

Trust and Communication Satisfaction as Mediators in the Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Work-Related Outcomes: A Conceptual Framework

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<p>Article history Submitted: 24 January, 2022 Revised: 05 February, 2022 Accepted: 12 February 2022</p> <p>Keywords: <i>Emotional Intelligence, Trust in Supervisor, Communication Satisfaction, Work-related Outcomes,</i></p>	<p>Abstract This study highlights trust and communication satisfaction as mediating variables in the relationship between emotional intelligence and work-related outcomes. The expected direct and indirect effects are theoretically investigated and presented in a conceptual framework. Findings from relevant research and a review of the available literature are compiled and appraised. Despite the importance of a direct relationship between emotional intelligence and work-related outcomes, little attention has been given to the indirect relationship concerning the mediating variables. Findings on the direct and indirect relationship between emotional intelligence and work-related outcomes in the presence of two suggested mediating variables may direct future efforts toward research trends pertaining to diverse cultures and sectors. Scholars, researchers, and practitioners can find alternatives to prepare research based on the results of the proposed conceptual framework presented in this study. This study contributes to literature related to emotional intelligence, work-related outcomes, trust in supervisors, and communication satisfaction by reviewing insights on related research and investigating research gaps. The study is designed to provide a conceptual framework that may direct and guide researchers toward future research.</p>
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1. Introduction

Human resources are an essential resource in an organisation, if not the most fundamental one. Therefore, to successfully manage human resources, supervisors must first understand workers vertically and horizontally, and then plan how to manage them. Thus, the level of subordinates' effectiveness depends on their supervisors' communication which should be clear, brief, and timely, followed by feedback [1], along with continual exchange of information [2].

On the other hand, the flow of information depends on trust, and mutual trust is a determinant of information exchange [3]. Therefore, the supervisor-subordinate interaction requires an in-depth study of the behavioural characteristics that are directly reflected in individual performance and other work-related variables. Performance is better when individuals, through effective communication, are adequately informed [4]. Effective communication, on the other hand, is achieved when there is satisfactory communication among employees [5].

Consequently, to attract subordinates toward certain goals, supervisors have to influence their behaviours [6]. The influence should be ethical, objective, or humane. The behaviours of effective leaders pave the way not only to understand others but also to create values and beliefs toward what they aim to achieve. Such attraction, where the leader is intelligent enough to influence others' emotions, leads to superior performance. Some research noted that trust in an organisation enhanced performance and was viewed as an invaluable intangible asset [7].

Emotional intelligence as a behavioural variable can contribute not only to enlighten performance indicators but also to explain how to lead performance toward excellence and success [8]; [9]. Considerable studies have dealt with the direct relationship between emotional intelligence and variables related to work outcomes. Our study deals with eight variables representing basic work-related outcomes, which were found to be significantly correlated with and/or influenced by emotional intelligence.

The direct relationship between independent and dependent variables has been addressed in previous studies that covered different sectors, as well as various cultures. It is noteworthy that the majority of these studies have presented findings in the same direction, whether in terms of the direction and strength of the relationship or the statistical significance. Thus,

in order to understand the relationship in greater depth, there is a need to study the mediating variables, as this can explain the indirect relationship between emotional intelligence and work-related outcomes.

On the other hand, investigating intervening variables, such as trust in supervisors and satisfaction with communication, will add value to understanding the link between emotional intelligence and work-related outcomes. As mediating variables fulfilled the conditions, they were expected to at least play a partial mediating role. In this regard, [10] stated that all independent factors should be related to mediators and dependent variables, wherein the mediators are also related to dependent variables. Thus, we expect the mediation. Moreover, the theoretical and logical foundations that justify the mediating role of these two variables were also reviewed.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

2.1 Emotional Intelligence

Interest in the field of emotional intelligence has been growing recently. Thorndike first introduced this concept in 1920 [11]. Another research presented emotional intelligence as one of the seven domains of intelligence [12]. A significant contribution was made by Peter Salovey and John Mayer in 1990 toward their theory of emotional intelligence. Accordingly, emotional intelligence can be defined as “the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotions; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotions and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth.” [13]

Consequently, authors (e. g., [14]; [15]; [16]) presented four components of EI:

- Self-emotional appraisal, which expresses the extent to which an individual is able to recognise his/her emotions deeply and the ability to extract and express his/her emotions normally, as such an individual can sense and appreciate his/her emotions properly and compare them to others' emotions.
- Other emotional appraisal refers to the extent to which emotions are perceived and understood by an individual toward another person. Hence, individuals of this type are mainly sensitive to others' emotions and attempt to read their minds.
- Regulation of emotion is about the level at which an individual is able to regulate his/her own emotions, and rapid recovery takes place when facing psychological distress.
- The use of emotions depends on the ability to utilise emotions by orienting others toward performance and productivity.

2.2 Trust in Supervisors

Trust is an essential determinant of employees' interactions, particularly when exchanging information, where the role played by mutual trust ensures cooperation between individuals and teamwork, and where trust is required to comprehend the work effectively [7]. Trust is a set of an individual's personal attributions toward others' intentions and motives behind his/her behaviour; in other words, it expresses the extent to which an individual has positive expectations about others [17].

Trust in an organisation has been divided into affective and cognitive [18]. Cognitive trust increases the interest and efforts spent on tasks, and thus affects task performance [19]; [20]. It further minimises feelings of worry and anxiety [21]. In affective trust, the leader demonstrates consideration toward followers, and thus they exchange this feeling in an aspect of favourable behaviours such as spending extra time doing tasks, and directing extra efforts to realise the organisational goals [22].

When the supervisor-subordinate trust is optimum, employees' willingness to meet the legitimate needs of the organisation increases [23]. Accordingly, employees' trust in supervisors and organisation enhances their motivation to contribute significantly in their roles by exerting their efforts and exhibiting extra-role behaviours [24].

Unlikely, distrust or keeping trust at a poor level will negatively affect the workplace, where aspects such as employee cynicism, absence of motivation, and/or commitment will be seen noticeably, which in turn negatively affect performance at all levels [25]; [26]. Thus, enhancing trust among individuals is a very important task for supervisors who should encourage subordinates to do the same.

2.3 Communication Satisfaction

The construct of “communication satisfaction” was seen for the first time in a doctoral thesis by Dale Level (1959) [27]. Back then, it was defined as “the personal satisfaction inherent in successfully communicating to someone or in successfully being communicated with” [28]. This multidimensional concept refers to social interactions that keep people online and satisfy all aspects of organisational communication [29]. It is also an indicator of healthy and effective communication within organisations [30]. Besides its role in facilitating supervisors’ mission of sharing information and creating trust relationships [31], it is a major part of supervisors’ strategies toward success [32]; [33]. Moreover, when employees are satisfied with the communication, they are willing to avoid conflicts [34] and other negative counteractive measures [35], as well as reduce the level of stress [36]. Researchers provided eight dimensions of communication satisfaction that are widely identified and practiced [37]:

- 1) Communication climate represents the extent to which communication at all levels in the organisation is healthy, which encourages employees to realise organisational objectives.
- 2) Relationship with the supervisor describes all upward and downward connections that demonstrate the degree to which the supervisor pays attention and listens carefully to subordinates and supports them in overcoming work-related obstacles.
- 3) Organisational integration reflects the extent to which subordinates perceive themselves as an essential part of the organisation because they receive rich information related to their duties, such as policies, plans, job requirements, and news.
- 4) Media quality assesses the level of quality associated with meetings, publications, and other written directives, and its further concerns regarding the competence of existing communication within the organisation.
- 5) Horizontal communication refers to the level of satisfaction with informal and horizontal communication, the level of accuracy of the free-flow of communication, and the extent to which grapevines are spread out within the organisation.
- 6) Corporate information represents all information related to the function of an organisation as an integral unit; such information is not limited to but includes the financial position, mission, government interventions, and actions that impact the organisation.
- 7) Personal feedback refers to subordinates' perceptions and understanding of how their performance is appraised and judged by their supervisors according to the feedback they receive.
- 8) Relationship with subordinates refers to the level of supervisors' commitment to initiate upward communication to a stage where they feel they have achieved an overload of communication within the organisation.

2.4 Work-Related Outcomes

In this study, eight variables that have been presented in the majority of previous research works as end-result variables were selected. These variables are mostly related to performance and are undoubtedly a matter of interest for organisations.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction represents an enjoyable feeling resulting from job appraisals [38]. Despite being a complex and multidimensional concept, job satisfaction is a factor that motivates efficiency and success, and is strongly related to all surrounding factors, such as physical, social, and psychological aspects [39]. Satisfaction dimensions include satisfaction with work and tasks, supervision quality, organisation, management, and the opportunities provided for individuals' growth and development, in addition to satisfaction with income (salary, wage, intensives, and allowances), work colleagues and work conditions, and the feeling of job security [40].

Job Performance

Job performance is the most important indicator of an organisation’s success, fulfilment, and excellence. It can be an essential part of the overall performance of an organisation. Some of the research works have defined performance as a group of behaviours with appreciative factors that can be identified to reflect positive or negative characteristics for an employee [41]. Others define it as “an activity in which employees are able to successfully complete their assigned tasks with the use of available resources” [42]. It can be further defined as “actions and behaviours that are under the control of individuals that contribute to the goals of the organisation” [43].

Accordingly, Authors categorised job performance into two groups: task performance and contextual performance, where task performance reflects mandatory duties that mostly reflect the feature of the work behaviour, while contextual

performance reflects all interrelated activities that are not related directly to the work but are nevertheless important to facilitate activities and processes related to the work [44].

Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)

Organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) can be defined as an "individual behaviour that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and promotes the effective functioning of the organisation" [45]. OCB is a core determinant of job performance and task performance [46]; [47]. Organ suggested five dimensions of OCB: (1) Altruism, which refers to helping others perform their tasks by devoting time to them; as a result, group efficiency increases when an individual's performance is high, (2) Conscientiousness is the reinforcement of both individual and group efficiency by using time efficiently to realise achievements beyond expectations, (3) Sportsmanship represents spending extra time realising fulfilment endeavours in an organisation where complaints and whining are avoided, (4) Courtesy refers to the ability to prevent problems and facilitate the benefit of time positively, such as ensuring an appropriate flow of information and using reminders and notices, and (5) Civic virtue is about how to enhance the interests of the organisation, for instance, by participating in committees and performing some functions voluntarily.

Job Involvement

Job involvement is a part of work attitude [48], and it refers to the extent to which the employee psychologically identifies with the job or the personal significance of the job [49]; [50]. Job involvement is the outcome of the interaction of both personal qualities and work environment for an individual; thus, it may be closely related to certain jobs [51]. It further characterises individuals who are motivated to achieve extraordinary performance, being more energised and dealing trustfully as a partner, since it reinforces individual learning and knowledge sharing in the work [7].

Well-being

The concept of well-being was introduced by Diener in 1993 [52]. Well-being is a widely spread term, but it does not express a unified understanding of this concept [53]. It further represents an individual's evaluation of his/her own life in the short term and long term, which includes positive and/or negative emotions and life satisfaction [54]; [55]. Studies (e.g., [56]; [57]; [58]) explained well-being as an affective state. Despite the physical and psychological factors that influence employees' well-being at work, organisations can benefit more when employees' well-being is taken care of, while ignorance of employees' well-being causes underachieved performance at the organisational level [59].

Work Engagement

It is a positive organisational behavior concept that has emerged in the past decade [60]. It is a strong influential factor of job performance [61]. It "is related to meaningful business outcomes at a magnitude that is important to many organisations" [62]. However, this concept was defined as "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption" [63]. On the other hand, some research indicated three dimensions of work engagement [64]: (1) Vigour, which refers to the motives to exert efforts by an individual, confirmation of energy at high degrees while performing work, and being able to stand consistently in front of work obstacles and challenges, (2) Dedication, which reflects the extent to which an individual is strongly involved in his work and expresses positive feelings such as pride, enthusiasm, and inspiration, and (3) Absorption, which refers to how an individual is fully involved in his work so that time appears to pass rapidly, while the employee finds it difficult to separate himself from work.

Organisational Commitment

Organisational commitment is an aspect that expresses trust in the values, involvement, and loyalty presented by an employee toward his/her organisation, and where employees are willing to put in extra efforts for the organisation's interest and contribute toward achieving its goals [7].

Previous research indicated three states of organisational commitment [40]: (1) Affective commitment, which is when employees prefer to willingly work with the organisation continuously, (2) Continuous commitment, which takes place when employees are keen to stay in the organisation because they realise that the cost of losing the organisational membership will be high, and (3) Normative commitment, which reflects the extent to which employees maintains their pertinence because they feel obligated to do so.

Turnover Intention

Employee turnover intention is a concept that expresses the likelihood of an individual leaving his/her current job [65]; [66]. The rate of turnover intention increases among the private sector compared to the public sector, and this rate varies

due to the density of population in a city or area [67]. There are two types, namely voluntary and involuntary turnover [68]. Voluntary turnover occurs when the employee leaves work by own choice. Another researcher classified turnover into functional and dysfunctional turnover [69], wherein functional turnover refers to leaving a job because of substandard performance, while dysfunctional turnover refers to leaving a job for employees who show effective performance. On the other hand, there are several reasons that cause employees to leave their jobs, such as the absence of motivation, lack of promotion, the work system being planned inadequately, and a high level of conflict at the workplace [70]; [71].

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The logical foundation of the conceptual framework is derived from theories and previous research works as follows:

The conceptual framework is rationally derived from theoretical and practical support. Theoretical support is presented in the transformational leadership theory, LMX theory, and Likert model. Practical support is based on findings from previous research. The LMX theory is utilised for the development of the theoretical framework and is the underlying theory that supports the framework of the present study. Additionally, in a mediating study, all variables were found to be significantly related to each other [10].

To support this suggestion, three conditions must be satisfied. The first condition supports the direct relationship between the independent and dependent variables. This condition has been discussed in this section. The remaining two conditions refer to the existence of a relationship between independent variables and the mediator variable, and between the mediator variable and the dependent variables.

Consequently, emotional intelligence has been proposed to be related to communication satisfaction. This claim originates from the LMX theory. Communication is an important factor that assists supervisors in their roles. Undoubtedly, supervisors need to have high communication skills to ensure employees' ability toward work-related outcomes, such as job satisfaction, by flowing helpful information [72]. Thus, creative skills of the supervisor may ensure effective communication [73]; [74]. This effective communication fosters mutual trust [75], and confidence [30], which in turn contributes toward maximising satisfaction within departments.

As the LMX theory shows, high-quality relations occur when the supervisor focuses on emotional exchange through interpersonal connections [76], empowering autonomy, considerable communication, and ensuring reciprocal-work information [77]; [78]. Conversely, supervisors build low-quality relations when they deal with subordinates with no or low interest in enhancing emotions [79]; [80]. Therefore, satisfaction with communication emerges from a high-quality relationship, while a low-quality relationship is an output of communication dissatisfaction [81]; [82].

On the other hand, trust in supervisors is assumed to be associated with work-related outcomes. This originated from the LMX theory, which illustrated that the exchange between individuals was based on mutual exchange. Subordinates' trust in supervisors varies according to the different quality of relationships [83] and work-related outcomes [74]; [84]; [85]. High-quality relations in addition to trust in supervisors creates a positive environment, triggers healthy interactions with the supervisor, and encourages excellent performance [86]; [87]. It was concluded that the quality of LMX between superiors and subordinates is a fundamental factor that affects the trust in supervisors [83]. This means that mutual trust increases due to high-quality LMX and vice versa.

Due to the above argument and in support of the suggested mediators such as trust in supervisors and communication satisfaction, studies (e.g., [88]; [89]; [83]; [90]) have indicated that supervisor-subordinate interaction is a vital part of the overall setup of employees.

Recent research introduced the task relationship of a supervisor-subordinate as a necessary social system in an organisation [91]. This mutual social system allows information exchange, accomplishes organisational tasks, and provides guidance and feedback [92]; [93]. Moreover, cooperative communication at work reflects the behavioral exchanges of messages to facilitate the accomplishment of objectives [94]; [91]. Hence, communication is not only the means of sending messages between the sender and recipient but also a social-psychological process through which the roles are performed in that system [95]; [94]. These interactions cannot be realised if mutual trust is not at a high level.

Nonetheless, mutual trust is considered as a key factor which creates supervisor-subordinate personal relationships [96]. Additionally, the supervisor-subordinate trust was considered as a very important factor for the organisation's overall effectiveness [97]. This relationship stems from the social exchange. Both communication and trust are a "social process of the broadest relevance, the functioning of any group, organisation, or society" [94]. Theoretically, the LMX theory focuses on social exchange associated with employee outcomes [98]. Meanwhile, the enhancement of social-exchange relationships further takes place when the supervisor "takes care of employees" [99]. Hence, the social-exchange relationship where mutual trust and communication play fundamental roles could be considered as mediating factors [100]; [99]; [101]. Accordingly, empirical efforts to support the above studies (e.g. [102]; [103]) refer to communication as the key organisational mechanism used to enhance the LMX relationship.

The applied research (e.g., [103]; [104]; [105]; [106]) concluded that the quality of LMX depends on the output of the frequency and quality of communication behavior between supervisors and subordinates. However, it was reported that

high-quality LMX relationships can be represented in terms of social exchanges that are more easily reinforced during face-to-face interaction [103]. Similarly, the influence of a supervisor takes place when they are emotionally intelligent rather than socially distant from subordinates [107].

Further justification of the suggested framework is based on the Likert's model [108], in which a large number of previous studies were reviewed in order to investigate the relationships between variables. This effort targeted human-resource variables that were classified into three categories. The first included casual variables that frequently appeared in previous studies, such as leadership and other supervisory behaviours. The second was for variables that have an effect on work-related variables, such as performance, and at the same time appeared to be affected by casual variables. These variables were called intervening variables, since they played the two roles mentioned previously. Examples of such variables are communication and other variables related to the interaction between supervisors and subordinates, such as mutual trust. In his review of Likert's model, some research assured that mutual trust is an intervening variable [109]. The third category included end-result variables. These variables were influenced by both causal and intervening variables, and thus were largely considered as "hard measures." Furthermore, it is found that these variables are related to work variables such as production, sales, cost, performance, and other indicators of performance, as presented in the current study. This model is based on the extent to which an individual is able to create essential relationships among causal, intervening, and end-result variables. These factors can be further assessed over time, and forecasting future effects on end-result variables is also possible. The variance between expectations is discounted to determine the change in the HR value.

Likert concluded that communication is an "intervening variable" that could be affected by "causal variables" (e.g., leadership strategies; skills, and behaviors), and influences "end-result variables" (e.g., productivity, costs, scrap loss, and earnings) [109]. In support to the previous argument, trust played a mediating role between emotional intelligence and project success [110]. It has also played a mediating role in several studies - for instance, between organisational justice and job performance [111], and between participative leadership and job performance [18]. It is also found that communication satisfaction plays a mediating role between emotional intelligence and well-being [53].

Practically, to justify a mediating variable, the three conditions should be realised [10]. First, there was a significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Second, there is a significant relationship between the independent and mediating variables. Third, there is a significant relationship between the mediating and dependent variables. The following three conditions were met in our study.

Emotional Intelligence and Work-Related Outcomes

Considerable research has examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and work-related variables such as job performance, OCB, organisational commitment, and job satisfaction. However, this relationship still needs to be further investigated across contexts [112]. The positive effect of emotional intelligence on job performance was greater in employees with lower-emotional intelligence. Intelligent individuals can control their emotions to ensure good mental status, which in turn enhances job performance [113]. Employees with high-emotional intelligence are often already adept, and are able to regulate their emotions that contribute to high performance rates, and therefore do not need managerial support as against those with low-emotional intelligence, who are less skilled in managing, assessing, and regulating their emotions [113].

Numerous studies have found significant relationship between emotional intelligence and work-related outcomes such as job performance [114]; [113], job satisfaction [115]; [116]; [117], Wellbeing ([118]; [119]; [120], OCB ([121]; [122]; [123]; [124], Job involvement [125]; [126]; [127], work engagement [128]; [129]; [130], organizational commitments [131]; [132]; [133]; [129]; [134], and negative correlation with turnover intentions [135]; [136]; [137]; [134]; [138].

Emotional Intelligence, Trust in Supervisor, and Communication Satisfaction

Emotional intelligence is said to be related with trust in supervisors, as confirmed empirically by previous studies (e. g., [111]; [139]; [140]), and with communication satisfaction as well [53]; [141]; [142].

Trust in Supervisor and Work-Related Outcomes

Trust in supervisor is proposed to be related with some significant and meaningful work-related outcomes, such as job satisfaction [39]; [17]; [143]; [144], wellbeing ([145]; [146]; [147]; [5], OCB ([148]; [115]; [149], job performance [150]; [115]; [113]; [7]; [17], job involvement [52]; [7]; [151], work engagement [152]; [61], organizational commitment [149]; [7]; [40], and negatively related with turnover intention [17]; [153]; [154]; [155].

Communication Satisfaction and Work-Related Outcomes

Communication satisfaction is proposed to be related with work-related outcomes, such as job satisfaction [74]; [35]; [156]; [157], wellbeing [53]; [158], OCB [159], 2017; [150]; [160]; [161], job performance [41]; [142]; [157], job

involvement [162];[70], work engagement ([35]; [82]; [163], and organisational commitment [164], [165]; [166], and negatively related with turnover intention [167]; [168].

As mentioned previously, the transformational leadership theory justifies the relationship between emotional intelligence as an aspect of transformational leadership and work-related outcomes. The LMX theory explains the role of mutual trust and communication in supervisor-subordinate exchanges. However, the relevant research suggests that the trust in supervisors and communication satisfaction acts as mediator. The Likert model, on the other hand, relays emotional intelligence as a leadership behaviour which is a causal variable; communication satisfaction and trust in supervisors are both intervening variables and can be suggested as mediators; lastly, the end-result variables that are related to productivity are all in the same field of work-related outcomes. Hence, the suggested conceptual framework can be described as follows:

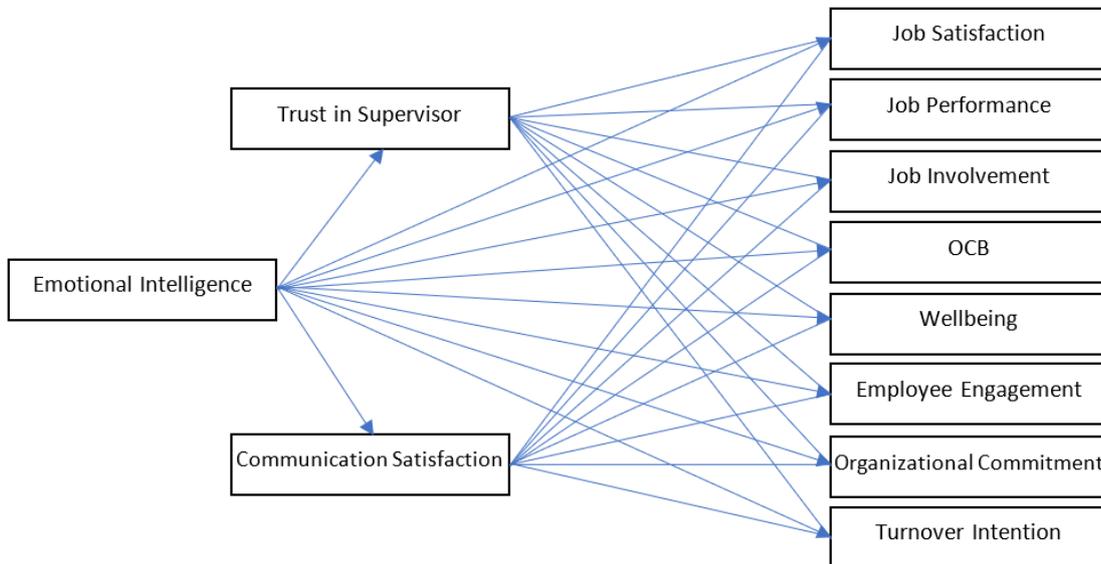


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Hypotheses

The review of the relationships between variables, as discussed previously, showed a significant direct effect of intellectual intelligence on both variables: trust in supervisor and communication satisfaction, as well as work-related outcomes. Moreover, work-related outcomes have been affected by trust in supervisors and communication satisfaction, suggesting that a mediating role can exist.

Thus, it can be hypothesised that:

- There is a significant relationship between intellectual intelligence and work-related outcomes.
- There is a significant relationship between intellectual intelligence and trust in leaders.
- There is a significant relationship between intellectual intelligence and communication satisfaction.
- There is a significant relationship between trust in leaders and work-related outcomes.
- There is a significant relationship between communication satisfaction and work-related outcomes.
- Trust in supervisor mediates the relationship between intellectual intelligence and work-related outcomes.
- Communication satisfaction mediates the relationship between intellectual intelligence and work-related outcomes.

4. Implication

Following review of previous research, along with supportive theories and the realisation of mediating conditions [10], the conceptual framework can be suggested as shown in Fig. 1. Future directions may concern any or both suggested mediators, as well as work-related variables. The link between emotional intelligence and work-related outcomes can also be investigated directly and indirectly. Researchers are advised to examine the hypothesised relationships among organisations across cultures, sectors, and industries.

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