REVIEW

under the procedure of Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar"
for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"

Dissertation title:	"Components of Emotional Intelligence (EI) as a Means of Strengthening Human Resources in Healthcare Institutions"
Professional field:	3.7 "Administration and Management"
Doctoral programme:	"Organization and Management Outside the Sphere of Material Production"
Author:	Amjad Mustafa Amara
Scientific supervisor:	Prof. Snezhanka Ovcharova, PhD
Reviewer:	Assoc. Prof. Kremena Andonova, PhD

This review has been prepared on the basis of the dissertation, the author's abstract, and the publications on the topic submitted by the doctoral candidate. The assessment also takes into account the progress made in comparison with the version presented at the preliminary discussion.

I. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS AND ASSESSMENT OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation submitted for review comprises 161 pages and includes an introduction (13 pages), an exposition in three chapters (112 pages), a conclusion (6 pages), a list of references (11 pages), and appendices (13 pages). The main text contains 11 tables and 9 figures, while the bibliographic base includes 92 titles in English. The structure is functionally balanced: the first two chapters develop the theoretical-conceptual and contextual framework, while Chapter Three is devoted to the methodology, empirical study, analysis, and discussion of the results.

The relevance and suitability of the research problem for doctoral research are indisputable. Prolonged crisis pressures exacerbate staff shortages, occupational burnout, turnover, and challenges to organisational resilience. In this context, the integration of emotional intelligence into human resource management has both theoretical and practical significance. The topic is relevant to Professional Field 3.7 "Administration and Management", since EI is examined in relation to managerial functions, organisational culture, and institutional decisions, rather than as an independent psychological phenomenon.

A substantial improvement over the version discussed at the preliminary stage is the operationalisation of the concept of "strengthening human resources" through measurable dimensions – occupational burnout, retention, and the quality of organisational conditions. The theoretical, subject-related, institutional, and temporal boundaries have also been refined, with the prolonged crisis context distinguished from the cross-sectional nature of the empirical observation. This improves the consistency between the title, the problem, the variables, and the permissible generalisations.

The doctoral candidate demonstrates *good familiarity with the literature* on HRM, emotional intelligence, organisational resilience, burnout, and healthcare management. The bibliographic base has been expanded compared with the previous version (to 92 titles), with contemporary scientific publications and institutional sources from the last ten years predominating. The theoretical discussion is more critical, although in places it remains broader than necessary for substantiating the empirical model. The sources have been used correctly, although some technical inconsistencies in citation remain. On the basis of the submitted similarity report, the accessible literature, and the substantive review of the dissertation, no evidence has been identified that would justify a finding of plagiarism.

The methodological toolkit is appropriate to the research problem. The study is based on a mixed (quantitative and qualitative) approach, implemented at four methodological levels: documentary and theoretical analysis of the scientific literature; contextual and comparative analysis of healthcare governance; a quantitative survey of 110 employees across three institutional models; and a

qualitative study through semi-structured interviews with representatives at management level. The use of internationally recognised questionnaires for assessing emotional intelligence and occupational burnout (WLEIS, MBI-HSS-MP), as well as an author-developed questionnaire on HRM practices, together with correlation, regression, mediation, and comparative analyses, is substantiated. The doctoral candidate's efforts to provide stronger justification for the quantitative and qualitative findings through the developed hypothesis alignment and verification matrices, as well as the joint presentation of the data (Section 3.3 of Chapter Three), deserve positive assessment.

It may be concluded that the topic has been appropriately selected, the issues addressed are complex and require interdisciplinary competence, while the study remains clearly management-oriented. The author demonstrates analytical skills and an ability to work with unsupported and partially supported hypotheses, which is an important indicator of research independence. The quality of the research has improved markedly in the final revision of the dissertation.

II. CHARACTERISTICS AND ASSESSMENT OF THE CONTENT OF THE DISSERTATION

The structure of the dissertation is logically constructed and, to a considerable extent, subordinated to the development of the research problem and the testing of the hypotheses. Compared with the previous version, the traceability between the theoretical framework, research questions, variables, methods, and results has been improved.

The introduction defines the relevance, research problem, object and subject, aim, tasks, methodology, hypotheses, scope, and limitations. The formulation of the research hypotheses as statements of associations is justified, which is more appropriate in view of the cross-sectional empirical study conducted. Some inaccuracies can still be identified with regard to: the subject, which is not limited to the actual empirical context of the study – Israeli healthcare institutions in the period from COVID-19 to the "Iron Swords" war; Task 4, which is formulated as a

methodological procedure; and two of the tasks (5 and 6), which concern the formulation of recommendations.

Chapter One, "Human Resource Management in Healthcare Institutions", develops the theoretical foundation of the study. The strategic role of HRM, the specific characteristics of the healthcare workforce, leadership competencies, and the principal models of EI are analysed. A strength of the revised version is the clearer critical discussion of the effects of training and the distinction between the ability model of emotional intelligence and mixed models of emotional intelligence. Certain strands – green transformational leadership, sustainability, and some aspects of artificial intelligence – remain primarily contextual in relation to the empirical model.

In Chapter Two, "Healthcare Systems Coping with Conditions of Prolonged Crisis", the research problem is specified in relation to COVID-19 and Operation "Iron Swords". Challenges to HRM, management under uncertainty, occupational burnout, trauma, and psychological resilience are analysed. The doctoral candidate successfully shifts the analytical focus from individual coping mechanisms to the organisational conditions that create or constrain resources for adaptation and, on this basis, substantiates the distinction between crisis pressures of different types.

Chapter Three, "Methodology and Analysis of Results in Israeli Healthcare Institutions", has substantial research and scientific and applied value. The methodological organisation of the empirical study, the instruments, and the analytical procedures are substantiated in detail. The testing and interpretation of the research hypotheses are presented in Sections 3.3 and 3.4, while their synthesised substantiation – which hypotheses are confirmed and which are rejected – is provided in the conclusion on pp. 132–133. Of particular value is the use of the qualitative interviews to explain and contextualise the quantitative findings. In this way, the mixed design functions as a genuinely integrated methodological strategy, allowing statistically established associations to be supplemented by an interpretation of the organisational context. On this basis, the following stand out: the predominance of informal assessment of emotional intelligence; the absence of structured mechanisms for developing emotional resilience; the different nature of occupational exhaustion

under pandemic and wartime crisis conditions; and the role of organisational conditions in the implementation of human resource management practices.

The conclusion constitutes a logical synthesis of the results of the theoretical and empirical analyses, bringing together in a consistent manner the testing of the research hypotheses, the main established associations, the limitations of the study, and the scientific and practical conclusions arising from them. The argumentation of the results follows the internal logic of the dissertation, linking the findings obtained with the formulated managerial recommendations and directions for future research.

II. SUMMARY OF THE MORE SIGNIFICANT STRENGTHS AND RESULTS OF A CONTRIBUTORY NATURE OF THE DISSERTATION

1. The relationships between organisational culture, selected HRM practices, emotional intelligence, and the components of occupational burnout in healthcare institutions operating under a prolonged compound crisis have been *specified and empirically tested*.

2. *Evidence has been provided* that, in the institutions studied, organisational culture has a stronger predictive association with burnout than self-reported EI and that, when EI is statistically controlled, the effect of organisational culture becomes stronger. On this basis, *the application* of the logic of the Job Demands–Resources model in a specific crisis context has been substantiated.

3. The absence of a statistically significant mediating effect of emotional intelligence in the relationship between human resource management practices and occupational burnout has been *established*. *The thesis is advanced* that organisational and individual resources do not form a single sequential causal chain, but may operate through different and relatively independent mechanisms. This result has scientific value and points to the need for subsequent longitudinal and intervention studies to establish the nature of these relationships more precisely.

4. *A distinction has been made* between predominantly physical exhaustion under pandemic conditions and more pronounced psychological exhaustion under conditions of prolonged military threat. On the basis of the qualitative analysis, *the need* for a differentiated approach to the development of HRM interventions

according to the nature of the crisis impact has been substantiated. The result has scientific and applied value, but requires further verification on a broader empirical basis.

5. *A comprehensive instrument has been developed* for assessing the integration of EI into key HRM functions. Quite appropriately, in the final version of the dissertation the instrument is presented as having been piloted at the current stage and as requiring further psychometric testing and refinement, rather than as a fully validated instrument.

6. *Practical recommendations have been formulated* by level of application. The strongest empirical support is provided for interventions targeting organisational culture and the formalisation of informal practices for psychological support and retention. Policy-level recommendations should be regarded as prospective managerial solutions.

The results of a contributory nature identified above are acceptable for the level of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”. They relate mainly to: the enrichment and specification of existing scientific knowledge in a specific institutional and crisis context; the application and combination of established methods to address a specific managerial problem; and the formulation of conclusions and recommendations of practical significance.

III. AUTHOR’S ABSTRACT AND PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO THE DISSERTATION

The author’s abstract appropriately reflects the main logic and content of the dissertation and presents the necessary elements of the research conducted. The effort to present both the theoretical framework and the methodology and results of the author’s own empirical study deserves positive assessment.

The doctoral candidate’s publication activity is thematically related to the subject matter of the dissertation. Three single-authored publications and one co-authored with the scientific supervisor are presented, and their results have been subject to scholarly discussion within international scientific conferences. On the

basis of the submitted scientometric report on the publications, it may be accepted that the minimum national and applicable institutional requirements for the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” have been met.

IV. NOTES, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND QUESTIONS

Following the preliminary discussion, the doctoral candidate carried out a substantial revision of the dissertation and, to a considerable extent, addressed the comments and recommendations I made as an internal reviewer. Notwithstanding the progress achieved, the following weaknesses may be identified in the final version:

1. The theoretical part could be more closely focused on the concepts and relationships directly involved in the empirical model; certain topics remain predominantly contextual (for example, green transformational leadership, sustainability, AI, and future technological competencies).

2. The subject and tasks of the study require further refinement. The subject is formulated more broadly than the empirical context actually studied, while Task 4 essentially represents a methodological procedure rather than an independent research task. The formulations used should also be aligned more consistently with the limitations of the cross-sectional study. Terms such as “influence” and “effect” imply a causal relationship, whereas the study conducted primarily allows statistical relationships between the variables examined to be established.

3. Consistency is required between the statistical procedures stated and those reported. Independent-samples t-tests, moderation analysis, and logistic regression are specified, but no results from them are presented. If they were not applied, they should be removed from the methodology. The justification of statistical power for between-group comparisons also requires refinement.

4. When using the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS), a clearer distinction is needed between the theoretical understanding of emotional intelligence as an ability and the way in which it is measured through a self-report scale. The lower reliability of the “Training and Development” subscale also calls for additional caution in interpreting the results, which is why the questionnaire

developed by the author should be regarded as piloted and subject to further psychometric testing.

5. The limited generalisability resulting from purposive sampling, the three institutions, unequal groups, and geographical concentration should be acknowledged more clearly. Instead of “ensures representativeness”, it would be more accurate to use “ensures structural diversity”.

7. A final technical edit is required – unification of in-text citation, institutional authors, and bibliographic entries, as well as removal of residual working notation.

The comments made do not alter my positive assessment of the substantive character, completeness, and results of a contributory nature of the dissertation. Some of them can be addressed through final editing, while the others outline directions for the future development of the research.

The following *question* may be addressed to the doctoral candidate *for discussion*:

1. What arguments give you grounds to define EI as a relatively stable personal resource, given that it was measured through a self-report instrument and that the study uses a cross-sectional design? What type of follow-up study would allow this causal relationship to be tested more convincingly?

V. CONCLUSION

The dissertation by Amjad Mustafa Amara submitted for defence is a completed and independent scientific study. The author demonstrates the ability to formulate a complex managerial problem, to work with his own empirical material, to combine quantitative and qualitative methods, and to interpret both supported and unsupported expectations. The final revision of the dissertation demonstrates substantial progress compared with the preliminary discussion.

The results obtained give me grounds to conclude that the dissertation meets the requirements for the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”. The comments

made do not invalidate the positive assessment, but rather delineate the boundaries of interpretation and the directions for further improvement.

I propose that the Honourable Scientific Jury award Amjad Mustafa Amara the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in Professional Field 3.7 "Administration and Management", Doctoral Programme "Organization and Management Outside the Sphere of Material Production".

28 October 2026 Reviewer:

Varna (Assoc. Prof. Kremena Andonova, PhD)