behavior

The Counterproductive Work Behavior or (CWB) is the exhibit of the conduct by the employees that badly affects the organization or the related people within (Spector & Fox, 2006). The negative behaviors of all sorts can be generalized and fall within the purview of the CWB,

and anything that results due to the emotional outburst of the employees and results in productivity loss of that employee or the other qualifies to be the CWB.

Further (Spector, 2006) presented the most famous classification of CWB.

- a) Abuse against others –Indulging in name calling, detrimental behavior against the fellow employees through physical actions or mental torture. (Unpleasant comments, ignoring), The abusing behavior of the employees mostly results in brawls and scuffles that leads to overall bad environment.
- b) Production deviance – deliberate omission or hindering realization of task ascribed. Commission and omission that jeopardizes the productivity of the employees against the set parameters. Not doing your work to the best of your abilities and efficiency is one such instance which means that you can get the job done in a better way, but you decide not to is also an indication of counterproductive work behavior.
- c) Sabotage –Intently causing damage to the assets of the firm. This is the major expression of CWB when employees start damaging the machines and other tools of the firm so that the work can be damaged.
- d) Theft – Stealing the assets or the product of the company to cause loss. The theft at workplace is the major loss of the assets and the fixed costs associated with the theft also increase therefore the CWB also incurs huge costs.
- e) Withdrawal –Procrastinating the work and causing the work to go on at a slower pace. This includes go slow policy so that the resources are wasted, earlier departures and work avoidance but staying at facilities is also included. The delaying tactics also lead to productivity losses therefore it is essential that the employees do not delay the work. The delay also creates bad impression in front of the suppliers and the clients of the firm.

The adherence to CWB for the employees within the organization or the related people has to be checked and more elements relating to the COVID-19 must be researched so that it can be controlled (Malik et al., 2020). The research must also include the elements that cause the employees to behave in such an erratic manner so that they can look into the bad aspects of their work without compromising the productivity.

Researchers have variably conceptualized such conscious behaviors: which are tabulated below.

Organizational aggression	(Neuman, 1998),(Fox & Spector, 1999)
Deviance Behavior	(Robinson & Bennet, 1995)(Robinson & Bennet, 1995)(Robinson & Bennet, 1995)
Retaliation	(Skarlicki & Folger, 1997)

(Bennett & Robinson, 2000) Suggested conceptually diverse dimension's for CWB's with two factors as,

- a) (CWB-I) CWB which is focused in the direction of employees in organization.
- b) (CWB-0) CWB which is focused in the direction of organization itself.

Different studies have focused CWB on prediction, Classification and relationship with different employees at workplace, additionally; the effect of demographic characteristics of employees on CWB has gone under examination in this study. Age has been stated to have a close negative correlation with CWB (Dirican & Erdil, 2016). Number of studies revealed that the employees who are young they show more aggressive behaviors than the employees who are older (Glomb & Liao, 2003). (Dirican & Erdil, 2016) have opined that preceding literature has shown that gender is correlated with CWB and males and females differ in CWB's.

The study is based upon following conceptual framework depicted by fig 1, which expresses the association between job stressor and counterproductive work behavior and Personality (positive and negative) elements and counterproductive work behavior. Besides, the variables are complemented with moderation role of emotional intelligence for both the variables.

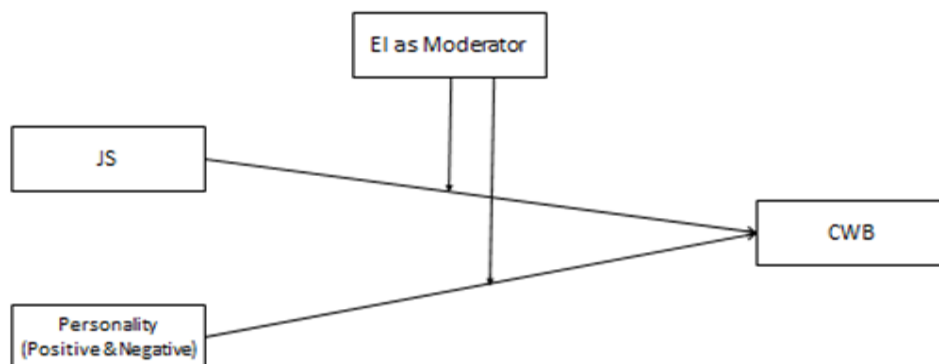


Figure 1; Conceptual Framework of the Study

NOTE; Where CWB=Counterproductive Work Behavior, EI=Emotional Intelligence, JS=Job Stressor.

III. Methodology

The analysis of the study is based upon the following research techniques:

A. Sample

This Study sample includes Academic staff from seven universities in Sindh southern region. In predicament of COVID-19 Sindh (Pakistan) is selected (Zheng et al., 2020). The sample used in this study constructed on cross sectional data, the data were collected from public universities include 301 faculty members were engaged. Survey questionnaire using Software called Google form were used to obtain data from respondents with the help of convenient sampling technique.

B. Instruments

Job stressor

Parker & DeCotiis's (1983) questionnaire was used to fathom the amount of job stress. Using 10 items and five likert scale. Keeping in mind the paradigm of (COVID-19) pandemic, small changes were made in to the items of this scale. The sample is 'I have felt Fidgety or nervous as a result of my job', during COVID-19.

BIG-5 Personality

Big Five Factor Markers of the International Personality Item Pool IPIP Scale (Goldberg et al., 2006) was used to assess the two traits of personality namely Conscientiousness and Agreeableness. Both traits were measured with the average of 10 items from the IPIP inventory keeping positive and negative effects. Each item was assessed on 5-point likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

Emotional Intelligence

For this study the Wong and Law emotional intelligence scale (WLEIS) was used to assess EI (Wong & Law, 2002). This scale has been generally utilized and referred to in the literature with great reliability and validity (Prentice et al., 2020). This scale consist on the 16 items and five likert scale. WLEIS has four dimensions; each dimension is composed by four items namely Regulation of emotion, use of emotion, other emotion appraisal, and self-emotion appraisal.

Counterproductive work behavior

For counterproductive work behavior (Bennett & Robinson, 2000) scale was used to assess CWB. This scale was consisting on 23 items with the five point likert scale. Examinations on its factorial arrangement have experienced Five subscale labeled as 1) Abuse against others ("I started or continued a gossip that was destructive or detrimental to somebody at work"), Interference at work ("I worked slowly on purpose, when something had to be done"), Sabotage ("I destroyed an element of equipment or property on purpose"), Thefts ("I misappropriated something that belonged to my employer") and Avoiding work ("I appeared late at work without a consent") with 9,3,3,4,4 item respectively

Control variables

Aside from the main variables of research, further research queries were added to gather Demographic data (i.e., Age, gender, work experience, designation and number of dependents)

IV. Data analysis and Results

The analysis of the study begins with the determination of the characteristics of the sample selected for the study. Table 1 depicts the profile of the university teachers used as study sample.

A. Profile of Informants

Table 1 presented the profile of respondents. The information includes 301 Teachers (Lecturers, Assistant professors, Associate professors, Professors) of Higher education institute from Southern region of Sindh. The profile of the teachers is given below.

Table 1 Profile of Informants (N=301)

Characteristics of Sample	%age
Gender	
Men	63.1
Women	36.1
Age	
Below 30 Years	23.9
31 to 40 Years	55.8
41 to 50 Years	17.6
51 to 60 Years	1.5
Experience	
1 Year or Below	8.3
1 to 5 Years	27.6
6 to 10 Years	28.6
10 to 15 Years	25.6
16 to 20 Years	2.0
Above 20 Years	8.0
Designation	
Lecturers	75

Assistant professors	14.9
Associate professors	7.3
Professors	2.6

Table 2 Mean, Standard deviation and Correlation among the variables of the study

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. CWB	1				
2. JS	.414**	1			
3. P-VE	.414**	.486**	1		
4. P+VE	-.079	.486**	.018	1	
5. EI	-.283**	-.036	-.159**	.578**	1
MEAN	2.0660	3.1143	2.7777	3.7608	3.7884
Standard deviation	2.0660	.70387	.63483	.53683	.53737
Cronbach's alpha	.938	.880	.813	.824	.894

NOTE; N=301, CWB =Counterproductive work Behavior, JS= Job Stressor, EI= Emotional Intelligence, P-VE=Negative traits of personality, P+VE= Positive traits of personality

* $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$.

Table 2 depicts the descriptive statistics of the variables of the research (i.e. means, standard deviations) along with Pearson correlations. As anticipated, Job stressor during COVID-19 is correlated positively with Counterproductive Work Behavior ($r = 0.414$), Emotional Intelligence is negatively correlated to CWB ($r = 0.281$), Positive personality is negatively correlated and negative personality traits are positively correlated with Counterproductive work behavior All of the variables except personality (positive) behave significant statistically at 1% confidence level. The results also revealed an excellent reliability of the study variables (between 0.81 and 0.93).

B. Moderated Regression Analyses

The moderation analysis was conducted in order to examine whether EI moderated the relationship among the job stressor, personality and Counterproductive work behavior (Table 3). In regard of the previous studies, the potential confounding effects of several socio demographic variables such as age, gender, number of dependents, educational level, and work experience were treated as controlled. Regarding counterproductive work behavior, the entire prediction model for the moderating variable EI was observed to be significant ($p > 0.05$) with personality negative traits only Figure 2 (iii) Whereas the moderation could not be significant statistically in the other two cases. However among variables, Emotional intelligence and personality with negative traits showed negative and significant relationship with CWB. Job stressor and ($p < 0.05$) personality

with positive traits showed a positive significant effect during the COVID-19 pandemic. The interaction term EI with job stressor, and EI with personality, contributed to explain CWB but not significant statistically ($p > 0.01$). Fig. 2 graphically represents the relationship of EI, Job stressor and EI with Personality traits for predicting CWB and confirms the direction of the relationship to be positive for positive personality and JS and negative for EI and negative personality traits but are not significant statistically.

Regression Analyses Moderated regression analyses for Emotional Intelligence between CWB and its predictors is given below.

Table 3 Moderated Regression Analyses

	Estimates	Lower	Upper	P Value
Job Stressor	..154	..076	..231	..002
Emotional Intelligence x job Stressor	..035	-.050	..101	..524
Personality Positive	-.011	-.113	..124	..977
Emotional Intelligence x PP	-.019	-.051	..018	..412
Personality Negative	..580	..487	..695	..001
Emotional Intelligence x PN	-.099	-.173	-.034	..023
Emotional Intelligence	-.241	-.383	-.125	..001
Gender	-.051	-.170	..064	..478
Age	-.048	-.117	..026	..269
Experience	..038	-.009	..084	..186

***p < 0.05.**

R² = 0.27

****p < 0.01.**

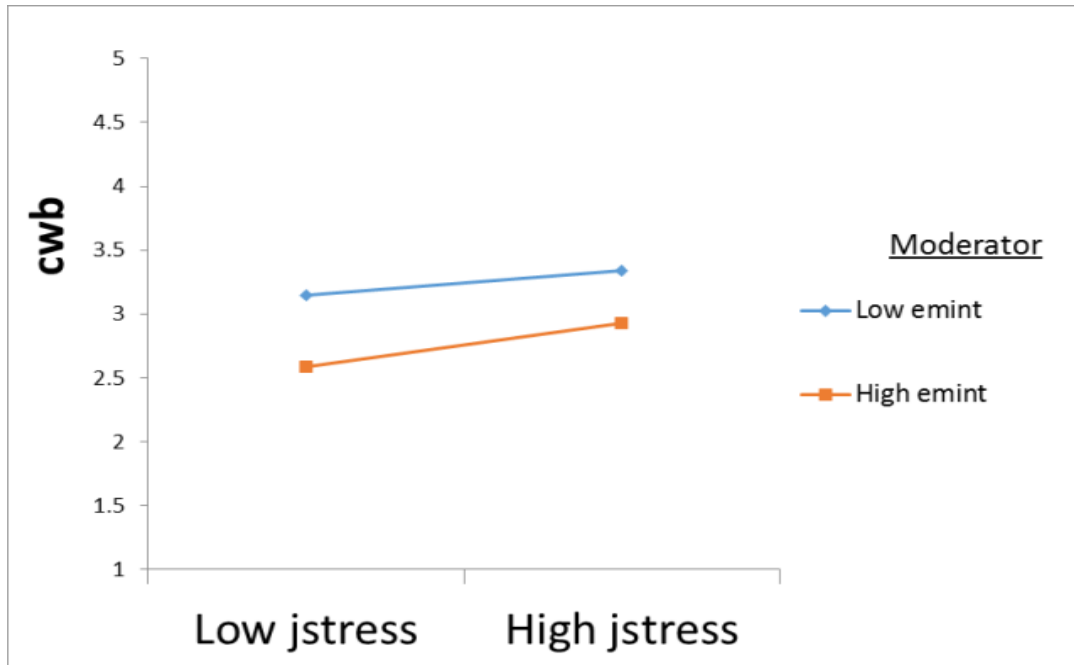


Figure 2(i) Moderating Role of EI between CWB & JS

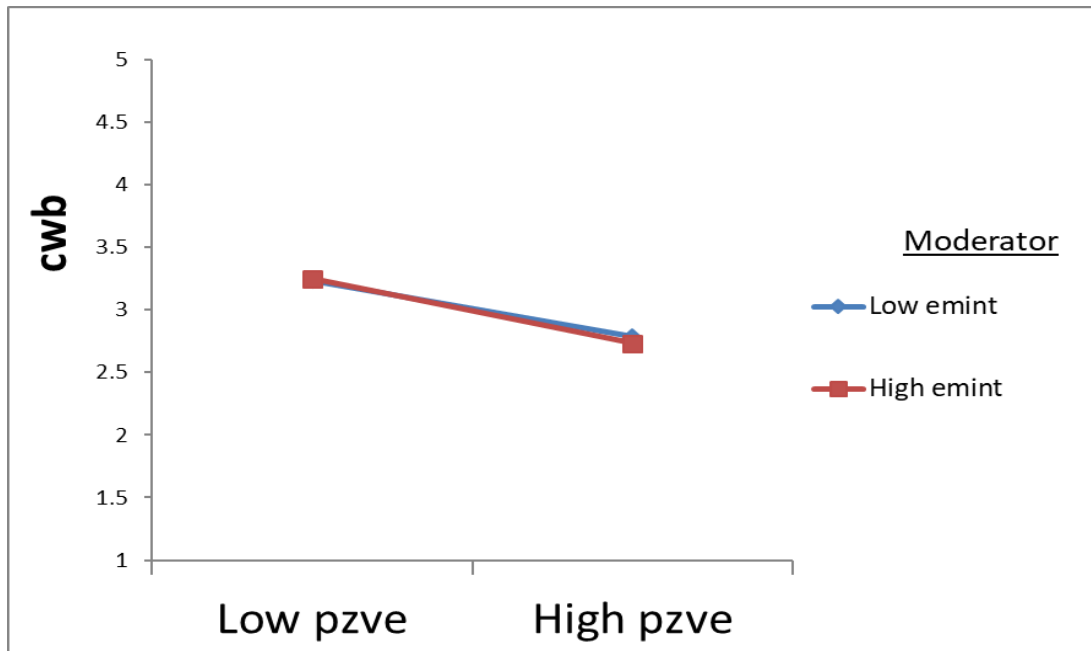


Figure 2(ii) Moderating Role of EI between CWB & Personality with positive traits

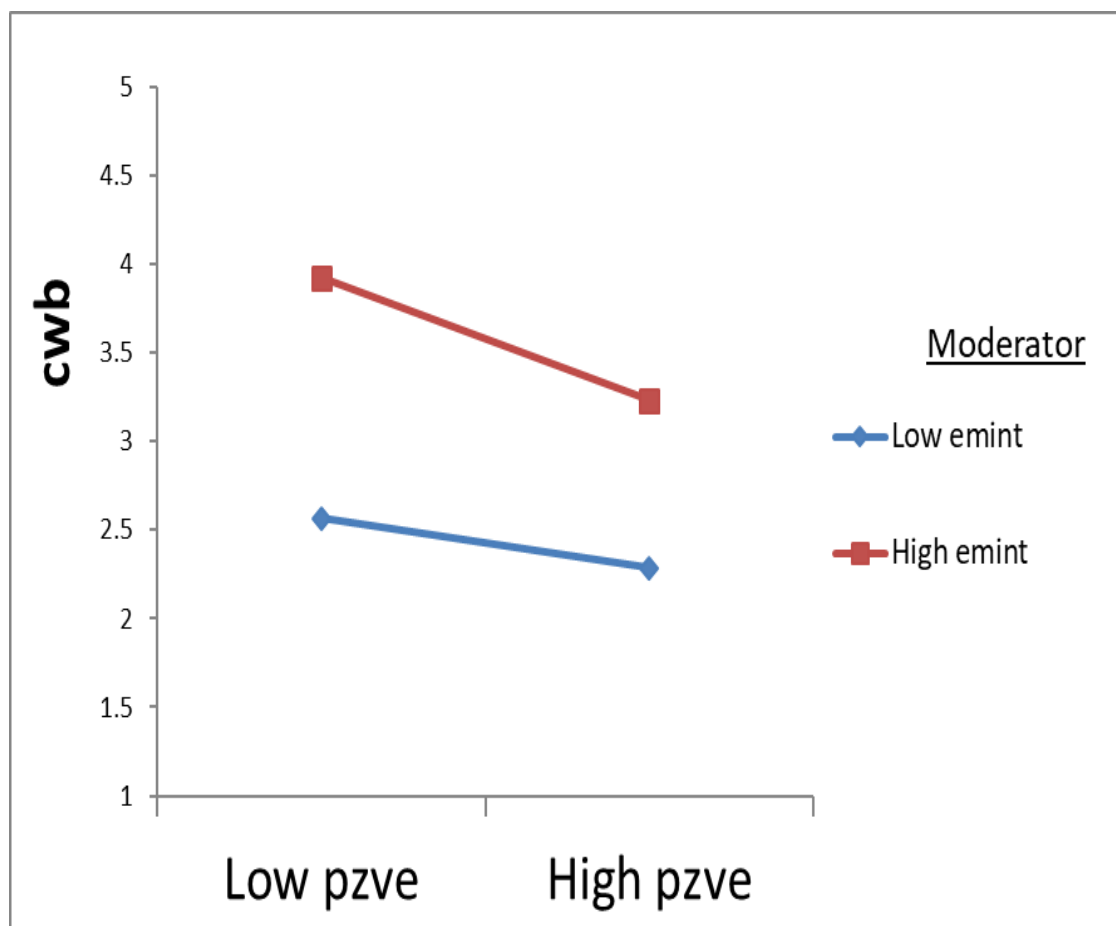


Figure 2(iii) Moderating Role of EI between CWB & Personality with Negative traits

V. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine the moderating effect of Emotional intelligence (EI) on the relationship between job stressors, personality, and counterproductive work behavior in Sindh university teachers. In line with previous research, the current study examined the job stressor created by COVID-19 as a source of moral decay and its influence on the quality of academic staff at universities in Sindh province using the International personality item pool (IPIP) Scale for the big five personality traits.

The findings of the study are of interesting nature due to COVID pandemic, demonstrating a direct effect of job stressors and personality traits on counterproductive work behavior. Additionally, this article sheds light on the role of EI as a moderator in the interaction of job stressors, personality, and counterproductive work behaviours induced by the current pandemic(Drigas & Papoutsis, 2020).

The current paper's findings indicate that meaningful correlations exist between all the independent variables and counterproductive work behavior in the COVID-19 pandemic, with EI serving as a moderator in both cases, and all variables are statistically significant except the moderator. Academic staff has suffered numerous mental and psychological declines as a result of the current pandemic, as documented in numerous studies, and policymakers must institute reforms to strengthen their personalities in order to withstand the behavioral changes associated with CWB (Farrastama et al., 2019). Additionally, some personality development trainings may be conducted to support faculty members and their behavioral patterns in Sindh's universities.

With regards to EI, prior research has found that the capacity for perceiving, comprehending, utilizing, and managing emotions can also act as a "buffer" when individuals are confronted with stressful situations, and that the personally acquired emotional Intelligence of whom will enable them to cope with adversity and thus adapt more efficiently to their current professional positions. According to the findings of this study, EI may be a critical individual skill for protecting CWB in a current situation where maintaining the quality of life in all walks of life is a real challenge (Fouquereau et al., 2019) professionals with a high EI may use their emotional Intelligence to identify pandemic-related feelings and emotions (e.g., fear, dizziness). Thus, EI is critical in explaining workers' outcomes when comparing those with low EI to those with high EI, as both groups are impacted by the same job stressor generated by the COVID-19.

These assertions are consistent with prior research demonstrating the moderating effect of EI on the relationship between job stressor and personality and its effect on CWB. As such, increased rates of EI aid professionals in mitigating the stress caused by the COVID-19's circumstances by acting as a buffer against its negative consequences and in the process, contributing to the stabilization and maintenance of the quality of teachers' performance at universities. In essence, being more emotionally intelligent aided in attaining a higher level of accumulated stress or negative personality traits caused by the pandemic, as well as a lower prevalence of CWB. On the other hand, those with lower emotional Intelligence were found to be more stressed and had a higher CWB at work.

Thus, the current study has attempted to translate the pandemic into a possible psychological category in accordance with that logic. After this conceptualization, it can be concluded that all correlations observed during the moderating analyses are reliable, implying that the presented results will pave the way for future research to reinforce the knowledge and literature presented in this paper. In essence, academic staffs who have reported higher levels of stress as a result of COVID-19 have a higher CWB in comparison to those with higher emotional Intelligence. When it comes to personality, the results are inverted. This, in turn, enabled them to benefit from a higher level of stress-relieving and personality-enhancing trainings for employees, thereby reducing the CWB in teachers, which is the ultimate goal of ensuring economic sustainability during this time of uncertainty caused by the pandemic.

A. Limitations and research

Although the current study makes adds a new application of the literature in the COVID pandemic scenario it also contains a few limitations that could be used to guide future research. First of all, Current study adopts cross sectional data analysis. However time series analysis could offer further light on the impact of the current pandemic's stress and could better explain such behavior.

The second limiting aspect is that the study targets only self-administrative questionnaires however input from supervisors could add more essence to the analysis.

The third limiting aspect is that study covers only academic institutes; other organizational structures are not covered, so study suggests that same study can be conducted in other organizational structures.

Lastly, the personality measures chosen for this study is short version of original scale and limited to only two traits out of Big-5trait model. This selection may limit the findings of individual behavior of an employee toward his/her work.

B. Theoretical and practical Implication

The present study has a novelty to examine the moderating effect of EI on the relation of job stressor and personality traits on counterproductive work behavior in a perilous scenario characterized by COVID-19. The study also enriched the existing literature towards personality perspective in the advent of an external force (COVID-19 Pandemic) and its effect on academia's personality and behavior.

Beside theoretical implication study has some significant practical implication. Mainly, the current research study is important for the Universities because the study will help policy makers (academic Heads of university HOD'S) universities to formulate more inclusive guidelines. This study is important because this study will entail us to devise the cost-effective measures and actions to thwart CWB in segments of academia.

IV. Conclusion

Overall, the findings of the study confirm that the variables like Job stressor and Emotional Intelligence play a significant role in determination of the counterproductive work behavior the negative traits of personality too has direct impact upon Counterproductive Work Behavior of the teaching staff in the universities of Sindh during the pandemic COVID-19 whereas the moderation of Emotional intelligence between negative personality traits and Counterproductive Work Behavior is statistically significant to anticipate more counterproductive work behaviors levels on the teacher's sampling of universities of Sindh. So as to declare, those exists a higher JS reduces the employee's ability to cope with the needs of his job and therefore reduces the role of EI to

influence the teacher's CWB during the current situation by observing less negative traits of personality their behaviors at work is Counterproductive in nature. These discoveries made by the study prove that the significance of COVID-19 has affected the teacher's personality, emotional intelligence and his job stress causing counterproductive work behavior. Therefore, during the current situation requires the policy makers to initiate with the development and implementation of policies that boast EI and Personality via promoting the intervention programs to foster academic staff's morale and promote comparatively healthier working environments that reduce their job stress. In long run this sort of work atmospheres could stop or reduce the progression of stress in teachers and helping them to have their best performance in building future generation or at least to retain their jobs while the rate of unemployment are skyrocketing worldwide during COVID-19 pandemic.

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