

The effect of emotional intelligence levels of blue-collar workers on their feelings of intent to revenge: A study in the textile industry

Mavi yaka çalışanların duygusal zekâ düzeylerinin intikam niyeti hissetmelerine etkisi: Tekstil sektöründe bir araştırma

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between emotional intelligence and the intent to seek revenge among blue-collar employees in the textile industry. The study's sample consists of 389 blue-collar employees working in textile factories in Bursa, one of Turkey's key industrial hubs. Data were collected through an online survey using snowball sampling. Data were analysed using SPSS and AMOS. Following validity and reliability analyses, the research hypothesis was tested via structural equation modelling. The model fit indices (CMIN/DF = 4.42; CFI = 0.95; RMSEA = 0.074) indicated acceptable model-data fit. Structural model results revealed a statistically significant and negative relationship between emotional intelligence and intent to revenge ($\beta = -0.69$; $t = 3.643$; $p < 0.01$). The findings suggest that employees with high levels of emotional intelligence tend to respond more constructively to negative organisational experiences. In contrast, those with lower levels are more prone to revenge-related attitudes. The results underscore the importance of emotional intelligence as a psychological resource for promoting organisational harmony and employee well-being, and highlight the need for employee support programs in labour-intensive industries such as textiles.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Intent to Revenge, Blue-Collar Employees

Jel Codes: M12, M14, I31

Öz

Bu çalışma, tekstil sektöründe çalışan mavi yaka personelin duygusal zekâ düzeyleri ile intikam niyetleri arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırmanın örneklemini, Türkiye'nin önemli üretim merkezlerinden biri olan Bursa ilinde tekstil fabrikalarında çalışan toplam 389 mavi yaka personel oluşturmuştur. Veriler, kartopu örnekleme yöntemiyle çevrimiçi anket aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Verilerin analizinde SPSS ve AMOS paket programları kullanılmış; geçerlilik ve güvenilirlik analizlerinin ardından yapısal eşitlik modeli ile hipotez testi gerçekleştirilmiştir. Modelin uyum indeksleri (CMIN/DF = 4,42; CFI = 0,95; RMSEA = 0,074) kabul edilebilir düzeyde çıkmıştır. Yapısal modelde elde edilen analiz sonuçlarına göre, duygusal zekâ ile intikam niyeti arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı ve negatif yönlü bir ilişki bulunmuştur ($\beta = -0,69$; $t = 3,643$; $p < 0,01$). Araştırma sonucunda, duygusal zekâ düzeyi yüksek mavi yaka çalışanların, örgütsel olumsuzluklara karşı daha yapıcı tepkiler verme eğiliminde olduğu, duygusal zekâ düzeyi düşük bireylerin ise intikam niyetine daha yatkın olduğu saptanmıştır. Elde edilen bulgular, duygusal zekânın örgütsel barış ve çalışan refahı açısından önemli bir psikolojik kaynak olduğunu ortaya koymakta; tekstil sektörü gibi emek yoğun alanlarda çalışan destek programlarının bu doğrultuda şekillendirilmesi gerektiğine işaret etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Duygusal Zekâ, İntikam Niyeti, Mavi Yaka Çalışanlar

JEL Kodları: M12, M14, I31

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Introduction

Despite the advancement of industrialisation and the transformation in production technologies, blue-collar workers remain at the heart of industrial activities. Particularly in developing countries like Turkey, the textile sector is one of the primary sectors where this labour is most evident. The textile industry in Turkey is a critical element of the economy, not only because of its export volume but also because it generates a vast number of jobs (TÜİK, 2024). However, the structural characteristics of this sector—such as production pressure, hierarchical organisational structures, low participation in decision-making, and limited promotion opportunities—lay the groundwork for perceptions of emotional exhaustion, ostracism, and injustice, especially among blue-collar workers (ILO, 2019; Development Library, 2023).

The reactions of individuals to workplace adversity are products of not only cognitive but also emotional processes. The intent to revenge, which emerges following employees' experiences such as injustice, being insulted, or feeling undervalued, stands out as a significant problem in organisations (Aquino et al., 2001: 53). Intent to revenge is a reaction involving the desire to reciprocate a perceived wrong, often manifesting in aggressive or passive-aggressive behaviours (Tripp and Bies, 2009: 17). Such intentions reduce cooperation, damage organisational commitment, and create an atmosphere of distrust in the production environment (Jones, 2009: 527).

In this context, emotional intelligence, a vital personal resource that determines how individuals respond to negative experiences, is receiving increasing attention in the organisational psychology literature. Emotional intelligence is the capacity of an individual to recognise their own and others' emotions, to regulate these emotions, and to use them effectively in social relationships (Salovey and Mayer, 1990: 185). Goleman (1995: 13) emphasised that success in the workplace is closely related not only to cognitive competence but also to emotional skills such as emotional awareness, empathy, and self-control. Specifically, the dimension of managing emotions increases an individual's capacity to cope with feelings such as stress, anger, and hostility, thereby limiting destructive tendencies, such as revenge (Bar-On, 2006; Zeidner et al., 2004).

Research indicates that individuals with high emotional intelligence prefer more constructive and reconciliatory paths during negative organisational experiences, whereas those with low emotional intelligence are more prone to reactive, angry, and harmful behaviours (McCullough et al., 2001; Schutte et al., 2001). This situation is particularly important for blue-collar workers in labour-intensive sectors like textiles, who often face physical and psychological burdens. In this group, communication with managers tends to be more limited, channels for seeking justice are weaker, and experienced negativities can more easily be personalised and transformed into a sense of revenge (Barsade and Gibson, 2007: 38).

In the literature, negative relationships have been identified between emotional intelligence and aggression, forgiveness, conflict management, and the tendency to forgive; it has been stated that when emotional intelligence levels are high, individuals show less destructive reactions (Wong and Law, 2002; Eldor and Shoshani, 2016). In this framework, it can be said that emotional intelligence is a strategic resource not only for individual adaptation but also for organisational peace and productivity. Therefore, the emotional intelligence levels of blue-collar personnel in the textile sector are critical for understanding how they develop attitudes toward their organisational experiences.

This study investigates the risk that blue-collar workers in the textile industry develop an "intent to revenge" as a response to workplace stressors—such as production pressure and hierarchical constraints—and examines how their level of emotional intelligence influences these destructive behavioural tendencies.

In this regard, the hypothesis that employees with high emotional intelligence tend to approach adversities more constructively and sensibly, whereas those with low emotional intelligence are more prone to revenge, has been tested. The findings are expected to make valuable contributions to improving human resources management, employee assistance programs, and workplace policies. This research is significant because it identifies emotional intelligence as a critical psychological resource for fostering organisational harmony and employee well-being, providing a scientific foundation for developing targeted support programs in labour-intensive sectors.

Theoretical background

Emotional intelligence is a multidimensional construct encompassing individuals' capacities to recognise their own emotions, understand the emotions of others, regulate these emotions, and use

them effectively in social relationships (Salovey and Mayer, 1990: 185). This competence contributes to the healthy maintenance of an individual's relationships both with themselves and their environment. Goleman (1995: 5) regards emotional intelligence as one of the primary determinants of success in professional life, emphasising that it exerts a stronger influence than cognitive intelligence.

The four-dimensional emotional intelligence model developed by Wong and Law (2002) – comprising Self-Emotion Appraisal, Others' Emotion Appraisal, Use of Emotion, and Regulation of Emotion – provides an effective framework for analysing employees' emotional processes and their reflections on job performance, particularly within an organisational context. According to this model, individuals with high emotional intelligence tend to exhibit more constructive, solution-oriented, and positive behaviours in stressful or conflict-ridden environments (Mayer et al., 2016: 291).

Intent to revenge is the desire of an individual to cause harm in response to perceived injustice or harmful behaviours directed toward them (Aquino et al., 2001: 53). This intent is mostly triggered by emotions such as anger, resentment, ostracism, and the search for justice, emerging strongly in individuals who believe they have been treated unfairly. Tripp and Bies (2009) state that revenge behaviours can damage relationships not only at the individual level but also at the organisational level, paving the way for long-term conflicts. Perceived organisational injustices, low perceived support, and conflicts with managers are among the significant factors that increase the intent to revenge.

Emotional intelligence is a vital personal resource that determines an individual's capacity to manage negative emotional states, control aggressive impulses, and resolve conflicts through an empathetic perspective (Zeidner et al., 2004: 371). Studies show that individuals with high emotional intelligence are more reconciliatory, empathetic, and prone to forgiveness in conflict situations (Eldor and Shoshani, 2016). In this respect, an individual's ability to regulate the desire for revenge or replace it with constructive responses is closely related to their level of emotional intelligence. Bar-On (2006: 14) notes that individuals with high emotional intelligence exhibit more forgiving, less hostile, and less destructive tendencies. In this context, it can be argued that emotional intelligence mitigates the intent to seek revenge.

This relationship becomes even more striking in the context of blue-collar workers. Blue-collar workers are employed in physical labour-intensive sectors such as production, construction, and maintenance, and often lack opportunities to participate in managerial processes. Due to factors such as status differences, low wages, high workloads, limited social support, and authoritarian management styles, these employees are more likely to experience feelings of ostracism and injustice within the organisation (Skarlicki and Folger, 1997: 435). The inability to manage emotional reactions under such conditions can lead to a desire for revenge.

At this point, the "regulation of emotion" dimension of emotional intelligence plays a critical role. Blue-collar employees with developed emotional intelligence can express their feelings more healthily in cases of injustice. Instead of converting emotional reactions directly into aggression or retaliation, they may prefer to use social communication, mediation, or feedback mechanisms (Zeidner et al., 2004: 375). This skill prevents workplace adversities from turning into conflicts, thereby supporting both employee satisfaction and organisational peace.

Conversely, in employees with low emotional intelligence, the regulation of emotions such as anger and hostility becomes difficult, which fuels the intent to revenge (Jones and Paulhus, 2011: 680). Especially in situations where the individual feels undervalued or wronged, a lack of emotional intelligence can provide a basis for these feelings to transform directly into acts of revenge. This situation can negatively affect both individual conflicts and intra-organisational functioning.

Furthermore, research indicates that emotional intelligence levels are positively correlated with the tendency to forgive, reconciliatory attitudes, and self-control (McCullough et al., 2001). Therefore, developing emotional intelligence offers an effective intervention to control the urge to seek revenge and reduce psychological risks in the workplace. Emotional skills training specifically targeting blue-collar workers can be evaluated as a strategy that supports both employees' well-being and the organisation's sustainability.

In line with this information obtained from the literature, the hypothesis of our study has been formulated as follows:

H₁: *There is a negative relationship between the "emotional intelligence" levels and the "intent to revenge" of blue-collar workers.*

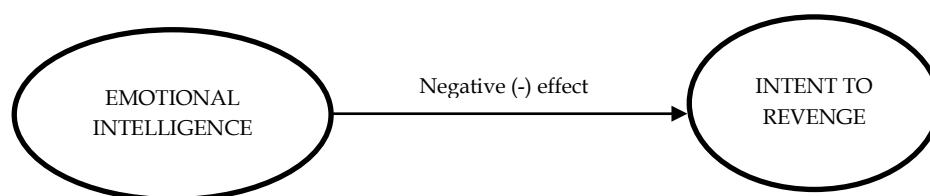


Figure 1: Hypothetical Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Intent to Revenge

Methodology

As of 2023, according to Social Security Institution (SGK) data, the number of insured employees in the textile and ready-to-wear sector across Turkey was 1,112,453; approximately 44% of these employees are women, and 17% are young individuals. According to official TURKSTAT (TÜİK) data covering the TR41 region (Bursa, Eskişehir, Bilecik), the number of blue-collar workers in the textile and ready-to-wear sector in Bursa was recorded at 126,520. Furthermore, among enterprises with 20+ personnel in Bursa, the manufacturing sector accounts for 51.3%, with a significant share of these enterprises operating in textile activities. Since official employment data do not include unregistered blue-collar workers, particularly in microenterprises, the actual population size remains uncertain. For this study, the necessary permission was obtained from the Bursa Uludağ University Social and Human Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Committee, with decision number 24 dated October 25, 2024. This study aimed to gather information on the experiences of blue-collar workers in factories in Bursa through an online survey conducted between October 26, 2024, and January 10, 2025, using a snowball sampling method. Responses from 401 participants were evaluated. After eliminating 12 unsuitable forms (those yielding uniform responses to both positive and negative statements), analyses were conducted with the remaining valid participants.

Sample size determination in research is carried out within the framework of specific assumptions and mathematical approaches. Bayram (2013: 51) suggests that a sample of approximately 200 people is sufficient for studies utilising Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). On the other hand, Saruhan and Özdemirci (2013: 181), in the table they developed for cases where the exact number of individuals is unknown, indicate a requirement of at least 288 people at the 95% confidence level, assuming a moderately homogeneous population. In this context, the sample obtained in the study exceeds the numerical thresholds suggested by both sources.

The survey applied included two scales using a five-point Likert-type rating. The scales measured emotional intelligence and revenge intent, with responses rated from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). In the introductory part of the survey, participants were asked about their gender, age range, tenure at the workplace, and educational status. The frequency distributions for this information are as follows:

Table 1: Frequency Distributions of Demographic Factors

Gender	N	%	Age	N	%
Female	192	49.4	18-29	62	15.9
Male	197	50.6	30-39	266	68.4
			≥40	61	15.7
Tenure	N	%	Education	N	%
≤ 5 years	58	14.9	Primary & Secondary Education	172	44.2
6-10 years	134	34.4	Associate degree	130	33.4
11-15 years	145	37.3	Bachelor's degree & over	87	22.4
> 15 years	52	13.4			
Total:	389	100	Total:	389	100

To measure emotional intelligence, the study utilised the four-dimensional emotional intelligence scale developed by Wong and Law (2002), which was first translated into Turkish by Güleriyüz et al. (2008). The scale consists of sixteen items in total: the first four items measure Self-Emotion Appraisal (SEA),

the next four measure Others' Emotion Appraisal (OEA), the following four measure Regulation of Emotion (ROE), and the final four measure Use of Emotion (UOE).

To measure participants' intent to revenge, the Intent to Revenge Scale, developed by Wade (1989) and adapted into Turkish by Akin et al. (2012), was employed. The scale has a unidimensional structure (Rye et al., 2001) and comprises 5 items.

The data were analysed using SPSS and AMOS. Initially, as part of the validity analysis, the data distribution was examined (Table 2).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Normality Values for the Scales

Variable	M	SD	Skewness*	Kurtosis*
Emotional Intelligence	3.82	.035	-.922	-.293
Intent to revenge	3.71	.035	.707	-.201

* $-2 \leq x \leq 2$ (George and Mallery, 2010)

Validity was assessed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), and reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha. In the CFA application, the model's fit indices were primarily examined, followed by an evaluation of whether the factor loadings—representing the level of sampling adequacy—were above 0.50. For convergent and discriminant validity analyses, AVE (Average Variance Extracted) and C.R. (Composite Reliability) criteria were taken as the basis. In the reliability analysis, it was evaluated whether the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for each scale and sub-dimension were higher than 0.70 (Büyüköztürk, 2003).

Findings

The first step in establishing a Structural Equation Model (SEM) is to assess the model's validity and fit to the data. In this regard, the objective is to determine the extent to which the obtained data align with the theoretical model (Çokluk Bökeoğlu et al., 2016). This assessment was performed through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), and the fit indices were analysed based on the results. In our research, criteria such as CMIN/DF, NFI, CFI, RMSEA, and GFI, which are among the most frequently cited fit indices, were taken as a basis (Saruhan and Özdemirci, 2013: 23). As presented in Table 3, the values according to these criteria were found to be within acceptable levels.

Table 3: Goodness-of-Fit Indices for the Structural Equation Model

Source	SRMR	CMIN/DF	NFI	CFI	GFI	RMSEA
Reference Values	≤ 0,08	≤ 5	≥ 0,90	≥ 0,90	≥ 0,90	≤ 0,08
Model Results	0,043	4,42	0,94	0,95	0,93	0,074

According to Table 3, the scale items exhibit acceptable fit with their respective dimensions. Confirmatory factor analysis should not be limited to model fit criteria; it must also assess construct validity. Construct validity refers to the clarification of what or which concept a scale measures (Saruhan & Özdemirci, 2013: 177). In this context, factor loadings must be analysed first. Factor loadings indicate the strength of the relationship between each item and its underlying construct and should ideally be above 0.50. All items used in this study ranged from 0.601 to 0.903, indicating meaningful integration with the relevant factors (Kline, 2015: 298).

Within the construct validity framework, the conceptual validity of the measurement instrument is evaluated. In this process, convergent and discriminant validity stand out as two fundamental dimensions (Hair et al., 2010: 123; Kline, 2015: 284). While convergent validity examines the high correlation among indicators of the same concept, discriminant validity examines the distinctiveness of indicators across different constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Since sub-dimensions in multidimensional scales are assumed to represent different concepts, establishing both types of validity is necessary.

For convergent validity, the AVE (Average Variance Extracted) is used as the basis, and it is expected to exceed 0.50 (Hair et al., 2010). Construct reliability is assessed using the C.R. (Composite Reliability) value; values above 0.70 indicate reliability (Raykov, 1997).

Table 4: AVE, C.R., and Alpha Values for Convergent and Discriminant Validity

Scale/Dimension	AVE	CR	α
Emotional Intelligence			
Self-Emotion Appraisal (SEA)	0.582	0.785	0.762
Others' Emotion Appraisal (OEA)	0.529	0.818	0.727
Regulation of Emotion (ROE)	0.554	0.831	0.744
Use of Emotion (UOE)	0.515	0.807	0.717
Intent to Revenge			
Unidimensional	0.594	0.757	0.770

It is observed that for all dimensions of the scale, AVE values exceed 0.50 and C.R. coefficients exceed 0.70 (Table 4). Furthermore, the condition that C.R. coefficients should be higher than AVE values (Byrne, 2013: 357) – regarded as additional evidence for convergent validity – was satisfied. Therefore, based on the results presented in Table 4, it can be concluded that the scales possess convergent validity within their structure.

For the assessment of discriminant validity, criteria such as the Fornell-Larcker test, the HTMT ratio, or the requirement that inter-factor correlations be below 0.85 are utilised (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Henseler et al., 2015). In unidimensional scales, discriminant validity is generally not required as distinct constructs are absent. Nonetheless, convergent validity remains crucial for these scales as well and must be analysed using AVE and C.R. values (Hair et al., 2010; Kline, 2015).

Table 5: Correlation Coefficients* and $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$ Values** for Emotional Intelligence Sub-dimensions

Dimension	1	2	3	4
1. Self-Emotion Appraisal (SEA)	.762			
2. Others' Emotion Appraisal (OEA)	.610	.727		
3. Regulation of Emotion (ROE)	.639	.722	.744	
4. Use of Emotion (UOE)	.679	.691	.711	.717

* < 0,85;

** The values in bold on the diagonal are expected to be greater than the correlation coefficients.

According to Table 5, both aforementioned conditions have been met for the emotional intelligence scale. That is, the scale's factors exhibit discriminant validity.

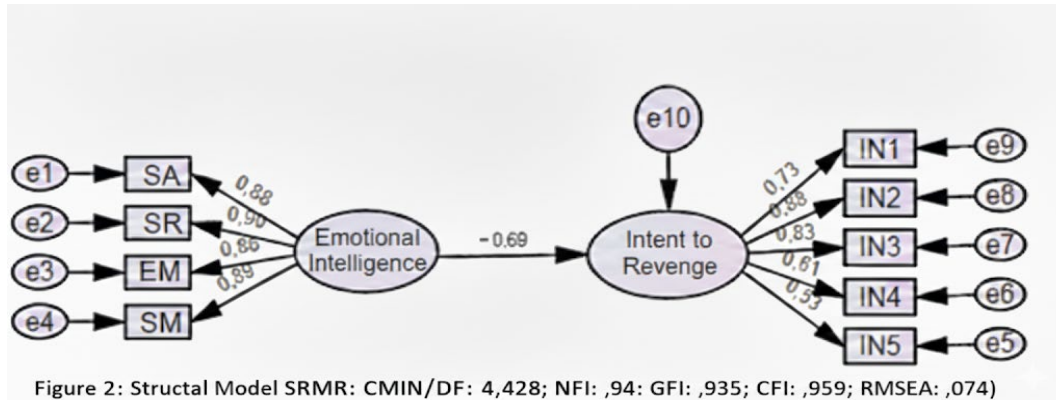
After testing the relationships between the factors and their respective scales through validity analysis, the researcher must conduct a reliability analysis in the next stage. This analysis reveals the extent to which the scale yields valid results within the sampled population and demonstrates the data's consistency. The most commonly used method for statistically evaluating the relationship between a scale and the population is Cronbach's Alpha. This coefficient is utilised as an effective tool, particularly for measuring internal consistency (Saruhan & Özdemirci, 2013: 178). The Cronbach's Alpha values for the scales used in this study are provided in Table 6 below:

Table 6: Reliability Coefficients for the Scales

Scale	Number of Factors/Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Emotional Intelligence	4 Factors	0.734
Intent to Revenge	5 Items	0.840

As shown in Table 6, the reliability coefficients for each scale exceed the acceptable threshold of 0.70. Since no item was identified that would significantly increase the Alpha value if deleted, the measurement model was utilised in its original form.

Following all preliminary analyses, the second stage of the research proceeded to structural model testing to evaluate the hypothesis's validity. In this process, relationships among latent constructs are defined simultaneously and tested through systems of equations; subsequently, the resulting estimates are analysed and interpreted (Çokluk Bökeoğlu et al., 2016: 261). It is stated that if there is no significant difference between the first and second levels in SEM studies, it is more accepted to use the simpler first-level DFA model (Gürbüz, 2019: 84).



During the model testing process, the p and t values obtained via the AMOS program, according to the structure presented in Figure 2, were examined. The t-value, also known as the Critical Ratio (C.R.), is calculated by dividing the estimated coefficient of the relevant variable by its standard error and is also known as the z-test statistic. An absolute value exceeding 1.96 indicates a statistically significant difference at the 5% significance level, while a value exceeding 2.58 indicates significance at the 1% level (Byrne, 2013: 351-352; Kline, 2015: 320). Consequently, hypotheses with $p < 0,05$ and $t > 1,96$ that are consistent with the direction (positive/negative) proposed in the literature are considered supported.

Table 7: Structural Relationship Results Between Emotional Intelligence and Intent to Revenge

Structural Relationship	Beta (β)	Expected Direction	Critical Ratio (t-value)	p-value	Result
Emotional Intelligence $\rightarrow$ Intent to Revenge	-0.69	(-)	3.643	***	Supported

*** $\leq 0,01$

Table 7 shows that the z-value for this relationship is 3.643, which is well above the absolute value of 2.58 considered 'acceptable' at the 0.01 significance level; the predictive value/ratio represented by the Beta coefficient is 0.69; and the relationship is negative (-) as predicted. Accordingly, the hypothesis we put forward in our model is supported.

Conclusion and discussion

This study aimed to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and the intent to seek revenge among blue-collar workers in the textile industry. The findings revealed that individuals with high emotional intelligence responded more constructively and with greater self-control to negative experiences in the workplace. In contrast, those with low emotional intelligence were more prone to revenge.

In analyses using structural equation modelling, emotional intelligence significantly predicted revenge intent ($\beta = -0.69$; $t = 3.643$; $p < 0.01$). The model's fit indices (CFI = 0.95; RMSEA = 0.074; SRMR = 0.043) were within acceptable limits, supporting the model's validity. These findings are consistent with the literature that argues for a negative relationship between emotional intelligence and destructive behaviours (Zeidner et al., 2004; Bar-On, 2006). Each of the four dimensions of the Wong and Law (2002) Emotional Intelligence Scale used in this study (evaluating one's own emotions, evaluating the emotions of others, managing and using emotions) demonstrated convergent validity, and reliability coefficients ($\alpha > 0.70$) supported strong measurement power.

The literature indicates that individuals with high levels of emotional intelligence tend to exhibit less hostile and more forgiving responses (McCullough et al., 2001: 601; Eldor and Shoshani, 2016: 126). This

study also found that emotional intelligence serves as an important psychological buffer, reducing vengeful intent. Similarly, Schutte et al. (2001: 167) reported that individuals with high emotional intelligence adopt more adaptive approaches to conflict resolution and cope more effectively with negative emotions. The fact that the 389 textile sector workers who constituted the study's sample were blue-collar workers adds a different perspective to these results. Blue-collar workers generally work under conditions of low status, limited decision-making participation, and high workload; this makes it easier for them to experience emotional tension and perceive injustice (Skarlicki and Folger, 1997: 434-435). In this context, the study's results show that emotional intelligence plays a protective role in blue-collar workers' responses to organisational stressors in the textile sector.

These results have significant implications not only at the individual level but also for organisational processes. It is recommended that practices that support the development of emotional intelligence be widespread to prevent experiences such as organisational injustice, exclusion, or devaluation experienced by employees from turning into destructive tendencies, such as revenge. Especially in high-stress work environments, increasing individuals' self-regulation and empathy skills is critically important for organisational commitment and productivity (Côté, 2014: 460).

The research is limited to blue-collar personnel working in textile companies operating only in Bursa province. Therefore, generalising the findings to blue-collar workers across sectors or regions may be limited. In addition, the data used in the study are self-reported; this may be subject to methodological problems, such as social desirability bias. The data were collected cross-sectionally; therefore, the temporal causality of the effect of emotional intelligence on intent to revenge cannot be evaluated.

Human resources management and organisational development specialists should plan interventions to improve emotional intelligence, particularly for blue-collar workers. Training programs focusing on emotional awareness, self-control, empathy, and conflict management can improve not only individual psychological well-being but also organisational productivity. Researchers could observe the temporal effect of emotional intelligence on intent to revenge using longitudinal designs to gain a deeper understanding of this relationship in the future. Furthermore, more comprehensive structural equation models incorporating mediating or moderating variables such as organisational justice, leader-member interaction, and job satisfaction could be developed. The contextual variability of this relationship could also be examined through sectoral and cultural comparisons.

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