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RECEIVED 24 January 2026

REVISED 20 April 2026

ACCEPTED 20 May 2026

PUBLISHED 05 August 2026

### CITATION

Jinadasa Y, Tantry A, Gilani SAM, Sergio R  
and Askri S (2026) Emotional intelligence  
and job satisfaction in UAE-based higher  
education: the mediating effect of self-  
efficacy among women employees.  
Front. Educ. 11:1795360.  
doi: 10.3389/feduc.2026.1795360

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# Emotional intelligence and job satisfaction in UAE-based higher education: the mediating effect of self-efficacy among women employees

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**Purpose:** This study aimed to examine the link between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction and how this relationship is mediated by self-efficacy among women working in higher education in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

**Methodology:** The sample of the study consisted of 346 higher education women employees selected by convenience sampling. The standardised tools were utilised to gather data on self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and job satisfaction. The study used a quantitative approach to test the hypotheses, employing the Structural Equation Model (SEM), to investigate the direct and mediating links between emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction.

**Findings:** According to the findings, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy have favourable effects on job satisfaction. Furthermore, self-efficacy acted as a potential mediator for the emotional intelligence variable in explaining job satisfaction in higher education women employees in the UAE.

**Research implications:** The findings suggest that enhancing both emotional intelligence and self-efficacy through targeted professional development can effectively improve job satisfaction among women in higher education.

### KEYWORDS

emotional intelligence, higher education, job satisfaction, self-efficacy, UAE, women employees

## Highlights

- Emotional intelligence (EI) boosts job satisfaction among women in higher education.
- Self-efficacy partially mediates the EI and job satisfaction relationship.
- Highlights Higher EI enhances self-efficacy, leading to greater job satisfaction.
- Findings support interventions targeting EI and self-efficacy in academia.

# 1 Introduction

Job satisfaction is widely recognised as a central indicator of employee well-being, professional fulfilment, and organisational effectiveness, particularly in higher education environments where employees are required to manage complex academic, administrative, and interpersonal demands (Khan et al., 2023; Samad et al., 2022). This issue is especially salient for women employees, whose professional experiences may be shaped by multiple workplace expectations alongside broader social and familial responsibilities (Gilani et al., 2025). In this context, identifying the psychological resources that contribute to job satisfaction is both theoretically and practically important. Among these, emotional intelligence has received growing attention because it enhances individuals' ability to perceive, regulate, and utilise emotions effectively, thereby supporting better interpersonal functioning, stress management, and adaptation to workplace challenges (Salovey and Mayer, 1990). At the same time, self-efficacy represents an important personal resource, reflecting individuals' beliefs in their capability to successfully perform tasks and manage demanding situations (Bandura, 2023; Laguna et al., 2017). Drawing on Social Cognitive Theory, self-efficacy may also help explain the process through which emotional intelligence contributes to improved job satisfaction, as emotionally intelligent individuals are more likely to develop stronger confidence in their ability to manage workplace demands effectively (Bandura, 2023). Therefore, the present study positions job satisfaction as the focal outcome among women employees in UAE-based higher education, while examining emotional intelligence as a key explanatory factor and self-efficacy as an intervening psychological mechanism that strengthens this relationship.

Emotional intelligence has mainly been discussed by various researchers as a cause that influences personal performance and job-related outcomes (Prentice, 2019). From low-level jobs to top managerial positions, emotional intelligence is turning out to be the most critical factor for improved performance at every level. This is because emotional intelligence encompasses more than just being kind to people; it also involves acting as effectively as possible when an issue arises (Krishnakumar et al., 2019). According to Rey et al. (2019), it should come as no surprise that emotional intelligence, which emphasises comprehending and utilising one's own and others' emotional states to solve issues and regulate actions, is positively correlated with the quality of friendships (Salovey and Mayer, 1990). Employees can quickly identify the principles of presentation and modify their emotions in accordance with them if they are able to properly regulate their own emotions as well as those of others (Côté, 2017). A professional culture can be established, constructive conflict resolution facilitated, and interpersonal communication enhanced by emotional intelligence (Roth et al., 2018).

According to self-efficacy theory, individual mastery expectations are the primary factors that influence behaviour change (Sherer et al., 1982). Self-efficacy has been frequently linked to performance gains and other favourable organisational outcomes (Tabatabaei et al., 2013). It has been defined as a miscible attribute depending on individual judgments of competence in particular contexts (Bandura, 2023). A person's

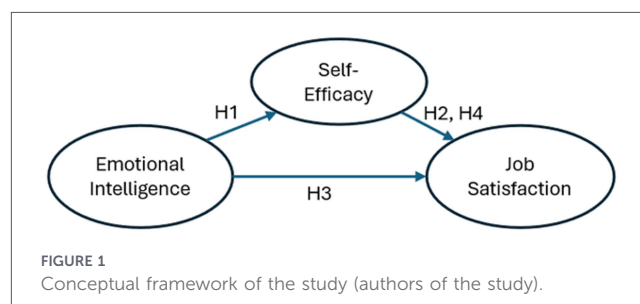
evaluation of their capacity to maximise their overall performance is known as perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1984). Individuals complete tasks with differing levels of self-efficacy based on their social support, knowledge, and ideals. When they work on projects, they are aware of their own abilities (Farina and Bodzin, 2018). Conversely, job satisfaction is the feeling of fulfilment or success that an employee gets from their employment (Judge et al., 2020). One can fulfil their basic needs or fulfil their work values because of their thoughts. It helps ascertain how much a person likes or dislikes their line of work. While some people enjoy their occupations, others find them necessary, and still others find them intolerable. Regardless of whether a person enjoys their job or aspects of it, including the type of work they do, employment satisfaction is a measure of their contentment with their job (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). As a result, job satisfaction refers to a variety of feelings and subjective perceptions that people have about their present job or occupations. Extreme job happiness and extreme dissatisfaction are two extremes of human job satisfaction.

According to the justification given above, one of the most crucial factors in assessing the efficacy and efficiency of a company is job satisfaction. According to the contemporary management paradigm, workers ought to be acknowledged and treated as unique persons with unique requirements. According to the paradigm, an excellent way to measure the level of job satisfaction in today's firms is to look at personnel, demands, and individual aspirations. The idea behind job satisfaction is that a contented worker is a happy worker, and a contented worker is a successful worker (Judge and Locke, 1993).

This study aims to probe the relationship between emotional intelligence, self-efficacy and job satisfaction. We argue that emotional intelligence and self-efficacy are positively related. Specifically, we seek to test the mediating effect of self-efficacy and how it influences the relationship between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy. We hypothesise that employees with higher self-efficacy have a significant and stronger relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. Based on the following literature review and hypotheses, we formulate the research model as shown in Figure 1.

## 1.1 Emotional intelligence

According to Salovey and Mayer (1990, p. 189), emotional intelligence is "the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to



guide one's thinking and actions." This is the most well-known definition of emotional intelligence. According to Mayer et al. (2008), emotional intelligence is a skill that can account for notable variations in an individual's approach to problem-solving and interpersonal interactions. According to Mayer and Salovey (1993), emotional intelligence is comparable to general intelligence. However, its mechanisms and expressions may vary. Greater verbal fluency in emotional domains and improved information transfer during emotional attacks are examples of manifestations, while the underlying mechanisms are emotionality, emotion management, and neural substrates.

According to Elfenbein and MacCann (2017), emotional intelligence illustrates how people vary in their capacity to select, focus on, and digest emotionally significant information. It has been demonstrated to support a range of organisational outcomes. Individual performance (Pastor, 2014), motivation (Chang and Tsai, 2022), job satisfaction (Wen et al., 2019), and job adaptability (Parmentier et al., 2019) are all significantly impacted by emotional intelligence. The association between salespeople's customer orientation and customer-related organisational performance is strongly moderated by emotional intelligence (Kearney et al., 2017). According to Davis et al. (2019), emotional intelligence and loneliness—which they defined as the gap between desired and real interpersonal relationships—are significantly correlated.

Emotional intelligence is a central construct in this study, examined as the key predictor of job satisfaction and as an antecedent of self-efficacy among women employees in UAE-based higher education. The study positions emotional intelligence within the higher education context to explain how women employees' emotional capabilities contribute directly and indirectly, through self-efficacy, to their workplace satisfaction and professional well-being.

## 1.2 Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is a person's subjective evaluation of their capacity to plan and carry out actions in particular circumstances (Schunk, 2023). According to performance, it is the perceived ability (Tladi, 2017). People who have strong self-efficacy think they can do a certain task well. On the other hand, those who have poor self-efficacy seem to doubt their ability to complete a given activity (Griffin and Moorhead, 2014; Wood et al., 2000). A person who believes well of himself gains self-confidence in his work (Guillén et al., 2018). While self-efficacy and other expectancy beliefs share the presumption that these are beliefs about one's perceived abilities, they differ in that self-efficacy is defined by an individual's perceived ability to carry out assigned task types and achieve outcomes (Pajares, 1996).

Compared to self-efficacy or self-esteem, self-efficacy is more precise and well-defined; it is also typically more developed than both (Heslin and Klehe, 2006). Although self-efficacy might be more generic, it is frequently task-specific. When people think they can achieve in a variety of circumstances, they are said to have general self-efficacy. According to McShane and Glinow (2018), people who have higher levels of self-efficacy in general also have higher self-evaluations.

## 1.3 Job satisfaction

One of the most crucial factors in assessing the efficacy and efficiency of a business is job satisfaction (Gkliati and Saiti, 2022). Employees should be addressed and acknowledged as unique individuals with unique needs, according to the contemporary management paradigm (Gerhardt and Lainer, 2011). In today's firms, a fantastic technique to measure the amount of job satisfaction is through personnel, desires, and individual goals, according to the paradigm (Hendri, 2019; Mainali and Tantry, 2022).

Although workers assess their work experiences according to their level of pleasure or discontent, there are probably a lot more elements that affect how favourably an individual views their employment (Lu et al., 2019). Based on years of intensive research, industrial and organisational psychologists have discovered several elements that seem to contribute to either job satisfaction or organisational commitment (Bashir and Gani, 2020). The increase in job satisfaction has been explained by researchers in several ways. Job features, dispositional qualities (worker characteristics), motivational theories, and social information processing (organisational characteristics) are the main strategies that have a high relationship with job satisfaction (Judge et al., 2017).

## 2 Reviews of literature

### 2.1 Theoretical framework

This study is based on Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), which holds that cognitive processes, environmental effects, and individual characteristics interact dynamically to shape behaviour (Bandura, 1986). Self-efficacy, which is a key concept in SCT, is the conviction that one can succeed in circumstances or complete tasks. SCT places a strong emphasis on personal agency and self-regulation, which is consistent with emotional intelligence (EI), which is defined as the capacity to recognise, control, and manage emotions in both self and others (Salovey and Mayer, 1990). Emotional intelligence (EI) prepares people to handle interpersonal difficulties, organisational stresses, and emotional labour in the workplace, especially in complicated contexts like higher education. According to SCT, people with high EI are more prone to form strong beliefs about their own abilities, which can have a favourable effect on job-related outcomes like job satisfaction. The present study is therefore supported by the theoretical claim that emotional intelligence raises self-efficacy, which in turn raises job satisfaction, especially for women in higher education, where role fulfilment depends on emotional resilience and confidence.

### 2.2 Conceptual framework

This study offers a conceptual model based on the SCT, where job satisfaction is the outcome variable, self-efficacy acts as a mediator, and emotional intelligence acts as the predictor variable. This theory is based on the idea that people with greater emotional intelligence are better able to comprehend and

control both their own and other people's emotional reactions, which promotes self-efficacy—the ability to handle challenging work-related tasks with confidence. According to [Guarnaccia et al. \(2018\)](#), increased self-efficacy improves task mastery, lowers stress, and boosts engagement, all of which contribute to increased job satisfaction. This approach enables a comprehensive understanding of how psychological resources impact workplace results, particularly for women working in the higher education sector, where role expectations, work-life balance, and institutional obstacles are prevalent. To evaluate this mediational model and ascertain if self-efficacy serves as a substantial conduit through which emotional intelligence influences job satisfaction, SEM is utilised. By providing evidence on the ways in which self-belief and emotional abilities interact to influence academic professional well-being, this paradigm advances both theory and practice.

## 2.3 Hypotheses formulation

A small number of studies have examined the connection between emotional intelligence and work-related behaviours like job satisfaction or organisational dedication and found no such association. Nonetheless, a descriptive study by [Baba \(2017\)](#) indicates a favourable relationship between organisational commitment and emotional intelligence. According to [Mohamadkhani and Lalardi \(2012\)](#), who conducted a descriptive study, there is a favourable correlation between the work satisfaction components of Iranian hotel employees and their emotional intelligence.

*H1: Emotional Intelligence is directly linked to job satisfaction.*

Many studies have looked at the connection between academic self-efficacy and emotional intelligence. According to [Mouton et al. \(2013\)](#), self-efficacy and emotional intelligence were favourably connected among physical education teachers; however, neither self-efficacy nor emotional intelligence was associated with age or prior teaching experience. Similar results of a positive and significant correlation between Iranian teachers' self-efficacy and emotional intelligence were also observed by [Rastegar and Memarpour \(2009\)](#). [Ordun and Akün \(2017\)](#) investigated how self-efficacy was affected by emotional intelligence and self-actualisation. They discovered that self-efficacy in college students is significantly and favourably impacted by both emotional intelligence and self-actualisation. According to [Pérez-Fuentes et al. \(2019\)](#), self-efficacy in the workplace was significantly predicted by emotional intelligence, meaning that employees with higher emotional intelligence also had higher levels of self-efficacy.

[Zampetakis et al. \(2017\)](#) discovered a favourable correlation between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and the use and modulation of emotions. However, [Tsarenko and Strizhakova \(2013\)](#) found that there is a positive correlation between self-efficacy views and customers' emotional intelligence. Additional research has examined and determined that there is a strong association between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy in the academic setting ([Akomolafe and Ogunmakin, 2014](#); [El-Sayed et al., 2014](#)). Thus, the following is how we formulate our initial hypothesis:

*H2: Emotional intelligence is positively related to self-efficacy.*

[Tsai et al. \(2011\)](#) discovered that among banking employees, self-efficacy significantly improves organisational commitment.

Recently, [Syabarrudin et al. \(2020\)](#) have demonstrated that self-efficacy significantly affects employees' organisational commitment. As a result, workers who are confident in their ability to complete a task are more likely to stick with the company. Organisational commitment is directly impacted by occupational self-efficacy, as demonstrated by [Liu and Huang \(2019\)](#). Other nursing-focused research in the literature also supports the association between these two variables ([Kang and Kim, 2014](#); [Orgambidez et al., 2019](#)). These results lead us to assume that self-efficacy and job satisfaction are positively correlated. This is because workers are more content with their jobs when they feel competent in carrying out specific tasks. The following is how we formulate our second hypothesis:

*H3: Self-efficacy is positively related to job satisfaction.*

According to [Mortan et al. \(2014\)](#), self-efficacy effectively mediates the connection between emotional intelligence and the desire to start your own business. Call centre agents with higher emotional intelligence are likely to have more client engagement involvement, as shown by [Villegas-Puyod and Charoensukmongkol \(2019\)](#). Considering these results, we postulate that a third variable mediates the association between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. In a variety of contexts, self-efficacy serves as a mediator between an independent and dependent variable. In our third hypothesis, we suggest that the association between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction is mediated by self-efficacy:

*H4: Self-efficacy is a mediator of the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction.*

## 3 Methods

### 3.1 Subjects and procedures

A survey of female employees in the higher education sector was carried out to examine the theories. Through a link posted on social media, respondents were requested to fill out the questionnaire. A sample of 346 questionnaires with a 75.7% consideration rate was obtained after 457 questionnaires were gathered, of which 103 were eliminated as unfit for study. Between January 20 and February 26, 2025, data was gathered.

### 3.2 Tool description

The Job Satisfaction Scale, developed by [Dubey \(2009\)](#), was used to measure the criterion variable job satisfaction. It is a 25-item self-report scale designed to measure job satisfaction. Respondents answered each item on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 = Strongly Disagree, 1 = Disagree, 2 = Undecided, 3 = Agree, and 4 = Strongly Agree. The scoring of the first 23 items is continuous, while the scoring of the last 2 items is reverse. The time required for completion of the scale is 5 min. The test-retest reliability of JSS, with an interval of one month, was found to be 0.64. The split-half reliability of JSS was 0.72 ([Dubey, 2009](#)). The Cronbach's alpha of the job satisfaction scale for the current study was 0.74.

The General Self-Efficacy Scale was developed by [Schwarzer and Jerusalem \(1995\)](#). It is a 10-item self-report scale designed



to measure self-efficacy. Respondents answered each item on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = not at all true, 2 = Hardly true, 3 = Moderately true, and 4 = Exactly True. The scoring of the scale is continuous, i.e., all the items are scored directly. The time required for completion of the scale is 3–5 min. The GSE Scale has good internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha levels ranging between 0.76 and 0.90 (Schwarzer and Jerusalem, 1995). The Cronbach's alpha of the general self-efficacy scale for the current study was: .79,

Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale (SEIS), developed by Schutte et al. (1998), was used to measure emotional intelligence among the selected sample. The scale consists of 33 items, three of which (5, 28 & 33) are negatively scored. Respondents reply on a 5-point Likert scale: strongly disagree = 1, disagree = 2, undecided = 3, agree = 4, and strongly agree = 5. A total score is derived by summing up all the item responses, yielding a minimum score of 33 and a maximum score of 165. Low scores indicate lower levels of emotional intelligence, and high scores indicate high emotional intelligence. The SEIS assesses perception, understanding, expression, regulating and harnessing of emotion in the self and others (Schutte et al., 1998). The alpha coefficient of the overall scale was 0.70 to 0.85, which demonstrated that the full scale was highly internally consistent and reliable. The Cronbach's alpha of SEIS for the current study was .73.

### 3.3 Data analysis

The information collected from the respondents was subjected to various statistical treatments. The data of the present study were treated by statistical software such as SPSS (21.00) and AMOS (24.0) and were analysed by applying the following statistical techniques.

Means, standard deviations and other appropriate descriptive statistics were calculated to make the data tangible. Pearson's  $r$  was applied to assess the relationships of the predictive variable and the moderator variable with the criterion variable. The study also implemented SEM to test the model. Before final analyses, data were tested for normality of the distribution, kurtosis, skewness, multicollinearity, independence of observation, homogeneity of variance, linearity and Levene's test of equality of variance. Reliability of the study tools was also calculated for the study.

## 4 Results

### 4.1 Descriptive statistics

It can be observed from Table 1 that the mean score of emotional intelligence in working women of the higher

education sector is 93.90, with a standard deviation of 9.205. The mean score of the self-efficacy measure in working women of the higher education sector is 25.10, with a SD of 5.190. In addition, on the job satisfaction measure, the mean score in working women of the higher education sector is 60.35, with a SD of 7.831.

Skewness and kurtosis indices are used to identify the normality of the data. The results suggest that the deviation of data from normality was not severe, as the values of skewness and kurtosis index between  $-1$  and  $0$  to  $+1$  on all three variables of the study, i.e., emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction in working women of the higher education sector. Data is normally distributed if the value of skewness ranges between  $-2$  and  $+2$  and if the value of kurtosis ranges between  $-7$  and  $+7$  (Hair et al., 2010). Other experts suggest that an acceptable range for skewness or kurtosis is below  $+1.5$  and above  $-1.5$  (Jaafari et al., 2023).

The observations presented in the above Table 2 show the relationship of emotional intelligence and self-efficacy with job satisfaction in working women of the higher education sector. Pearson  $r$  correlation showed that a significant relationship existed between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction ( $r = .248$ ,  $N = 346$ ,  $p = .041 < .05$  level of significance, 1-tailed) (Figure 2). It can be concluded that there is a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction in working women of the higher education sector. The findings claimed that working women have a higher level of emotional intelligence, and the level of job satisfaction in working women of the higher education sector and vice versa.

A significantly positive weak correlation was found between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy in working women of the higher education sector ( $r = .365$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $< .01$  level of significance, 1-tailed). Consequently, it can be concluded that the higher the level of emotional intelligence, the higher the level of self-efficacy in working women of the higher education sector and vice versa.

Moreover, the findings also revealed a significant positive and fair correlation between self-efficacy and job satisfaction ( $r = .589$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $< .01$  level of significance, 1-tailed). Therefore, the results claimed that the higher the level of self-efficacy, the greater the level of job satisfaction in working women of the higher education sector and vice versa.

### 4.2 Mediation analysis

Several goodness-of-fit statistics were used to determine how well the specified model fits the obtained data. Specifically, the model chi-square test, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), comparative fit index (CFI) and Tucker–Lewis index

TABLE 1 Is an illustration of descriptive statistics.

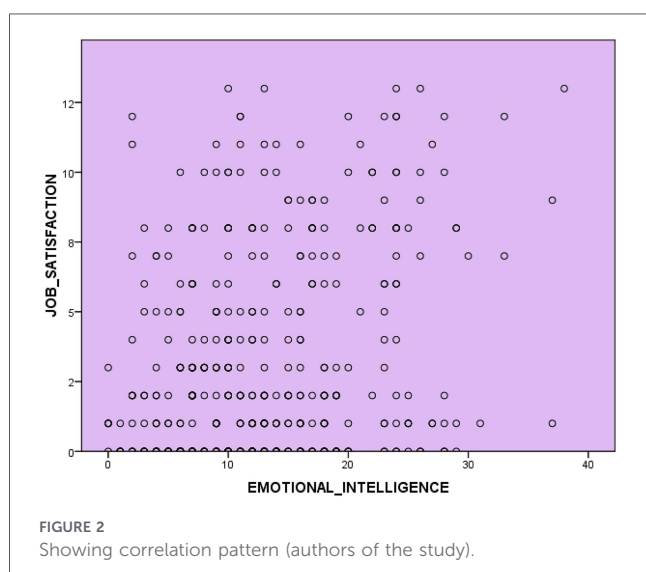
| Variable               | N   | Mean  | SD    | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|------------------------|-----|-------|-------|----------|----------|
| Emotional intelligence | 346 | 93.90 | 9.205 | -.077    | -.246    |
| Self-efficacy          | 346 | 25.10 | 5.190 | -.096    | -.298    |
| Job satisfaction       | 346 | 60.35 | 7.831 | .189     | -.315    |

TABLE 2 Correlation matrix.

| Variables              | Statistics | Emotional intelligence | Self-efficacy | Job satisfaction |
|------------------------|------------|------------------------|---------------|------------------|
| Emotional Intelligence | <i>R</i>   | –                      | .365**        | .248*            |
|                        | <i>p</i>   |                        | .001          | .041             |
| Self-efficacy          | <i>R</i>   | .365**                 | –             | .589**           |
|                        | <i>p</i>   | .001                   |               | .001             |
| Job Satisfaction       | <i>R</i>   | .248*                  | .589**        | –                |
|                        | <i>p</i>   | .041                   | .001          |                  |

\*\*Significant at 0.01 level of significance;

\*Significant at 0.05 level of significance.



(TLI) were used. A chi-square value of or near zero indicates the statistical model fits the data well; however, this criterion is influenced by sample size. Therefore, I primarily emphasised other goodness-of-fit values.

A mediation analysis was conducted to investigate whether self-efficacy mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. Conceptually speaking, a mediator is a variable that is expected to alter the strength of a causal relationship between two other variables (i.e., the dependent and independent variables; [Wu and Zumbo, 2008](#)). Relevant to the present study, these analyses were used to demonstrate the hypothesis that levels of emotional intelligence will predict/effect degree of job satisfaction in working women of the higher education sector. Furthermore, it was hypothesised that self-efficacy would mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction in working women of the higher education sector in the UAE. If individuals are high in emotional intelligence and self-efficacy, it was expected that they would demonstrate more job satisfaction and vice versa.

Statistically speaking, a mediator has an interaction effect ([Wu and Zumbo, 2008](#)). Specifically, the present study investigated mediation analysis: whether self-efficacy mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction in working women of the higher education sector.

## 4.2.1 Data analysis

To analyse and interpret the data, SPSS software version 21.0 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences, Inc., Chicago, IL, USA) and AMOS (Analysis of Moment Structure) version 24.0 were used as per the objectives and the hypotheses of this study. Moreover, univariate and multivariate normality evaluations were done to check their degree of kurtosis and skewness.

The model fit of the measurement model was examined by first examining the model fit of all the variables in the study. The correlation among variables and the hypothesis testing executed by the structural equation modelling analysis has been shown. Maximum likelihood estimation algorithms were used, where the various model fit indices were used. This includes, but is not limited to, Chi-square goodness of fit, the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA; Browne and Cudeck, 1993), Comparative fit Index (CFI; [Bentler, 1990](#)), Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI; [Bentler and Bonett, 1980](#)), Akaike Information Criterion (AIC; [Akaike, 1973, 1987](#)). RMSEA < .08 is acceptable to fit, CFI and TLI value > .90 is acceptable, > .95 is a good fit ([Hu and Bentler, 1999](#)), and AIC with a lower value has a better fit.

## 4.2.2 Measurement model assessment

Before testing the structural model, a CFA was conducted to assess the adequacy of the measurement model for emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction. As shown in [Table 3](#), the standardized factor loadings for the items were generally acceptable, ranging from 0.57 to 0.73 for emotional intelligence, 0.50 to 0.68 for self-efficacy, and 0.55 to 0.73 for job satisfaction. The composite reliability (CR) values were 0.95 for emotional intelligence, 0.83 for self-efficacy, and 0.93 for job satisfaction, all exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70, thereby supporting internal consistency. The average variance extracted (AVE) values were 0.51 for emotional intelligence, 0.51 for self-efficacy, and 0.50 for job satisfaction, indicating acceptable convergent validity.

### 4.2.2.1 Discriminant validity

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion ([Hilkenmeier et al., 2020](#), [Jaafari et al., 2023](#); [Tantry et al., 2026](#)). As shown in [Table 4](#), the square roots of AVE for emotional intelligence (0.714), self-efficacy (0.714), and job satisfaction (0.707) were greater than the corresponding inter-

TABLE 3 Confirmatory factor analysis results for the measurement model.

| Construct              | Item | Standardized loading | CR   | AVE  |
|------------------------|------|----------------------|------|------|
| Emotional intelligence | EI1  | 0.59                 | 0.95 | 0.51 |
|                        | EI2  | 0.72                 |      |      |
|                        | EI3  | 0.66                 |      |      |
|                        | EI4  | 0.68                 |      |      |
|                        | EI5  | 0.59                 |      |      |
|                        | EI6  | 0.71                 |      |      |
|                        | EI7  | 0.60                 |      |      |
|                        | EI8  | 0.57                 |      |      |
|                        | EI9  | 0.62                 |      |      |
|                        | EI10 | 0.65                 |      |      |
|                        | EI11 | 0.69                 |      |      |
|                        | EI12 | 0.63                 |      |      |
|                        | EI13 | 0.67                 |      |      |
|                        | EI14 | 0.58                 |      |      |
|                        | EI15 | 0.61                 |      |      |
|                        | EI16 | 0.64                 |      |      |
|                        | EI17 | 0.58                 |      |      |
|                        | EI18 | 0.71                 |      |      |
|                        | EI19 | 0.69                 |      |      |
|                        | EI20 | 0.73                 |      |      |
|                        | EI21 | 0.62                 |      |      |
|                        | EI22 | 0.58                 |      |      |
|                        | EI23 | 0.71                 |      |      |
|                        | EI24 | 0.63                 |      |      |
|                        | EI25 | 0.66                 |      |      |
|                        | EI26 | 0.60                 |      |      |
|                        | EI27 | 0.64                 |      |      |
|                        | EI28 | 0.68                 |      |      |
|                        | EI29 | 0.69                 |      |      |
|                        | EI30 | 0.65                 |      |      |
|                        | EI31 | 0.71                 |      |      |
|                        | EI32 | 0.69                 |      |      |
|                        | EI33 | 0.68                 |      |      |
| Self-efficacy          | SE1  | 0.52                 | 0.83 | 0.51 |
|                        | SE2  | 0.61                 |      |      |
|                        | SE3  | 0.56                 |      |      |
|                        | SE4  | 0.61                 |      |      |
|                        | SE5  | 0.50                 |      |      |
|                        | SE6  | 0.68                 |      |      |
|                        | SE7  | 0.63                 |      |      |
|                        | SE8  | 0.57                 |      |      |
|                        | SE9  | 0.65                 |      |      |
|                        | SE10 | 0.60                 |      |      |
| Job satisfaction       | JS1  | 0.71                 | 0.93 | 0.50 |

(Continued)

TABLE 3 Continued

| Construct | Item | Standardized loading | CR | AVE |
|-----------|------|----------------------|----|-----|
|           | JS2  | 0.64                 |    |     |
|           | JS3  | 0.56                 |    |     |
|           | JS4  | 0.55                 |    |     |
|           | JS5  | 0.62                 |    |     |
|           | JS6  | 0.70                 |    |     |
|           | JS7  | 0.72                 |    |     |
|           | JS8  | 0.59                 |    |     |
|           | JS9  | 0.63                 |    |     |
|           | JS10 | 0.61                 |    |     |
|           | JS11 | 0.69                 |    |     |
|           | JS12 | 0.58                 |    |     |
|           | JS13 | 0.64                 |    |     |
|           | JS14 | 0.68                 |    |     |
|           | JS15 | 0.69                 |    |     |
|           | JS16 | 0.73                 |    |     |
|           | JS17 | 0.70                 |    |     |
|           | JS18 | 0.68                 |    |     |
|           | JS19 | 0.57                 |    |     |
|           | JS20 | 0.58                 |    |     |
|           | JS21 | 0.55                 |    |     |
|           | JS22 | 0.57                 |    |     |
|           | JS23 | 0.73                 |    |     |
|           | JS24 | 0.71                 |    |     |
|           | JS25 | 0.66                 |    |     |

TABLE 4 Discriminant validity matrix.

| Construct              | Emotional intelligence | Self-efficacy | Job satisfaction |
|------------------------|------------------------|---------------|------------------|
| Emotional intelligence | 0.714                  |               |                  |
| Self-efficacy          | 0.365                  | 0.714         |                  |
| Job satisfaction       | 0.248                  | 0.589         | 0.707            |

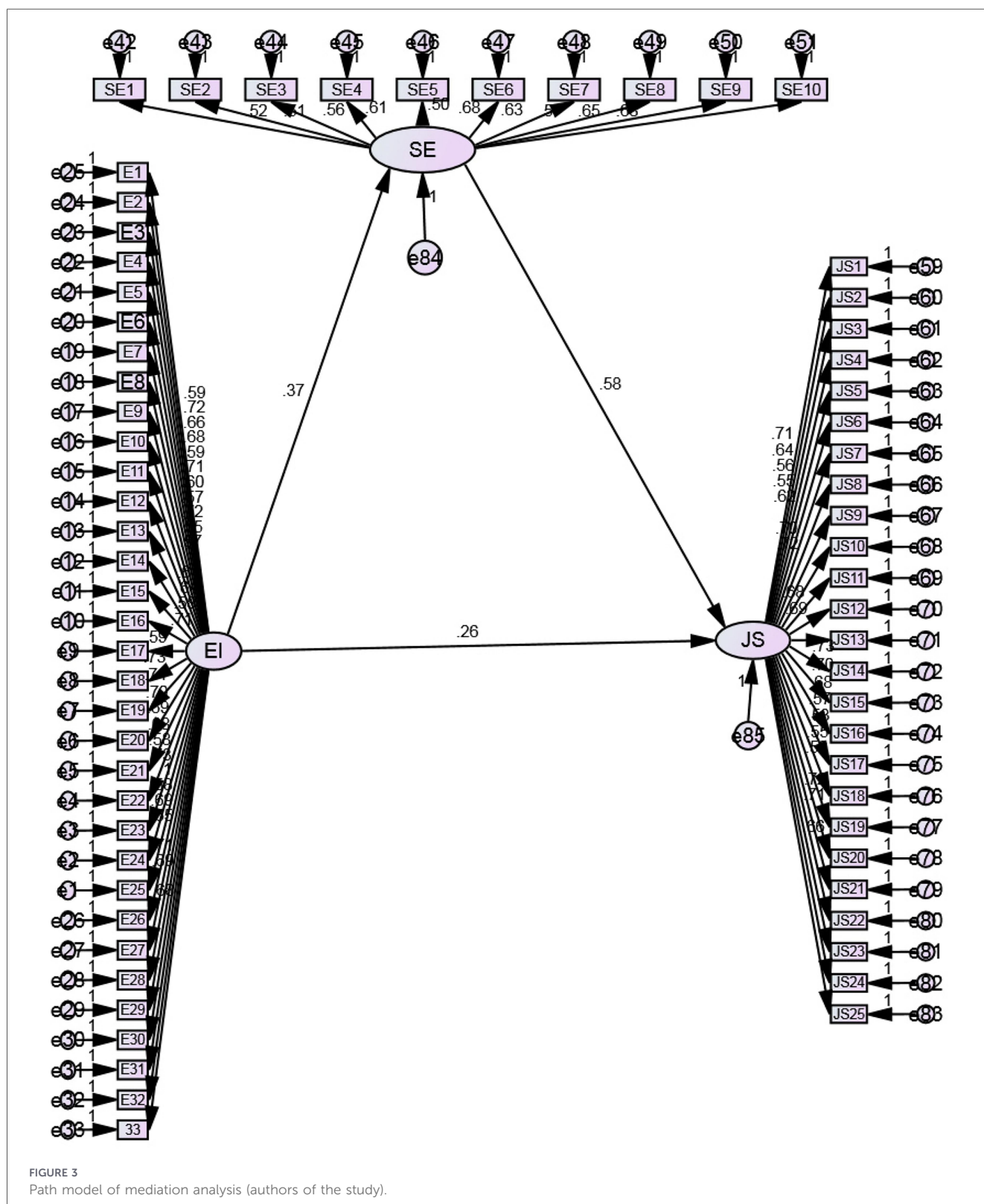
construct correlations. These results support the empirical distinctiveness of the three latent constructs and indicate that the measurement model was satisfactory for proceeding with the structural equation modelling analysis.

4.2.3 Structural model

After the successful estimation of measurement models with reasonable model fits, the structural model was used to test the hypotheses postulated in this study. The structural model permits researchers to test complex hypotheses simultaneously. A structural path was drawn from the independent variable (emotional intelligence) to both the mediator (self-efficacy) and

dependent variable (job satisfaction), and from self-efficacy to job satisfaction. The structural model fits indices were found to be good ( $X^2/df = 1.093$ ,  $TLI = .943$ ,  $CFI = .949$ ,  $SRMR = .068$ ,  $RMSEA = .035$ , C.I. 95% [.036;.061],  $P\text{-Close} = .557$ ). In this study, the path model was found to show good model fits. The structural path diagram is offered in Figure 3.

The findings of the structural path as presented in Figure 3 showed the total, direct and indirect effect of the model. When only emotional intelligence was in the model, emotional intelligence had a direct impact on job satisfaction ( $\beta = .029$ ,  $SE = .057$ ,  $p = .000 < .01$  level of significance, CI, 95%) as the bootstrapping (2000) at 95% confidence interval does not





contain a value of zero. This result supported the postulation of the  $H_1$  that emotional intelligence will predict job satisfaction in working women of the higher education sector. Furthermore, emotional intelligence significantly predicted self-efficacy. This result supports the  $H_2$  that emotional intelligence will predict self-efficacy in working women of the higher education sector.

Self-efficacy also significantly determined job satisfaction ( $\beta = .520$ ,  $SE = .056$ ,  $p = .000 < .01$  level of significance, CI, 95%), supporting  $H_3$  stating that self-efficacy will predict job satisfaction in working women of higher education sector. The beta values of emotional intelligence and self-efficacy suggest that both predictors have a significant impact on job satisfaction. Further, self-efficacy has the strongest beta coefficient, which suggests that self-efficacy emerged as the most potent predictor of job satisfaction among the two independent variables.

The indirect effect showed that the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction was partially mediated by self-efficacy. The introduction of low self-efficacy as a mediator into the model decreased the significant effect of emotional intelligence on job satisfaction ( $\beta = .112$ ,  $SE = .047$ ,  $p = .015 < .05$  level of significance, CI, 95%). The introduction of high self-efficacy as a mediator into the model increased the significant effect of emotional intelligence on job satisfaction ( $\beta = .362$ ,  $SE = .043$ ,  $p = .000 < .01$  level of significance, CI, 95%), which suggests an indication of the mediating effect of self-efficacy in the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction among working women. In other words, self-efficacy plays some role in explaining how and why emotional intelligence promotes the level of job satisfaction in working women of the higher education sector.

The results suggested that the emotional intelligence of working women through the indirect path via self-efficacy has different effects on job satisfaction than that of direct path, and the mediating impact of self-efficacy is significant. As can be seen in the analysis, when self-efficacy was low, the strength of the relationship decreased. This shows that the presence of lower levels of self-efficacy, the strength of the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction decreased significantly. Similarly, when self-efficacy was high, it was found that the strength of the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction increased significantly.

It can be concluded that the mediation effect of self-efficacy on the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction in working women of the higher education sector in the UAE was significant. Therefore,  $H_4$  is supported by the observations of the study. The path model is displayed in [Figure 3](#).

## 5 Discussions

The research examined women professionals in the UAE higher education field who were aged 26 to 45, with an average age of 33.41. Many women express a desire to achieve professional success along with financial self-reliance. Marriage and childbearing responsibilities can interfere with academic achievements and making plans. The mother faces a conflict between her ambition to succeed professionally and her love for her child. Women experience significant stress from their

multiple roles as wives, mothers, workers, and housekeepers. Women hold responsibility for their well-being and sustaining relationships with friends and family.

The responsibility to handle domestic tasks has long been viewed as an inherent duty for women. The ongoing trend shows that women are increasingly participating in both higher education and work life, resulting in reduced time availability for conventional household tasks. Traditional gender roles for husbands and wives are evolving as certain communities start to adopt shared household responsibilities as standard practice. The emerging paradigm seeks to distribute workloads fairly to allow couples to collaborate effectively in managing job demands alongside household tasks and child-management responsibilities.

The challenge of managing office duties alongside home responsibilities creates significant problems, which drives married couples to seek a balanced approach to their work and family life, including parenting. Mothers find the task difficult because their roles include multiple responsibilities like caregiving, cooking, tutoring children, cleaning the house and supplying all household necessities. The multiple responsibilities working women manage in their everyday lives lead to stress and restlessness, especially when they receive insufficient family support or work in negative work environments. The presence of these difficulties raises essential questions about working women's contentment with their jobs.

Which factors contribute to the variations observed in job satisfaction levels? Working women who demonstrate strong emotional intelligence and self-efficacy experience enhanced life quality through improved job satisfaction and happiness while becoming less susceptible to adverse mental and physical health outcomes. This study examines how emotional intelligence affects job satisfaction in female employees within the UAE higher education sector. The study examines how self-efficacy moderates the link between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction for women working in higher education in the UAE.

### 5.1 Correlational observations

It investigated emotional intelligence and its relationship with job satisfaction among women in the UAE higher education sector and aligns with findings from Rubio-Marin (2020). Our empirical examination focused on  $H_1$ , which postulated that women working in higher education would show greater job satisfaction when they exhibit higher emotional intelligence. The study demonstrated through Pearson correlation analysis that women within this industry exhibited a statistically significant positive link between their levels of emotional intelligence and job happiness. The results confirmed  $H_1$ , suggesting that working women in the higher education sector show a substantial positive link between their job happiness and emotional intelligence. The research revealed that women in this UAE industry sector with superior emotional intelligence experience greater job satisfaction, while those with inferior emotional intelligence experience diminished job satisfaction.

The findings are supported by Sy et al. (2006), who explored the multifaceted connections between emotional intelligence levels of both workers and managers and their impact on

workers' job satisfaction and performance within the food service sector. The study findings demonstrated a positive relationship between workers' emotional intelligence and their job satisfaction and performance levels. The research revealed that managerial emotional intelligence had a more significant positive relationship with job satisfaction than employee emotional intelligence, particularly for workers with lower emotional intelligence scores vs. those who scored high.

The findings demonstrated how self-efficacy and emotional intelligence are related among working women. Among women employed in higher education in the UAE, the correlational analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy, although the correlation was slight. The outcome of the analysis supported H<sub>2</sub>. The presence of higher emotional intelligence leads to greater self-efficacy, and this relationship exists in the reverse direction as well.

This study aimed to explore how job satisfaction correlates with self-efficacy among UAE-based higher education-employed female workers who face challenging situations. It was found that self-efficacy positively correlates with job satisfaction in this population, supporting H<sub>3</sub> by confirming a positive link between self-efficacy and job satisfaction. The study revealed a direct relationship between self-efficacy and job satisfaction, where increased self-efficacy leads to higher job satisfaction and decreased self-efficacy results in reduced job satisfaction. A similar study by Connors et al. (2019) discovered that job satisfaction strongly positively connects with self-efficacy.

## 5.2 Mediation analysis

The mediation analysis results demonstrated that self-efficacy exerts a positive partial mediation effect between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. Self-efficacy serves as a clarifying explanatory variable which shows how emotional intelligence produces greater job satisfaction. The findings showed that self-efficacy significantly mediated the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. Specifically, emotional intelligence was positively associated with self-efficacy, and self-efficacy, in turn, was positively associated with job satisfaction. This indicates that self-efficacy functions as an important psychological mechanism through which emotional intelligence contributes to job satisfaction among women employees in higher education. In other words, higher emotional intelligence enhances employees' beliefs in their own capabilities, which subsequently leads to greater job satisfaction.

The study indicates that self-efficacy moderates the connection between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. The findings confirmed H<sub>4</sub>, which claimed that self-efficacy functions as a mediator between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction for women working in higher education. The results aligned with Lee and Cho's (2009) study, which found that childcare instructors experienced lower burnout rates while having higher levels of job satisfaction and self-efficacy.

When emotional intelligence served as the sole independent variable within the analytical model, its effects showed a strong direct link with job satisfaction. Moreover, self-efficacy facilitates

the impact of emotional intelligence on job satisfaction by intervening as a mediator.

In the UAE, where women are increasingly participating in academic professions, the ability to manage workplace demands while balancing family obligations places significant emotional and psychological pressures on female employees. Emotional intelligence, the ability to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions (Salovey and Mayer, 1990), and self-efficacy, the belief in one's capacity to execute behaviours necessary to produce specific outcomes (Bandura, 1997), are two psychological constructs known to influence job satisfaction in demanding work environments.

The direct link between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction is consistent with existing literature. Sy et al. (2006) found that emotionally intelligent individuals are more likely to develop meaningful interpersonal relationships, effectively manage workplace stress, and maintain higher job satisfaction. Brunetto et al. (2012) similarly observed that emotional intelligence contributes to a positive work climate and facilitates better communication and cooperation, factors closely tied to employee morale and satisfaction. In the academic context, where interpersonal engagement and emotional labour are high, emotional intelligence enables professionals to manage both internal stress and external relational demands.

The study also confirmed a strong positive relationship between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy. This is well-supported by Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, which suggests that emotional regulation enhances one's belief in their competence to handle challenges. Teachers and professionals with high emotional intelligence often perceive difficulties as manageable, thereby reinforcing their self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2001). In educational institutions, such self-beliefs are critical for managing classrooms, research pressures, administrative responsibilities, and interpersonal conflicts.

Importantly, the mediating role of self-efficacy between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction reveals a key psychological mechanism. Individuals with high emotional intelligence may be more confident in their problem-solving abilities and more optimistic about outcomes, which increases their self-efficacy. This, in turn, enhances job satisfaction by fostering a sense of control and personal agency. The findings align with the work of Judge and Bono (2001) and Zhang et al. (2020), who emphasised that internal belief systems mediate the impact of personality traits and emotional abilities on job-related outcomes.

These findings have both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, they support the model of psychological capital proposed by Luthans and Youssef (2007), in which self-efficacy plays a central role in translating emotional competencies into positive workplace outcomes. Practically, they suggest that interventions aimed at improving job satisfaction among female professionals should focus not only on emotional intelligence training but also on strategies that build and reinforce self-efficacy. These may include mentorship, leadership development, and opportunities for autonomous decision-making.

Contextually, the findings take on particular significance in the UAE, where socio-cultural norms continue to shape the professional experiences of working women. While government

policies actively promote female participation in education and the workforce, many women still bear the primary responsibility for family and caregiving. Emotional intelligence allows women to navigate these intersecting demands with resilience, while self-efficacy empowers them to act with confidence in the face of competing expectations. In this dual role, both constructs are vital to well-being and sustained performance.

Furthermore, the nature of emotional labour in academia, where women often provide emotional support to students, collaborate closely with peers, and balance personal growth with institutional responsibilities, makes emotional intelligence and self-efficacy especially relevant. As Mayer, Roberts, and Barsade (2008) highlight, emotional labour can be taxing, but individuals with high emotional competence and strong self-belief are more likely to find fulfilment in such roles (Schlegel and Mortillaro, 2019).

Despite the strengths of the study, including the use of SEM analysis and a focused sample, several limitations must be acknowledged. The cross-sectional design restricts causal inference. Self-report data may be influenced by social desirability, and convenience sampling may not capture the full diversity of women professionals across different emirates or institutional types. Future research could adopt longitudinal designs and explore additional mediators or moderators such as organisational climate or perceived social support.

Therefore, this study provides valuable insights into how emotional intelligence contributes to job satisfaction among women in higher education, with self-efficacy serving as a crucial psychological bridge. These findings emphasise the importance of psychological empowerment in promoting well-being, productivity, and retention in academic settings. As UAE institutions strive to foster inclusive and supportive environments, prioritising the development of emotional and self-efficacy skills among female staff may yield significant individual and organisational benefits.

### 5.3 Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction among women employed in the UAE's higher education sector, revealing that self-efficacy partially mediates the link between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. The findings suggest that while emotional intelligence directly contributes to higher job satisfaction, self-efficacy strengthens this relationship by empowering women to effectively manage work challenges and maintain positive attitudes. These results underscore the importance of integrating emotional intelligence and self-efficacy development into professional training programs to enhance well-being, performance, and retention among women in higher education. By recognising the unique psychological resources that contribute to job satisfaction, institutions can implement targeted interventions to create supportive work environments that foster both personal and professional growth. Overall, this study provides valuable insights into mechanisms that can be leveraged to improve job satisfaction and advance gender equity in academic workplaces across the UAE.

## 5.4 Implications

Working women experience a significant positive correlation between their emotional intelligence and their job satisfaction levels. Women who display emotional intelligence demonstrate greater adaptability in workplace alterations, leading to higher career contentment. Their advanced self-management abilities, combined with teamwork skills and emotional comprehension of both them and others, alongside strong adaptability, explain this phenomenon. Interventions should focus on workplace programs that enhance women's self-efficacy and emotional intelligence. Custom-tailored training programs directed at enhancing emotional intelligence and self-efficacy can lead to increased job satisfaction for female employees. Using evaluation screening tests which measure emotional intelligence and self-efficacy levels, organisations can improve work performance. These screening tests function as indicators to predict future job satisfaction levels.

## 5.5 Recommendations

From the key findings exploring the mediating role of self-efficacy in supporting women's employment in higher education, the authors recommend that businesses and women consider adopting innovative technologies in the workplace to ease women's stability and longevity in the workplace where the benefits of innovation adoption have proven to be beneficial to the employees of businesses from other sectors and regions in past studies (Krupicka et al., 2025; Moussa et al., 2024). However, authors have highlighted the importance of adequate infrastructure to better support businesses and women adopting innovative technologies for enhancing self-efficacy, which may be based on the rurality of businesses, which can determine a digital divide (Tiemo et al., 2026). Additionally, the authors recommend that business leaders, including women, may need to adapt their leadership styles to better utilise innovation adoption for effectively managing self-efficacy for better support, possibly under-represented employee groups like women, which may especially be the case for businesses undergoing challenging periods attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic and economic recessions (Sulthan et al., 2022).

A limitation of the present study lies in its use of convenience sampling and its focus on women employees within UAE-based higher education institutions, which may restrict the generalisability of the findings. Future research should employ more representative sampling strategies, such as stratified or probability-based sampling across diverse institutional and demographic groups, to enhance external validity and broader applicability.

## Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

## Ethics statement

The studies involving humans were approved by Westford University College Ethics Committee. The studies were conducted in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

## Author contributions

YJ: Supervision, Investigation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Methodology. AT: Validation, Formal analysis, Visualization, Writing – review & editing, Funding acquisition, Supervision, Writing – original draft. SG: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Formal analysis. RS: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, methodology, supervision, validation. SA: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Data curation, Validation, Conceptualization.

## Funding

The author(s) declared that financial support was not received for this work and/or its publication.

## Conflict of interest

The author(s) declared that this work was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

## Generative AI statement

The author(s) declared that generative AI was not used in the creation of this manuscript.

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