

## Navigating the School to Work Transition: The Interplay Between Emotional Intelligence and Anxiety in Fresh Graduate at Company X

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### Abstract

The transition from academic to professional life often creates psychological pressure for fresh graduates, particularly amidst intense job competition and post-pandemic economic uncertainty. Emotional intelligence (EQ) is believed to play a crucial role in helping individuals manage anxiety during this career transition. This study aims to analyze the relationship between emotional intelligence and work-related anxiety among fresh graduates at Company X. Using a quantitative correlational design with a cross-sectional approach, this research involved 230 fresh graduates selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale (SEIS) and the Career Anxiety Scale (CAS), both of which have proven validity and reliability. Data analysis was conducted using Spearman's rho correlation test. The results revealed a significant negative correlation between EQ and anxiety ( $r = -0.437$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that higher levels of emotional intelligence are associated with lower levels of anxiety. The majority of participants were categorized as having moderate EQ (71.7%) and moderate anxiety (53.9%). These findings confirm that emotional intelligence serves as a psychological resource that helps new graduates manage stress and uncertainty during career transitions. The practical implications suggest that organizations should integrate EQ-based interventions into orientation and training programs for new employees to enhance emotional resilience and work readiness among young workers.

**Keywords:** emotional intelligence, fresh graduate, anxiety, career transition, work readiness

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## INTRODUCTION

The world of work is one of the most challenging phases in the lives of recent graduates (Varadinov et al., 2022). The transition from an academic environment to a professional one often entails considerable psychological strain. Such anxiety affects not only individuals' readiness during the recruitment process but also their ability to maintain performance and adapt within the workplace (Vandana et al., 2025). According to Dewantari and Soetjningsih (2022), anxiety and negative thoughts arise when individuals perceive themselves as incapable of meeting the challenges they face; when people feel inadequate, they are more prone to negative thinking patterns that intensify anxiety. In job-seeking contexts, this condition is common among fresh graduates who lack sufficient work experience and feel unprepared to compete in the labor market. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, these challenges have intensified due to reduced employment opportunities, heightened competition, and economic uncertainty, thereby increasing the psychological burden on new graduates (Elfina & Andriany, 2023).

Emotional intelligence, or emotional quotient (EQ), has been identified as a critical factor in helping individuals cope with anxiety during the early stages of their careers. Cobb and Mayer (2000) conceptualized EQ as the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and use emotions adaptively to guide thoughts and actions, while Goleman (1995) expanded this concept into core competencies, including self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Individuals with high EQ tend to manage emotions effectively, navigate social interactions skillfully, and respond adaptively to stressors in professional contexts. Recent research suggests that EQ is foundational not only for personal wellbeing but also for career readiness and workplace functioning, especially in uncertain environments (Kašparová & Trávníčková, 2025).

Emerging research has explored links between EQ and workplace outcomes. A systematic review of emotional competence training indicates that structured programs can improve employees' emotion regulation, empathy, and stress management in organizational settings (Mehler et al., 2024). This aligns with findings from studies on emotional intelligence, which show that EQ contributes to mental clarity, emotional stability, and preparedness for employment demands among graduates, suggesting that higher EQ is associated with better stress and stability management in early career phases (Ku & Abraham, 2025).

Empirical studies from Indonesian contexts also underscore the significance of emotional intelligence for fresh graduates. For example, research examining emotional intelligence and self-efficacy in relation to anxiety in facing work challenges found that these psychological resources together explained a significant portion of variance in employment anxiety among fresh graduates (Nastiti, 2024). This suggests that while EQ contributes to emotional adjustment, its effects may interplay with other personal competencies in shaping anxiety responses. Complementarily, research on emotional intelligence and workplace support found that EQ is associated with job satisfaction and positive psychosocial outcomes, highlighting the broader role of emotional competencies in organizational functioning (Muzakki et al., 2024).

Beyond direct associations with anxiety or adjustment, emotional intelligence also influences broader career development processes. Studies exploring emotional intelligence and career adaptability indicate that individuals with higher EQ exhibit stronger adaptive responses to employment demands, thereby supporting psychological



flexibility and resilience during early career transitions (Nguyễn et al., 2024). These findings suggest that EQ not only buffers stress but also enhances skills critical for navigating career uncertainties.

Despite these insights, the relationship between emotional intelligence and anxiety in workplace contexts is not universally straightforward. Research in broader organizational settings suggests that emotional intelligence interacts with work climate, job stress, and other psychosocial factors to influence outcomes such as job satisfaction and wellbeing, highlighting the complex, context-dependent nature of psychological responses in work environments (Castillo-López & Domínguez, 2024). Additionally, studies on employment stress and anxiety among student populations indicate that factors such as social support and psychological resilience mediate the effects of stress on anxiety, suggesting that emotional regulation resources operate within a network of psychosocial influences (Wang & Zhang, 2025).

Taken together, these findings highlight that while EQ is an essential psychological resource for emotional management and career adaptation, the specific mechanisms by which EQ relates to work-related anxiety require further investigation, particularly in organizational contexts and among fresh graduates. Most existing research in this area has focused on academic samples, general employee groups, or broad psychosocial outcomes, with limited attention to fresh graduates entering specific workplace environments and to the simultaneous use of validated instruments such as the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale (SEIS) and Career Anxiety Scale (CAS).

Despite the growing body of literature emphasizing the role of emotional intelligence (EQ) in facilitating career adaptation and reducing psychological distress, most existing studies have focused on academic samples, general employee populations, or broad psychosocial outcomes, with limited attention given to fresh graduates transitioning into specific organizational contexts. Furthermore, few studies have employed validated instruments such as the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale (SEIS) and the Career Anxiety Scale (CAS) to examine the relationship between EQ and anxiety within a single corporate setting, particularly in the Indonesian context. To address this research gap, the present study aims to analyze the relationship between emotional quotient (EQ) and work-related anxiety among fresh graduates at Company X, specifically investigating whether a negative correlation exists between these two variables. By addressing this question, the present study contributes to the broader literature on emotional intelligence and workplace psychology by offering new empirical evidence from an Indonesian corporate setting. It also provides practical insights for organizations to develop EQ-based interventions in onboarding and early-career training programs to strengthen emotional resilience and work readiness among young employees.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional design with a correlational analysis approach. The independent variable in this research was emotional quotient (EQ), while the dependent variable was career-related anxiety. The study was conducted among fresh graduates working at Company X, with a total population of 500 employees. The research site was chosen because the company possesses a distinctive characteristic most of its employees are recent graduates currently undergoing a transition from the



academic environment to the professional workforce. This makes it an ideal setting to examine the relationship between emotional regulation ability and work-related anxiety.

The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, with specific inclusion criteria: participants were classified as young adults (aged 18–29 years), aligning with the general age range used to define fresh graduates. They had been working for 1 to 2 years after graduating from higher education. The total sample consisted of 230 employees. Participation in this study was voluntary, and all participants provided informed consent before completing the instruments, ensuring adherence to ethical research principles.

Two standardized and psychometrically validated psychological scales were used in this study. The first instrument, the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale (SEIS), was developed by Schutte et al. (1998) to measure EQ. This 33-item scale assesses five dimensions: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Each item was rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). In this study, SEIS demonstrated high internal consistency (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .912$ ). The construct validity was confirmed through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), which yielded acceptable fit indices ( $\chi^2/df = 2.41$ , CFI = 0.94, TLI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.061), indicating a good model fit. The second instrument, the Career Anxiety Scale (CAS), was developed by Tsai et al. (2017) to measure work-related anxiety. This 25-item instrument assesses cognitive, emotional, and behavioral anxiety. Responses were collected on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The scale showed strong reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .896$ ) and good construct validity based on CFA results ( $\chi^2/df = 2.58$ , CFI = 0.92, TLI = 0.91, RMSEA = 0.068). Both instruments have been widely validated in previous research across diverse cultural and occupational contexts.

Data were collected via an online questionnaire distributed through the company's internal communication platform. The survey took approximately 15–20 minutes to complete. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw at any time, and the confidentiality of their responses. To minimize common method bias, participants were assured anonymity, and items from the two scales were randomly ordered.

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 26. Prior to conducting the correlation analysis, the data were screened for missing values and to assess statistical assumptions. Normality was tested using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test and Q-Q plots, while linearity and homoscedasticity were assessed via scatterplots and residual analysis. Because the data did not meet the assumption of normality, Spearman's rank correlation was used to examine the relationship between EQ and career-related anxiety. The significance level was set at  $p < .05$ .

The cross-sectional design limits causal inference, as data were collected at a single point in time. Additionally, the use of self-report instruments may introduce common method bias and social desirability effects, although procedural steps were taken to minimize these risks.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The initial stage of data analysis involved processing the raw data using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). To enhance the interpretation of the



findings, two additional data visualizations were incorporated. These include: (1) a double bar chart comparing the categorical distribution of Emotional Quotient (EQ) and Anxiety (Low, Medium, and High), and (2) a scatter plot with a regression line illustrating the negative relationship between total EQ and total Anxiety scores. This procedure aimed to provide a clearer descriptive statistical overview of both variables following data transformation. Subsequently, participants were categorized into three ordinal levels low, moderate, and high according to the scoring criteria of each measured construct.:

#### Descriptive Statistical Test

The descriptive findings revealed that the majority of respondents had a moderate emotional quotient (EQ), accounting for 71.7% of the total participants. This indicates that most fresh graduates at Company X demonstrate an adequate ability to recognize and manage emotions, though not yet at an optimal level. Meanwhile, 14.3% of respondents were categorized as having low EQ, and only 14.0% displayed high EQ. These results suggest that approximately 86% of fresh graduates still need to further develop their emotional regulation and self-awareness skills to better cope with workplace pressures.

**Table 1.**

Categorization of Emotional Quotient (EQ)

Interval	Category	Frequency	Percentage
$X < 142.71$	Low	33	14,3%
$142.71 \leq X < 151.02$	Moderate	165	71,7%
$X \geq 151.02$	High	32	14%
Notes:			
Minimum	136		
Maximum	159		
Mean	146.87		
SD	4.156		

Regarding the anxiety variable, 53.9% of respondents were classified within the moderate anxiety category, reflecting a tendency to experience anxiety when facing workplace demands, although not at a severe level. In contrast, 17.4% of respondents exhibited high anxiety, indicating that a considerable portion of fresh graduates still struggle with adaptation and feelings of pressure within the professional environment. Only 28.7% of respondents demonstrated low levels of anxiety, suggesting that while some individuals can manage their emotional responses effectively, the majority remain vulnerable to work-related psychological strain.



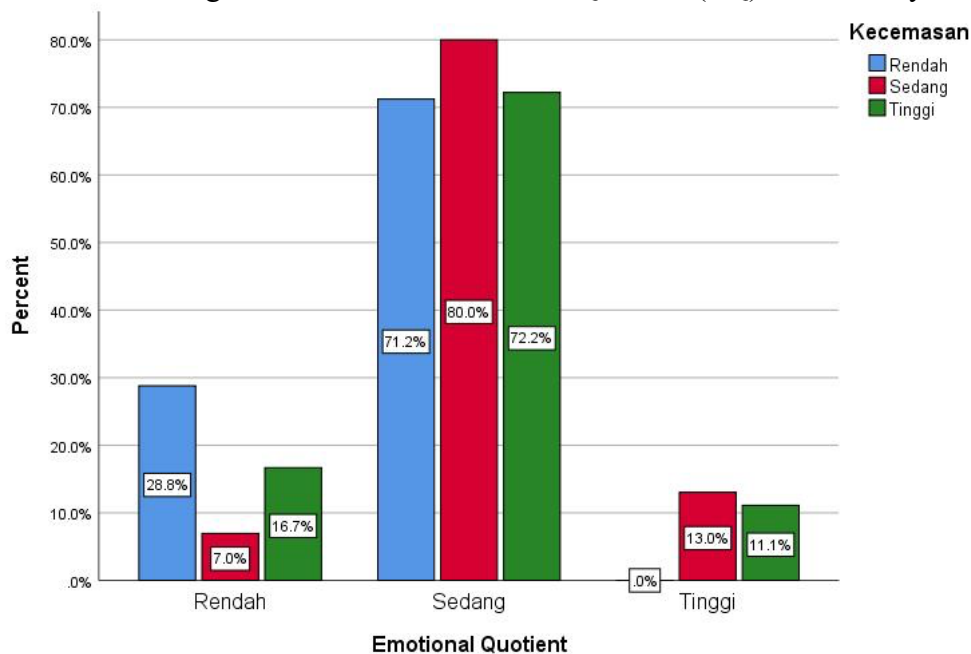
**Table 2.**  
 Categorization of Anxiety

Interval	Category	Frequency	Percentage
$X < 67.36$	Low	66	28,7%
$67.36 \leq X < 100.65$	Moderate	124	53,9%
$X \geq 100.65$	High	40	17,4%
Notes:			
Minimum	58		
Maximum	108		
Mean	84		
SD	16.645		

As shown in Graph 1, most respondents fall within the medium category for both EQ (71.7%) and Anxiety (53.9%). A smaller percentage are in the low category (EQ: 14.3%; Anxiety: 28.7%), while only a few belong to the high category (EQ: 14.0%; Anxiety: 17.4%). This visual pattern reinforces the descriptive data presented in Tables 1 and 2, suggesting that the majority of respondents have a moderate ability to recognize and manage emotions while still experiencing a moderate level of workplace anxiety. This indicates that emotional regulation skills among fresh graduates are generally adequate but not yet optimal, as moderate anxiety still exists despite average emotional competence.

**Graph 1.**

Percentage distribution of Emotional Quotient (EQ) and Anxiety levels



Normality testing using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test indicated that the Emotional Quotient (EQ) variable had a significance value of .004 ( $p < .05$ ), and the career anxiety variable had a significance value of .000 ( $p < .05$ ). These results suggest



that both datasets deviate from normality. Consequently, Spearman's rho correlation test, a nonparametric alternative, was selected as the appropriate method to examine the relationship between the two variables.

**Table 3.**  
 Results of Normality Test for Emotional Quotient (EQ) and Anxiety

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test			
		SEIS	CAS
N		230	230
Normal Parameters <sup>a,b</sup>	Mean	146.87	84.00
	Std. Deviation	4.156	16.645
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.074	.239
	Positive	.057	.174
	Negative	-.074	-.239
Test Statistic		.074	.239
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.004 <sup>c</sup>	.000 <sup>c</sup>

#### Linearity Test

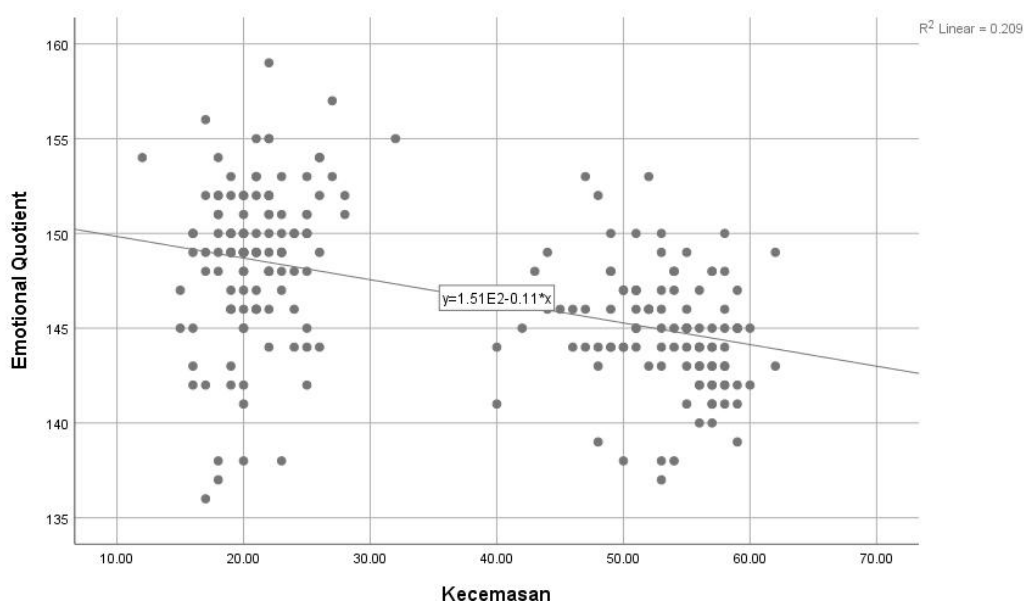
Furthermore, the linearity test between Emotional Quotient (EQ) and anxiety produced a significant linearity value of .000 ( $p < .01$ ), indicating a statistically significant linear relationship between the two constructs. The deviation from linearity value was .139 ( $p \geq .05$ ), signifying no substantial deviation from the assumption of linearity. Thus, the relationship between EQ and career anxiety can be considered consistently linear and statistically significant, confirming that higher levels of emotional intelligence tend to be associated with lower levels of work-related anxiety among fresh graduates at Company X.

**Table 4.**  
 Results of Linearity Test for Emotional Quotient (EQ) and Anxiety

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Emotional Quotient Anxiety	Between Groups	(Combined)	1421.289	36	.000	.000	.000
		Linearity	825.788	1	.000	.000	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	595.501	35	.139	.139	.139
Within Groups			2534.054	193			
Total			3955.343	229			

The downward slope of the regression line clearly indicates a negative linear relationship between the two variables: as EQ increases, Anxiety decreases. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2 = 0.209$ ) indicates that approximately 20.9% of the variance in Anxiety is explained by differences in EQ. In comparison, the remaining variance (79.1%) is attributable to other psychosocial factors, such as work stress, social support, and personality traits. The negative slope line visually supports the hypothesis that individuals with higher emotional intelligence tend to experience lower anxiety when adapting to workplace demands.





**Figure 1.** Scatter Plot with a Negative Linear Relationship between Emotional Quotient (EQ) and Anxiety.

#### Hypothesis Test

As presented in Table 5, the negative correlation coefficient indicates that the relationship between EQ and Anxiety is inverse and statistically significant. The 95% confidence interval  $(-.55, -.30)$  suggests that the true population correlation likely falls within this range, confirming the robustness of the observed relationship. The inclusion of confidence intervals follows good statistical reporting practices, providing an estimate of the precision of the results. Taken together, these findings confirm that Emotional Quotient (EQ) has a significant negative relationship with Anxiety among fresh graduates at Company X. The visual patterns and inferential results jointly indicate that emotional intelligence serves as a psychological buffer against work-related anxiety during early career adaptation.

Based on the results of the data analysis using the Spearman's rank correlation test, the correlation coefficient between Emotional Quotient (EQ) and career anxiety was found to be  $r = -.437$  with a significance value of  $p = .000$  ( $p < .01$ ). The negative correlation coefficient indicates an inverse relationship between the two variables, meaning that the higher the respondents' level of EQ, the lower their level of anxiety. This demonstrates a statistically significant and negative association between emotional intelligence and anxiety among fresh graduates working at Company X.



**Table 5.**  
 Results of Hypothesis Testing for Emotional Quotient (EQ) and Anxiety

			Emotional Quotient	Anxiety
Spearman's rho	Emotional Quotient	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.437**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	230	230
	Anxiety	Correlation Coefficient	-.437**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	230	230

**Table 6.**  
 Results of Hypothesis Testing for Emotional Quotient (EQ) and Anxiety

	r (Spearman)	p-value	95% Confidence Interval (CI)	N
Emotional Quotient* Anxiety	-.437	<.01	-.55, -.30	230

The findings suggest that individuals with higher emotional intelligence tend to experience less anxiety when facing workplace challenges. Descriptive data show that the majority of respondents fell within the moderate EQ category (71.7%), while most also exhibited moderate levels of anxiety (53.9%). This pattern indicates that although most fresh graduates possess adequate emotional management skills, they still experience a moderate degree of anxiety, likely related to the process of adaptation within a new professional environment.

## Discussion

The present results are consistent with the findings of Kumar et al. (2021), who reported a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and anxiety among young adults, suggesting that emotional sensitivity can heighten vulnerability to anxiety. Similarly, Hatimah et al. (2023) emphasized that fresh graduates' anxiety regarding employment transitions is also influenced by parental social support, implying that emotional regulation alone is insufficient to reduce anxiety without external support systems. In the context of work readiness, Chand et al. (2019) found that EQ is positively associated with job skills and employer satisfaction among fresh graduates. However, high performance expectations can simultaneously act as a source of psychological stress. Along similar lines, Sankaran and Kumar (2019) stressed that EQ should be integrated into the development of graduates' soft skills, as it enhances employability but may also increase a sense of responsibility and, consequently, anxiety if not balanced with effective coping strategies. Moreover, Qiu and Ling (2024) demonstrated that EQ contributes substantially to organizational commitment among new employees; however, the transition from academic to professional life still poses emotional challenges even for individuals with high EQ.



Additional studies also reinforce these findings. Zubieta (2024) highlighted that EQ influences work behavior and even accident risk, indicating that the transition from education to employment remains psychologically taxing. Puspananda and Rahmawati (2020) found that anxiety, particularly that associated with cognitive demands, is significantly affected by EQ; students with higher emotional intelligence achieved better academic outcomes despite stress. Similarly, Sinekha et al. (2024) reported that high EQ enhances individuals' resilience in facing both academic and psychological pressures. These results collectively affirm that EQ serves as a crucial buffer, helping individuals regulate emotional responses and cope with environmental stressors, particularly during early career development.

The implications of these findings are twofold. First, emotional intelligence plays a significant role in determining the degree of anxiety experienced by fresh graduates in the workplace. Second, under certain conditions, individuals with high EQ may also become more emotionally sensitive to job-related demands, which paradoxically can increase anxiety rather than reduce it. This aligns with the findings of Hjalmarsson & Dåderman (2022), who observed that individuals with lower EQ are more prone to interpret workplace conditions as threatening, leading to heightened emotional distress. Additionally, Srivastava and Jaiswal (2022) asserted that EQ is a key predictor of professional success; however, competitive pressure may cause individuals with high EQ to experience greater emotional strain if they lack adequate social support and emotion-regulation strategies.

In conclusion, the results of this study confirm that emotional quotient (EQ) significantly influences career anxiety among fresh graduates. Individuals with higher EQ are better equipped to manage work-related stress and emotional challenges, thereby reducing their overall anxiety levels. These findings highlight the importance of integrating emotional intelligence development into professional preparation programs and recruitment processes. By prioritizing emotional competence as a key component in employee selection and training, organizations can help foster a workforce that is not only technically capable but also psychologically resilient in managing the pressures of modern professional life.

## CONCLUSION

This study reveals a significant negative relationship between emotional intelligence (EQ) and career-related anxiety among fresh graduates at Company X. The findings indicate that individuals with higher EQ tend to experience lower anxiety upon entering the workforce. This suggests that the ability to regulate emotions, maintain self-awareness, and adapt to social environments plays a crucial role in helping new graduates manage stress and uncertainty during the transition into professional life. The majority of respondents demonstrated moderate levels of both EQ and anxiety, suggesting that although they possess adequate emotional competence, further development is needed to enhance their adaptability and emotional resilience in professional settings.

Beyond the empirical findings, this study contributes to the theoretical understanding of career adaptation by confirming and extending its relevance within the specific context of Indonesian fresh graduates. It provides empirical evidence that emotional intelligence functions as an adaptive psychological resource that facilitates smoother career transitions. However, several limitations must be acknowledged,



including the cross-sectional research design, which prevents causal inference, reliance on self-report measures, which may introduce bias; and limited generalizability due to data collection from a single company and industry sector. Future studies are recommended to employ longitudinal designs to examine causal relationships, explore potential mediating variables such as social support or coping strategies, and investigate moderating factors like job type or organizational culture. Replicating this research across diverse industry sectors and countries is also encouraged to enhance the external validity and generalizability of the findings.

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