

# **Emotional intelligence and turnover intention: the differentiated role of job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment**

## **Intelligence émotionnelle et intention de quitter : le rôle différencié de la satisfaction et de l'engagement affectif**

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**Date submitted :** 11/06/2025

**Date of acceptance :** 04/08/2025

**To cite this article :**

BOUSSEDRA I. (2025) «Emotional intelligence and turnover intention: the differentiated role of job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment», Revue Internationale des Sciences de Gestion « Volume 8 : Numéro 3 » pp : 1062 - 1086

### Abstract

With an emphasis on finding explanatory mechanisms using a parallel mediation model, this study investigates the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and turnover intention among Tunisian employees. Based on a quantitative survey with 121 participants and analyzed with Hayes' (2018) PROCESS macro in SPSS, the model includes affective organizational commitment and job satisfaction as concurrent mediators. The results show partial mediation, with job satisfaction playing a supporting but important role and affective commitment acting as the main pathway through which EI influences turnover intention. With its foundations in social exchange theory, self-determination theory, and conservation of resources theory (COR), theoretical framing provides a comprehensive lens through which to view emotional dynamics in Arab-African workplaces. By promoting emotional intelligence as a tactical tool for retaining talent, this study fills a gap in culturally contextualized research and adds to the body of knowledge in HRM worldwide. Particularly in developing economic environments, useful suggestions are made to help organizations create emotionally intelligent workplace cultures that improve affective ties and reduce voluntary turnover.

**Keywords:** Emotional intelligence ; turnover intention ; affective commitment ; job satisfaction ; parallel mediation.

### Résumé

Cette étude explore le rôle de l'intelligence émotionnelle (IE) dans la régulation de l'intention de départ chez les salariés tunisiens, en s'appuyant sur un modèle de médiation parallèle où la satisfaction au travail et l'engagement organisationnel affectif agissent comme variables intermédiaires. Une enquête quantitative menée auprès de 121 employés a permis d'analyser les données à l'aide du macro PROCESS de Hayes (2018) sous SPSS. Les résultats révèlent un effet de médiation partielle, avec l'engagement affectif comme levier principal de l'influence de l'IE sur l'intention de départ, tandis que la satisfaction au travail joue un rôle complémentaire mais significatif. L'ancrage théorique mobilise les principes de la théorie de la conservation des ressources (COR), de l'autodétermination et de l'échange social, pour éclairer les mécanismes émotionnels à l'œuvre dans les environnements professionnels arabo-africains. En mettant en exergue les déterminants émotionnels de la fidélisation, cette recherche propose une contribution originale à la littérature en gestion interculturelle des ressources humaines. Des recommandations managériales ciblées sont formulées en vue de renforcer les pratiques de rétention des talents à travers le développement de climats organisationnels émotionnellement intelligents.

**Mots-clés:** Intelligence émotionnelle ; intention de départ ; engagement affectif ; satisfaction au travail ; médiation parallèle

## Introduction

In a context marked by organizational confrontations related to economic uncertainty, digital transformation, and market volatility, the issue of voluntary turnover remains at the heart of organizational behavior research (De Smet et al., 2022). The importance of intention to leave as a transitional phase between dissatisfaction and actual departure has been emphasized by a number of sequential models, including Mobley's (1977). However, the majority of previous studies have primarily focused on factors such as job satisfaction, motivation, or structural parameters (Iddoub & Barzi, 2022; O'Callaghan & Sadath, 2025; Jogi et al., 2025), to the detriment of variables more closely related to affects.

Among the factors influencing the intention to leave the organization, emotional intelligence (EI) stands out as a strategic competence reducing organizational turnover intentions, due to its role in affective regulation, the quality of professional interactions, and the construction of organizational commitment (Jefveleon et al., 2024). According to recent research, affective commitment—a powerful indicator of employee retention—is greatly influenced by emotional intelligence (EI) (Selvi & Aiswarya, 2023; Jefveleon et al., 2024).

Even though a number of studies have demonstrated that emotional intelligence and turnover intention are negatively correlated (e.g., Gara et al., 2021; Kurniawan & Susanto, 2023; Sharma et al., 2024), the mechanisms underlying this relationship have not been sufficiently investigated. Furthermore, the majority of research on emotional intelligence concentrates on how it affects leadership, partially neglecting its impact on individual organizational attitudes like satisfaction or intention to leave. Moreover, the mediating mechanisms remain under-researched in non-Western cultural contexts, particularly in Arab and African cultures, where emotional dynamics, social values, and workplace relationships may display unique characteristics of their own (Bouderbala et al., 2020; Gara et al., 2021).

To address these gaps, this study investigates the parallel mediating role of job satisfaction and organizational affective commitment in the relationship between emotional intelligence and turnover intention. Drawing on a sample of 121 Tunisian employees, the data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed with Hayes' (2018) PROCESS macro in SPSS, allowing for a robust evaluation of mediation effects. This analytic strategy provides a rigorous assessment of mediation effects and enables the simultaneous exploration of two attitudinal pathways, surpassing the fragmented perspectives that separately address EI, satisfaction, or

engagement.

The theoretical framework integrates three major perspectives: the conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001), the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), and the social exchange theory (Blau, 1968), thus offering a nuanced interpretation of emotional dynamics in Arab-African organizational contexts. This research contributes to the advancement of culturally contextualized human resource management studies.

Thus, we formulate our main research question as follows: ***To what extent do job satisfaction and organizational affective commitment mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and turnover intention among Tunisian employees?***

To address this research question, the article is structured into five key sections. It begins with a literature review establishing conceptual foundations and hypotheses. Next, the methodology outlines the survey design and analytical procedures; The results section follows, presenting the main findings. A discussion then interprets these outcomes through both theoretical and managerial lenses. Finally, the conclusion offers directions for future inquiry.

## **1. Theories and hypotheses**

### **1.1. Emotional intelligence and turnover intention**

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a rapidly expanding field of research in management sciences. Introduced by Salovey and Mayer (1990; p.10), it is defined as *"the ability to perceive, evaluate and express emotions with precision; to access feelings that promote thinking; to understand emotions; and to regulate emotions in order to promote emotional and intellectual development"*. This definition was further developed with the formalization of the capabilities model (Mayer & Salovey, 1997), distinguishing four key dimensions of EI: (1) Perception of emotions, (2) Understanding emotions, (3) Emotional regulation and (4) The use of emotions to facilitate thought and action. In accordance with several previous studies (eg. Brunetto et al., 2012; Wong & Law, 2002; Gara et al., 2021), this present research also adopts this definition.

In the organizational context, emotional intelligence represents a strategic psychological resource (Chader et al., 2021). It enables employees to cope with the emotional demands of work, regulate internal and external tensions, and maintain their professional commitment. Authors like Carmeli (2003) and Sy et al. (2006) emphasize that EI acts as an adaptive spring, facilitating resilience to stress and the preservation of psychological well-being.

EI is also part of resource conservation Theory (COR) (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001), according to which individuals seek to acquire, protect and preserve resources essential to their well-being (emotional, social, material). Stress arises from the loss or threat of loss of these resources, or lack of emotional return on investment. In this context, EI would allow individuals to: "Protect" their resources (via emotional regulation); "Restore" their balance (by managing conflicts and frustrations); "Acquire" new resources (through positive social relationships and recognition).

Thus, employees with a strong EI would be less inclined to develop a departure intention, even in the context of high organizational pressure (Hobfoll et al., 2018). By facilitating harmonious social interactions, EI contributes to reducing tensions that could lead to the breakdown of the employment relationship (Gara et al., 2021). Lopes et al. (2020) have also demonstrated that emotionally intelligent people forge stronger social relationships, helping to increase their organizational social capital, an essential resource against isolation and demotivation.

Voluntary employee turnover is a central strategic issue for organizations. It generates not only economic losses, but also the loss of human and social capital, essential elements of performance (Gara et al., 2021).

Numerous empirical studies (Giao et al., 2020; Kurniawan & Susanto, 2023; Sharma et al., 2024) highlight a negative and significant link between emotional intelligence and the turnover intention. This research converges to demonstrate that emotionally intelligent individuals are better equipped to cope with stress, manage conflicts and maintain a high level of organizational integration. As a result, they are less likely to consider leaving their organization. We can therefore formulate the following hypothesis:

**H1: Emotional intelligence would be negatively associated with turnover intention**

## **1.2. Towards a mediational model of the turnover intention**

### **1.2.1. Work attitudes as vectors of retention**

Turnover intention refers to a proactive behavioral attitude indicating an employee's perceived likelihood of voluntarily leaving their organization. It is shaped by cognitive responses to an altered perception of well-being at work, emotional support, and value congruence (Lahlimi & Messaoudi, 2024). According to a mediational model, emotional intelligence would not directly reduce this intention but would act through the improvement of work attitudes, in particular satisfaction and commitment. This reasoning is based on the principles of self-determination

theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), according to which emotional resources participate in the satisfaction of fundamental psychological needs (competence, belonging, autonomy), thus fostering positive motivational attitudes towards the organization. Moreover, social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) suggests that individuals evaluate their professional relationships according to a principle of perceived reciprocity. Hence, a high EI promotes quality interactions and reinforces the sense of reciprocity with the organization or authority figures, which can translate into increased affective commitment and reduced turnover intention.

### **Job satisfaction**

Job satisfaction represents an integrated perception encompassing affective responses (such as well-being and enjoyment), cognitive assessments (of role clarity, autonomy, and working conditions), and motivational alignment (between individual expectations and organizational realities) (Jogi et al., 2025). It is recognized as a key predictor of employee retention, commitment, and performance outcomes (Penconek et al., 2021).

However, recent studies suggest that this effect may be modulated by factors such as affective commitment (Meyer et al., 2002; Rhoades et al., 2002; Gara et al., 2021), organizational justice (Morin & Renaud, 2021), or perceived career alternatives (Ferdiana et al., 2023). In our model, emotional intelligence promotes this satisfaction by facilitating frustration regulation, the quality of social interactions, and the sense of accomplishment (Wong & Law, 2002).

### **Affective organizational commitment**

Affective commitment represents the emotional bond between an individual and their organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). It is one of the most powerful predictors of organizational retention. Several empirical studies have demonstrated that EI is positively correlated with affective commitment, particularly due to its role in building quality interpersonal relationships and managing emotional stress at work (Gara et al., 2021).

#### **❖ Job satisfaction as a motivational mediator: contributions of self-determination theory**

Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) provides a particularly relevant conceptual framework for understanding the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between emotional intelligence and turnover intention. This theory postulates that individuals are intrinsically motivated to act when three fundamental psychological needs are satisfied: (1)

autonomy, (2) competence, and (3) social belonging. Satisfaction of these needs fosters the emergence of autonomous motivation, which is itself associated with positive work attitudes such as job satisfaction, affective commitment, and organizational retention (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Forest & Mageau, 2008).

In this context, emotional intelligence plays a catalytic role. By facilitating emotional regulation and quality social interactions, it enables employees to feel competent, integrated, and autonomous (Ye et al., 2025). In this way, EI indirectly contributes to nurturing fundamental psychological needs, resulting in increased job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction transcends a mere emotional response; it embodies a fundamental motivational mechanism that fosters the internalization of organizational values and aligns individual aspirations with workplace realities (Flanchec et al., 2015; Matzkin, 2018). Grounded in Self-Determination Theory, recent findings by Wikaningtyas et al., (2023) underscore that when psychological needs—such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness—are thwarted, employees tend to adopt controlled forms of motivation. This shift significantly heightens the risk of turnover. Motivational regulation thus turns into a crucial strategic tool for retention.

Several empirical studies support this interpretation. Chen & Zhang (2022), for instance, demonstrate that psychological need satisfaction, fueled by emotional intelligence, significantly mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and the turnover intention. This mediating role is also confirmed by Wong and Law (2002), whose WLEIS model highlights the impact of emotional intelligence on professional attitudes.

More recently, Lalonde Francoeur and Paquet (2024), in a systematic review of 56 studies, emphasized that managers' emotional intelligence positively influences job satisfaction and reduces withdrawal behaviors, particularly the turnover intention. Similarly, Ben Sassi (2024) showed that emotional intelligence, while having a moderate direct effect on commitment, acts primarily through job satisfaction as a key mediator. The study by Güleriyüz et al. (2008) confirms that job satisfaction acts as a significant mediator between emotional intelligence and organizational commitment, reinforcing the empirical validity of the indirect link between emotional intelligence and retention behaviors.

Finally, emotional intelligence can thus be seen as catalyst for job satisfaction, facilitating emotional regulation and social harmonization in the work environment (Brunetto et al., 2012; Lalonde Francoeur & Paquet, 2024). This positive emotional dynamic contributes to



strengthening organizational attachment and reducing departure intentions. Thus, we can formulate the following hypothesis:

**H2: Job satisfaction would mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and turnover intention.**

**❖ Affective commitment as a mediating mechanism: contribution of social exchange theory**

Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) provides a solid conceptual framework for understanding the mediating role of affective commitment in the relationship between emotional intelligence and turnover intention. This theory is based on the idea that individuals evaluate their professional relationships according to a principle of reciprocity: when the organization is perceived as supportive, fair, and emotionally engaging, employees develop an affective attachment to it (Pimenta et al., 2024)

In this context, emotional intelligence, particularly the regulation and use of emotions, promotes a high-quality relational climate, better social integration, and an increased perception of organizational support (Liao et al., 2022). These perceptions reinforce affective commitment, i.e., feelings of emotional attachment, identification, and loyalty to the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). This commitment, according to several meta-analyses (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Cooper-Hakim & Viswesvaran, 2005; Fazio et al., 2017), is a powerful negative predictor of turnover intention.

In contrast, the effect of emotional intelligence on commitment depends on how commitment is conceptualized. If we consider only affective commitment, studies such as Carmeli (2003), Al-Oweidat et al. (2023), Gara et al. (2021) show a positive link between EI and commitment. However, some studies, such as Gülerüyüz et al. (2008) or Aghdasi et al. (2011), have found no direct link but suggested an indirect influence via job satisfaction. These results support the idea that the effect of EI is exerted more through secondary affective mechanisms.

In short, emotional intelligence can be seen as an indirect predictor of turnover intention, by strengthening employees' affective commitment, itself influenced by the perceived quality of interpersonal exchanges within the organization. We can therefore formulate the following hypothesis:



**H3: Affective organizational commitment would also mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and turnover intention.**

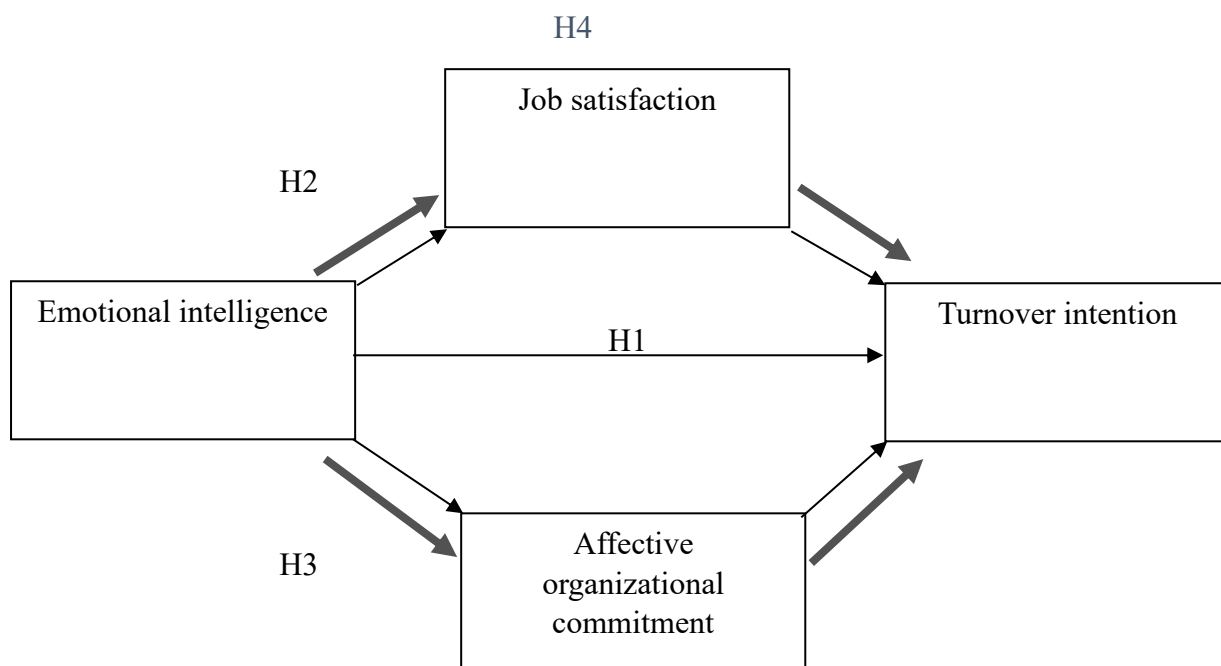
**❖ Job satisfaction and affective commitment: parallel mediation**

As already illustrated in the previous sections, emotional intelligence simultaneously influences several affective dimensions of work experience. On the one hand, it enhances job satisfaction by satisfying the fundamental needs for autonomy, competence, and belonging described in self-determination theory (Wikaningtyas et al., 2023; Ye et al., 2025). On the other hand, it nourishes an emotional attachment to the organization, in a logic of reciprocal exchange specific to social exchange theory.

Although conceptually linked, these two variables -job satisfaction and affective commitment- involve distinct psychological mechanisms: the former focuses on the evaluation of the job and working conditions (positive affective state), while the latter focuses on the identity and emotional connection to the organization (attachment). Several empirical studies (Khairuddin & Hussain, 2021; Gara et al., 2021; Kuok, 2022; Moses, 2024) have confirmed that each of these variables can act as an independent mediator between emotional intelligence and turnover intention. We can therefore formulate the following hypothesis:

**H4: Job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment would simultaneously mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and turnover intention.**

**Figure 1: conceptual model**



**Source:** Author

## 2. Methodology

In spring 2025, an online survey was conducted among professionals working in the private sector in Tunisia. Participants were contacted via LinkedIn and through personal contacts. Data was collected anonymously and confidentially. The survey was completed by 130 employees. After excluding incomplete or inconsistent questionnaires, a total of 121 respondents were selected for the final analysis.

Regarding the socio-demographic characteristics of the sample, 32.2% of respondents were men and 67.8% were women, with an average age of 30.10 years (SD = 5.199). Most participants had a bachelor's degree (60.3%). Based on the convenience sampling method, the sample included all employees surveyed in three private organizations, including two banking institutions and one agri-food company.

### 2.1. Measurement scales

Five-point Likert scales, ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"), were used in this survey.

**Emotional intelligence:** EI was measured using the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS). This scale comprises 16 items divided into four dimensions, in line with the definition of emotional intelligence proposed by Mayer and Salovey (1997): (1) evaluation of personal emotions (e.g., “I have a good understanding of my own emotions”), (2) emotional regulation (e.g., “I can always calm down quickly when I am very angry”), (3) evaluation of others' emotions (e.g., “I have a good understanding of the emotions of those around me”), and (4) use of emotions (e.g., “I always encourage myself to do my best”). In line with previous studies (Kong et al., 2012; Meisler, 2013), this variable is conceptualized as a second-order factor, in which the four dimensions are latent indicators of the overall construct.

**Job satisfaction:** to assess this variable, we adopted the scale developed by Macdonald and MacIntyre (1997). It consists of 10 items (e.g., “I receive recognition for a job well done,” “I feel good about my work”).

**Emotional organizational commitment:** this variable was measured using the scale developed by Allen and Meyer (1991), which consists of five items (e.g., “I feel that the problems of this company are my own”).

**Turnover intention:** this concept was measured using the “low propensity to seek another job” dimension of the organizational loyalty scale proposed by Peretti and Swalhi (2007). Although this scale is multidimensional (encompassing affective attachment, job performance, and behavioral loyalty), this particular dimension demonstrates a strong conceptual alignment with traditional definitions of voluntary turnover intention in organizational behavior research (Mobley, 1977; Steel, 2002), as a cognitive reflection of disengagement.

Indeed, several authors emphasize that looking for a new job is a decisive step in the turnover process, often preceding actual resignation (Lee & Mowday, 1987; Griffeth et al., 2000). This methodological choice is also supported by previous research that has mobilized this single dimension as an indicator of turnover intention (Charbonnier-Voirin & Lissillour, 2018; Bali & Ferouani, 2024). This approach allows for a targeted and valid measurement of turnover intention, while fitting into an integrated perspective of organizational loyalty.

**Control variables:** According to Becker's (2005) theory-driven selection principle, only gender and tenure were kept out of the four sociodemographic control variables that were first taken into consideration: age, tenure, gender, and educational attainment. According to Bernerth and Aguinis (2016), gender has conceptual significance in predicting relational and emotional

sensitivity in organizational settings, particularly when evaluating affective commitment and turnover intentions, even though it lacks statistical significance. Conversely, tenure, which is consistently linked to greater organizational attachment and resistance to turnover, represents accumulated experiential capital. Two main factors supported the exclusion of age and education level: (1) empirical worries about multicollinearity, given that both variables had moderate to strong correlations with tenure ( $r = .519$  for age and  $r = .360$  for education); and (2) the lack of explicit theoretical support in the model under test. Consequently, keeping Therefore, by matching control variable selection with both theoretical relevance and economical modeling strategy, keeping only gender and tenure reduces statistical bias and strengthens the internal validity of the mediation model.

### 3. Results

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, correlations, and Cronbach's alpha reliability indices) for all variables. The risk of multicollinearity appears negligible in this study, as none of the correlations exceeding the 0.7 (Anderson et al., 2016).

To test the model, we used Hayes' PROCESS macro (2017) in SPSS 21. Model 4 was selected, with emotional intelligence (EI) as the independent variable, job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment as mediating variables, and turnover intention as the dependent variable.

The significance of the direct and indirect effects was tested using the bootstrap method with percentile bias correction, based on 5,000 samples. If the 95% confidence interval (CI) of the effect does not include zero, the hypothesis is considered validated.

**Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlations**

	1	2	3	4	5	6
M	3.63	3.58	3.64	3.89	2.26	0.67
S.D	1.121	1.31	1.14	1.15	0.57	0.46
1.TI	(0.77)	-	-	-	-	-
3.JS	0.32**	(0.91)	-	-	-	-
2.AOC	0.54**	0.66**	(0.72)	-	-	-

	1	2	3	4	5	6
M	3.63	3.58	3.64	3.89	2.26	0.67
S.D	1.121	1.31	1.14	1.15	0.57	0.46
4.EI	0.44**	0.57**	0.63**	(0.93)	-	-
5.TENURE	-0.01	0.13	0.10	-0.01	-	-
6.GENDER	-0.13	-0.10	-0.07	-0.16	-0.14	-

Notes:  $n = 121$ . The diagonals show Cronbach's alpha for each construct.  $**p < .01$ . EI = emotional intelligence. JS = job satisfaction. AOC = affective organizational commitment. TI = turnover intention.

Source: Author

**Table 2. Total and direct effect of emotional intelligence on turnover intention**

	Job satisfaction			Affective organizational commitment			Turnover intention		
	<i>b</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constante	0.87	2.79	.006	0.81	2.20	.029	1.18	2.99	.003
Emotional intelligence (direct effect)	0.71	9.03	.000	0.71	7.67	.000	0.34	2.68	.008
Job satisfaction							-0.24	-1.88	.061
Affective organizational commitment							0.54	5.11	.000
Emotional intelligence (total effect)							0.34	2.68	.008

Notes:  $n = 121$ , coefficients not standardized.

*Table 3. Indirect effects of emotional intelligence on turnover intention*

	Bootstrapping
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	BC 95 %		
	IC		
	Indirect Effect	Low	High
Emotional intelligence – Job satisfaction –turnover intention	-0.18	-0.37	0.03
Emotional intelligence – Affective organizational commitment – turnover intention	0.40	0.20	0.57
Total	0.22	-0.02	0.47

**Source:** Author

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics, inter-variable correlations, and internal reliability indices (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ). All main variables have satisfactory alpha coefficients ( $\alpha \geq .72$ ), indicating good internal consistency. Emotional intelligence (EI) is positively correlated with job satisfaction ( $r = .57, p < .01$ ), affective organizational commitment ( $r = .63, p < .01$ ), and inversely correlated with turnover intention ( $r = .44, p < .01$ ), supporting the hypothesis that EI plays a protective role against turnover.

The results in Table 2 reveal that emotional intelligence exerts a significant direct effect on job satisfaction ( $b = 0.71, p < .001$ ), affective organizational commitment ( $b = 0.71, p < .001$ ), and turnover intention ( $b = -0.34, p < .01$ ).

However, when mediators are introduced into the model, the effect of job satisfaction becomes marginally significant ( $b = -0.24, p = .061$ ), while affective commitment retains a strong and significant influence on turnover intention ( $b = -0.54, p < .001$ ), indicating partial mediation.

Finally, Table 3 shows that the indirect effect of EI via affective commitment is significant (95% CI: [0.20; 0.57]), while the effect via job satisfaction remains more uncertain (95% CI: [-0.37; 0.03]). The confidence interval for the total indirect effect contains zero, suggesting weak but plausible mediation, mainly driven by organizational commitment.

**Table 4 summarizes our main results**

Hypotheses		Results
<b>H1</b>	Emotional intelligence is directly and significantly associated with the turnover intention.	Confirmed
<b>H2</b>	Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between EI and turnover intention.	Rejected
<b>H3</b>	Affective organizational commitment mediates the relationship between EI and turnover intention.	Confirmed
<b>H4</b>	Job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment simultaneously mediate the relationship between EI and turnover intention.	Partially confirmed

**Source:** Author

## 4. Discussion and implications

### 4.1. Discussion

The role of emotional intelligence (EI) in shaping attitudes, behaviors, and performance at work is attracting growing interest among management researchers. Although several studies have found a positive impact on job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and sense of organizational justice (Wong & Law, 2002; Al-Oweidat et al., 2023; Lalonde Francoeur & Paquet, 2024), research investigating the link between EI and turnover intention remains inconclusive and provides relatively inconsistent results (Gara et al., 2021). The present study aims to fill this gap by examining the direct and indirect effects of EI on turnover intention among professionals in Tunisia.

Regarding the first hypothesis, although the main objective of this research is to examine the psychological and attitudinal mechanisms- notably emotional intelligence (EI), job satisfaction, and organizational commitment- that influence turnover intention, the direct relationship between EI and turnover intention was also tested. The results confirm the central and beneficial role of emotional intelligence in preventing the turnover intention. As expected, EI has a significant direct negative effect, consistent with previous work suggesting that individuals with high emotional intelligence are better able to manage stress, maintain positive relationships with colleagues, and effectively regulate their emotions (Giao et al., 2020; Kurniawan &



Susanto, 2023; Sharma et al., 2024). This ability to maintain a favorable emotional climate contributes to reducing their propensity to consider organizational withdrawal.

However, these results differ from the findings of Gara et al. (2021), who found no direct link between EI and turnover intention. This divergence illustrates the inconsistencies observed in the literature on the subject and underlines the value of integrated approaches that take into account mediating and contextual variables.

Concerning the second hypothesis, which postulated that job satisfaction mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and turnover intention, the results of our study validated partial mediation. Although emotional intelligence exerts a significant direct effect on satisfaction, confirming that it contributes to a more positive evaluation of the organizational environment, job satisfaction did not appear to be a total mediator of the link between EI and turnover intention. Although important, job satisfaction is not the main vector of EI's influence on organizational withdrawal intention.

This result can be explained from different angles. On the one hand, job satisfaction reflects a relatively short-term assessment of working conditions (Salas-Vallina et al., 2022), while affective commitment—which acts as a robust mediator—mobilizes a deeper and more stable emotional attachment to the organization.

Indeed, the results obtained confirm that job satisfaction plays a partial mediating role in the relationship between emotional intelligence and turnover intention, which corroborates certain observations from the literature. Nasria et al. (2019) showed that job satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between psychological capital and turnover intention. Given the conceptual overlaps between psychological capital and emotional intelligence (resilience, emotional self-regulation), this result supports the hypothesis of a behavioral mediating channel. For his part, Maillet (2015) identified mediation by job satisfaction in the link between psychological climate and turnover intention, reinforcing the idea that affective perceptions of the work environment are central to the decision-making process to leave.

Furthermore, this result can be explained by the ability of employees with high emotional intelligence to maintain their organizational commitment, even in the absence of immediate satisfaction. Thanks to their ability to regulate their emotions and mobilize personal meaning in their professional activity, these individuals manage to preserve a form of affective loyalty to their organization. This interpretation is supported by the work of Ben Sassi (2024), how

shows that emotional intelligence influences organizational commitment via job satisfaction, but that some employees with high EI remain committed despite fluctuating satisfaction by mobilizing internal resources such as emotional regulation and a sense of purpose in their work.

The third hypothesis posits significant mediation by affective organizational commitment, and our results indicate that EI acts indirectly by strengthening the affective bond between the employee and their organization. This confirms Meyer & Allen's (1997) models and supports the idea that emotionally intelligent employees identify more with organizational values and develop a stronger sense of belonging, thus curbing their turnover intention.

Consequently, these results support the idea that the turnover intention is built through a deeper affective process, with emotional attachment—via affective commitment—to the organization playing a central role. Emotional intelligence therefore seems to facilitate employee retention by strengthening their affective commitment, rather than merely by improving their level of job satisfaction. This model highlights partial mediation, in which EI retains a marginal direct effect on the turnover intention, while being largely explained by organizational commitment. This result underscores the psychological complexity of voluntary turnover, which goes beyond simple reactions to job satisfaction and is rooted in a more lasting emotional dynamic.

The main aim of this study is to investigate the underlying mechanisms that influence and guide employee attitudes and behaviors. Indeed, parallel mediation involving job satisfaction and affective commitment is partially supported, insofar as the total indirect effect remains insignificant ( $EI \rightarrow JS \rightarrow TI$ ). This result suggests that, although both variables contribute to the mediation process, it is affective commitment that constitutes the main pathway through which emotional intelligence influences turnover intention. This predominance can be explained by the fact that affective commitment reflects a deep emotional identification with the organization, often more stable and predictive of retention behaviors than satisfaction, which can be more circumstantial. This interpretation is consistent with the work of Vandenberghe (2009), who showed that organizational commitment, particularly in its affective dimension, plays a more robust mediating role than job satisfaction in the relationship between individual motivations and reported performance. Similarly, Al-Oweidat et al. (2023) emphasized that affective commitment to the organization is strongly influenced by relational and emotional factors and is a central lever in employee retention dynamics. Similarly, the work of Gara et al.

(2021) supports these findings by showing that affective commitment mediates the relationship between EI and turnover intention.

#### **4.2. Theoretical implications**

This study offers three main theoretical contributions. First, while most research on emotional intelligence (EI) has focused on its effects on leadership behaviors, our research stands out by simultaneously integrating integrative skills (emotional intelligence) and organizational attitudes, particularly the turnover intention. This enables a more comprehensive understanding of the effects of EI on professional dynamics.

Second, our study clarifies the mechanism by which EI influences employees' turnover intention. The results reveal a partial parallel mediation involving job satisfaction and affective commitment, with affective commitment predominating as the main pathway. This configuration had previously been explored little in the literature, giving our model an innovative character.

Third, our research is set in a cultural context that has yet to be studied: Tunisia. While the majority of studies on EI have been conducted in Western countries (Brunetto et al., 2012), our contribution enriches emerging work in the MENA region (Clarke & Mahadi, 2017; Meisler, 2013). Tunisian national culture, characterized by identity specificities distinct from the transnational Arab paradigm (Bouderbala et al., 2020), provides fertile ground for examining the cultural effects on the link between EI and organizational behaviors. Our results thus invite further research on the cultural mediations of emotional intelligence and encourage consideration of affective commitment as a strategic lever for loyalty in intercultural contexts.

#### **4.3. Managerial implications**

The results of this study provide valuable insights into the emotional dynamics of employee retention. The partial mediation identified between emotional intelligence (EI) and turnover intention, operating through job satisfaction and, above all, affective commitment, calls for targeted interventions on these two levers:

In terms of recruitment, HR managers are called upon to integrate the assessment of emotional skills into their selection practices. The ability to regulate emotions, express professional empathy, and maintain a meaningful connection to work can predict future employee

commitment. A holistic approach, including the candidate's personality, values, and adaptive behavior, is therefore recommended.

With regard to skills development, the study highlights the value of setting training programs dedicated to emotional intelligence, aimed at strengthening emotional awareness, stress management, and interpersonal communication. These programs could include individualized coaching, promoting emotional autonomy and sustainable performance, even in situations of declining contextual satisfaction.

Last but not least, valuing affective commitment requires creating an organizational climate based on transparency, flexibility, and recognition. Going beyond simple job satisfaction (e.g., material conditions, atmosphere) to invest in deeper affective drivers, such as meaning in work, recognition, and corporate culture.

### **Conclusion, limitations, and future research directions**

This study has provided a better understanding of the emotional mechanisms underlying the turnover intention, by exploring a parallel mediation model involving job satisfaction and affective commitment. To our knowledge, our research is the first to empirically test the simultaneous mediating role of these two variables in the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and turnover intention in the Tunisian context.

The results highlight partial mediation, suggesting that emotional intelligence acts both directly on the turnover intention and indirectly via affective commitment. This predominance of affective commitment confirms that emotional competence influences retention through a deep attachment to the organization, while job satisfaction plays a complementary but more circumstantial role.

Our proposed model is distinguished by the simultaneous articulation of integrative competence and attitudinal variables, enriching traditional fragmented approaches. It highlights the ability of emotional intelligence to constitute an autonomous individual resource, capable of guiding withdrawal attitudes even in the absence of formal organizational levers (HR policies, climate, or culture).

Despite its theoretical and empirical contributions, this study presents several limitations. First, the use of a non-probability sample, recruited by convenience, restricts the statistical generalizability of the results, even if it allows for a rich interpretation in a specific

organizational context. Furthermore, without temporal sequencing, the study's cross-sectional design prevents the establishment of causal relationships between variables; a longitudinal approach would have been more pertinent to investigate the development of mediators and elucidate influence trajectories. Finally, the data was collected exclusively through self-questionnaires, exposing the results to response bias due to social desirability, particularly with regard to affective constructs such as emotional attachment or organizational commitment, which calls for caution in interpretation.

To extend these results, several avenues should be explored: first, studying serial or moderate mediations involving other variables such as organizational climate, leadership styles, or organizational identity. Second, deepen the analysis of organizational commitment by mobilizing its other theoretical dimensions: normative commitment and calculated commitment. These forms of commitment, which are less emotional but equally influential, could interact differently with employees' emotional skills and modulate their relationship to voluntary departure. Next, develop cross-cultural comparative studies to analyze how the effects of emotional intelligence are modulated by cultural dimensions specific to the MENA region. Finally, mobilize longitudinal or mixed methods to better identify the evolution of affective mediators and their interaction with organizational retention strategies.

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