



## The mediating role of self-esteem in the relationship between emotional creativity and wisdom in middle managers

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### ABSTRACT

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**Background and Aim:** This study was conducted with the aim The mediating role of self-esteem in the relationship between emotional creativity and wisdom in middle managers. **Methods:** The cross-sectional research method is correlational and in order to respond to the research hypotheses, structural equation modeling analysis was used. The statistical population of this research was made up of all the middle level managers of private banks and Mahan Airlines in Tehran in first half 2021, from among them, 300 people were selected by staged cluster sampling method. In this research, the tools of wisdom (Ardelt, 2003), emotional creativity (Avril, 1999), and self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965) were used, all of which are valid and had acceptable reliability. In order to analyze the data, SPSS-V19 and Lisrel-V8.8 software were used. **Results:** The findings of the research showed that the model has a good fit. The results showed that emotional creativity had a significant direct effect on wisdom. In connection with the existence of an indirect effect of emotional creativity on the wisdom of middle managers through self-esteem, it is confirmed with 95% confidence. **Conclusion:** Therefore, paying attention to the mentioned variables helps senior managers and researchers in choosing managers and designing more suitable for cultivating wisdom.



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## Introduction

Today, human resources are considered as the most valuable and important organizational resources that can lead to strengthening the organization's competitive advantage over other organizations (Snow, 2021). In today's world, which is accompanied by rapid changes and transformations, effective human resources are one of the most important intangible assets in the organization, and the economic growth of the organization depends on empowering them (Matis et al., 2016). Therefore, special attention should be paid to the needs of human resources and in fact unity and integration should be created between individual and organizational needs (Arianto, 2017). On the other hand, the success of organizations and work environments completely depends on the efficient use of human resources based on behavioral sciences, which is one of the most important elements for providing appropriate services. The selection of wise managers, human resources and efficient force is the most fundamental factor of production, construction, growth and evolution. Therefore, it is necessary to know as comprehensively as possible the concepts and structures related to human power, special tools and finally the skill of using these tools (Bahalohoreh & Mirmehdi, 2016). Regarding the promotion of wisdom of successful managers, it should also be acknowledged that the modern and advanced knowledge organization of the world should lead to the advancement and development of its human resources. This requires regular and continuous activities at all levels, which survival and progress in today's ever-changing world require (Sides, 2017). Undoubtedly, one of these cases is paying attention to the appropriate and desirable structural model for choosing and improving the wisdom of managers.

Some psychologists define wisdom as personal traits that need time to develop (Gluck, 2017); For example, Erikson (1982) defines wisdom as an individual's virtue or strength that emerges after a lifetime of solving psychological crises and states that wisdom is manifested in a person's conscious but neutral concern for life when faced with death. Wisdom can be developed through experiences such as successful resolution of life crises. Ardelet (2011) defines wisdom as a personality trait that combines cognitive, contemplative, and

emotional personality traits and states that to develop wisdom, a person must be willing to learn from life lessons and transfer them to the process. Gluck and Bluck (2013) define wisdom as a personal resource used to navigate life's challenges and fundamental changes. They state that people who score high in the four scales of mastery, openness, contemplation and empathy and emotional regulation: They can develop wisdom from experiencing life's fundamental changes, by searching for experiences that reinforce it, and by facing their own and others' life challenges in a way that promotes wisdom.

Also, creative and innovative thinking, along with problem solving and conducting research, are among the essential skills needed for the 21st century. The main focus in emotional creativity includes generating original ideas and responding to issues or situations that can be taught to managers and employees through emotional creativity training (Gupta & Bajaj, 2017). It is believed that emotional creativity is related to the richness of a person's emotional life (Sadati Firouzabadi & Yousefi, 2019). Creativity is often the manifestation and display of free expression and is at the highest level among excellent thinking processes, on the other hand, emotions are often the manifestation of people's internal arousals in a way that limits a person in providing answers (Ajam et al., 2016). Bochkova (2020) believes that people prone to creative emotions spend more time than others for emotional recognition and pay more attention to their own and others' emotions. In this regard, the results of Safi's research (2019) showed that there is a significant relationship between curiosity and emotional creativity with wisdom in people. Moreover, the results of Yarmohammadi et al. (2018) showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between successful intelligence and wisdom with emotional creativity in people.

Ardelt considers wisdom as an important personality trait in interaction with other traits. Optimism and a positive view towards the future, purposefulness, self-esteem (Kordnougabi et al., 2015) and education (Wang & Lee, 2018) are external factors that affect intelligence. Self-esteem plays a fundamental role in the formation of human wisdom (Bortolan, 2018). Self-esteem refers to a person's positive evaluation of himself, which

consists of two dimensions: "competence and value". Competence dimension (self-esteem based on efficiency) to the degree that people see themselves as capable and efficient. The value dimension (value-based self-esteem) also refers to the degree to which people feel they are valuable (Scott et al., 2020). Self-esteem has six basic pillars that include conscious life, self-acceptance, responsibility for oneself, assertiveness and self-expression, purposeful life, coherence and integrity (Shimotsu & Horikawa, 2016). Individuals with self-esteem are very rational and benefit from realism, intuitiveness, independence of opinion, flexibility and many positive characteristics (Gardner, 2020). The results of Azizi et al.'s research (2019) showed that self-esteem had an impact on wisdom, and on the other hand, low self-esteem blocks the path to achieving wisdom. Moreover, the results of Mohammadi et al.'s research (2018) show that wisdom has an effect on self-esteem and organizational voice of employees of Refah Bank branches in Isfahan province.

This topic is important because emotional creativity and generation of new thoughts and ideas by middle managers and organizational employees is of special importance and this importance has a high position in the organization. Today, organizations are successful and can survive in a highly competitive world that constantly apply new thoughts and ideas, and this is made by competent managers and employees who have emotional creativity, wisdom and high self-esteem. Therefore, according to the said contents and because the investigation of this issue will increase the wisdom in choosing capable managers and competent employees and helps them in solving organizational issues, it has a special value and importance. Therefore, the present research seeks to investigate the question: Is wisdom based on emotional creativity with the mediation of self-esteem in middle managers suitable?

Therefore, the conceptual model of the research is presented as follows.

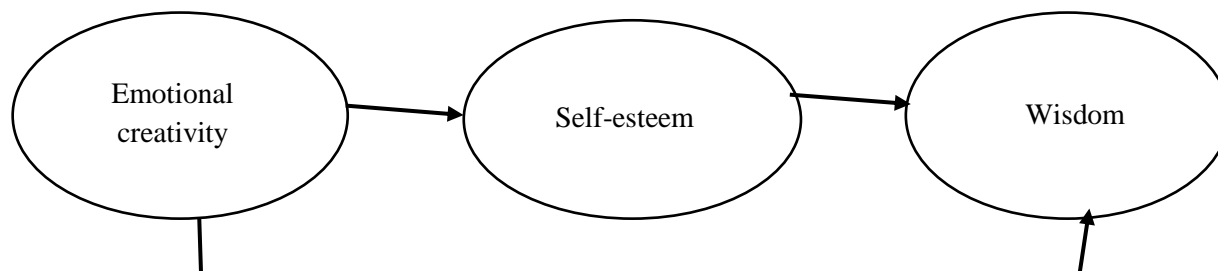


Figure 1. Suggested model

### Method

This research was carried out in terms of the fundamental purpose and data collection method using the correlation research method and structural equation pattern analysis method. This research's statistical population was comprised of all middle-level managers of private banks and Mahan Airlines in Tehran in the first half of 2021. In order to determine the sample size, considering that in this research, confirmatory factor analysis was used, and as a rule, a larger sample size is necessary to fit the model. Therefore, there are recommendations for determining the sample size, which were taken into account. Ding et al. (1995) considered 100 to 150 samples as the minimum satisfactory sample size when dealing with manifest and latent variables. Lohlin (1992) has suggested 100 to 200 subjects for the measurement model of two to four factors and

considers the number of 300 samples to be desirable. Bentler and Chu (1987) have suggested that when the latent variables have multiple predictors, a ratio as small as 5 subjects per variable is sufficient for a normal distribution. Also, for other distributions, a ratio of at least 10 subjects per variable will be sufficient, and Dr. Homan considered 15 to 30 times the obvious variables for structural equation modeling. Based on these recommendations, a sample size of 300 people was considered in order to comply with all the recommendations. It should be noted that the samples were selected based on the multi-stage cluster sampling method.

### Materials

**1. Ardel's wisdom questionnaire (2003).** The micro questionnaire was designed by Ardelet in 2003. This questionnaire consists of 39 items and three cognitive (14 questions), reflective (12

questions) and emotional (13 questions) subscales, which are used to measure wisdom. The scoring of the questionnaire is in the form of a 5-point Likert scale, where 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 points are considered for the options. Ardelt calculated the internal consistency in all three dimensions as 0.85, the cognitive dimension as 0.78, the reflective dimension as 0.75, and the emotional dimension as 0.74. Ardelt has reported its psychometric properties, including its retest reliability (0.56), positive and significant inter-rater reliability, and its convergent validity by examining its correlation with a suitable psychological well-being scale. Exploratory factor analysis has also confirmed three measured theoretical factors, whose Cronbach's alpha was reported as 0.85 (Ardelt, 2003).

**2. Avril emotional creativity questionnaire (1999).** This questionnaire was prepared by Avril (1999) in order to measure emotional creativity in the four dimensions of novelty, effectiveness, honesty and emotional readiness. It includes 30 items that measure 7 items of emotional readiness, 14 items of novelty, 5 items of effectiveness and 4 items of honesty. In front of each item is a five-point spectrum from very low to very high. Avril (1999) obtained 0.91 reliability of the emotional creativity total score and 0.80, 0.89, 0.80 and 0.85 dimensions of readiness, effectiveness, honesty and novelty with Cronbach's alpha method. Avril (1999) used factor analysis and correlation with similar tests to calculate the validity of the questionnaire, which obtained three dimensions instead of four dimensions based on factor analysis. The dimensions of effectiveness and originality formed a factor together (Jokar & Albarzi, 2009). Gutbezal and Avril (1996) estimated the reliability coefficient of the test using Cronbach's alpha method as 0.86 and reported a range between 0.80 and 0.89 for the four dimensions. In Iran, Abdullahi et al. (2008) reported Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.68 and 0.65 for athletic and non-athletic students. Jokar and Albarzi (2009) confirmed the existence of three factors of novelty, preparation, effectiveness and honesty through exploratory factor analysis using the principal components method, based on the scree diagram and higher eigenvalues. They confirmed the reliability using Cronbach's alpha method for the total creativity score of 0.90 and for the dimensions of novelty (innovation), effectiveness/honesty and

readiness. They also reported reliability using Cronbach's alpha method for the total creativity score of 0.90 and for the dimensions of novelty, effectiveness, honesty, and preparation, the coefficients were 0.83, 0.82, and 0.68, respectively. Their findings were similar to those of April (1999).

**3. Rosenberg self-esteem questionnaire (1965).** This scale was prepared and introduced by Maurice Rosenberg in 1965, which consists of 10 items and was prepared to measure general self-esteem. A positive answer to each of the statements 1 to 5 will receive +1. The opposite answer to each of the statements 1 to 5 will receive -1. Positive answers to each of the statements 6 to 10 receive +1 and negative answers to statements 6 to 10 receive -1. A score higher than zero indicates high self-esteem and a score lower than zero indicates low self-esteem. Several studies have been conducted to check the validity and reliability of the Rosenberg scale. Rosenberg has reported the creation of the scale as 0.9 and its scalability as 0.7. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for this scale were calculated as 0.87 for men and 0.86 for women in the first round and 0.88 for dying and 0.87 for women in the second round. Wiley (1989) in his review of the research conducted with this scale found that in seven different studies, the alpha value was obtained from 0.72 to 0.87. Silber and Tippett (1965) obtained a retest coefficient of 0.85 after two weeks. In a study in Iran by Barkhouri et al. (2008), Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.71. Also, the validity of this scale in Iranian culture has been confirmed in various studies. Its reliability has been reported from 0.82 to 0.88 by the retest method and 0.77 to 0.88 by the alpha method (Sheikh & Afshari, 2012).

**Implementation**

The analysis of the information obtained from the implementation of questionnaires was done through Spss-V19 and Lisrel-V7.80 software. Also, in order to test research hypotheses, structural equation modeling was used.

**Results**

The average and standard deviation of the age of the participants in the research was 28.78 (4.54) years. In this section, the research variables are described using central indicators, dispersion and graph.

**Table 1. Statistical characteristics of research variables**

Variable	Component	Score	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
<b>Wisdom</b>	Cognitive	62.16	7.70	0.81-	0.15
	Reflective	51.55	7.04	0.27-	0.69
	Emotional	56.31	6.92	0.90-	1.03
<b>Emotional creativity</b>	Novelty	46.09	11.60	0.05	0.52-
	Effectiveness	15.64	4.48	0.18	0.56-
	Honesty	13.61	3.46	0.06-	0.38-

	Emotional readiness	23.51	5.24	0.04-	0.10
<b>Self-esteem</b>	-	6.21	5.15	0.33-	0.86

The information in Table 1 shows the statistical characteristics of the research variables. According to the values of skewness and kurtosis which are in the range of (+1.96, -1.96),

the assumption of the normality of the data is strengthened, therefore, the assumption of the normality of the data can be raised and accepted.

**Table 2. Correlation matrix between research variables**

		Wisdom	Emotional creativity	Self-esteem
<b>Wisdom</b>	Correlation	1		
	Sig.			
<b>Emotional creativity</b>	Correlation	0.776**	1	
	Sig.	0.000		
<b>Self-esteem</b>	Correlation	0.754**	0.613**	1

As it is clear from matrix 2, the sign \*\* indicates the existence of correlation between research variables at the 0.01 level. That is, there is a significant relationship between research variables.

hypothesis, the confirmatory structural equation model is used. For this purpose, after drawing the structure, adding the model constraints and selecting the maximum likelihood method, the executed model and the fit path diagram of Figures 2 and 3 were obtained.

In this section, in order to investigate the relationships between the variables of the third

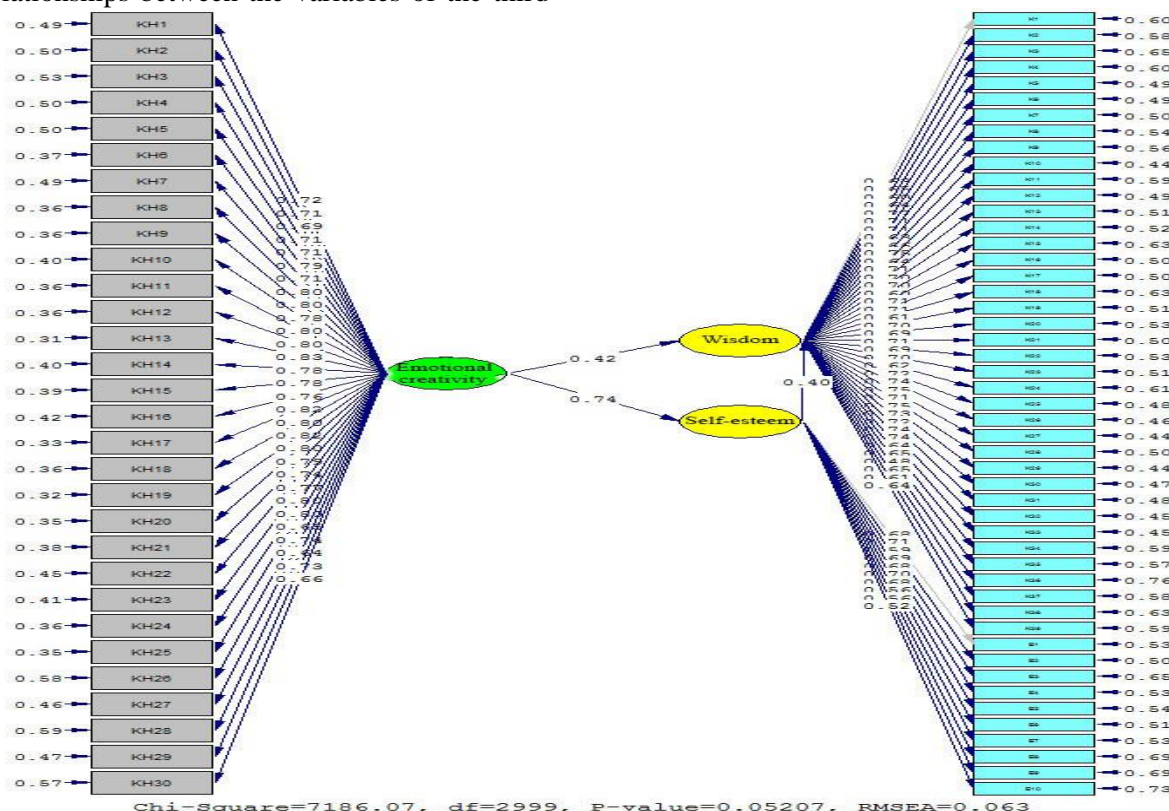
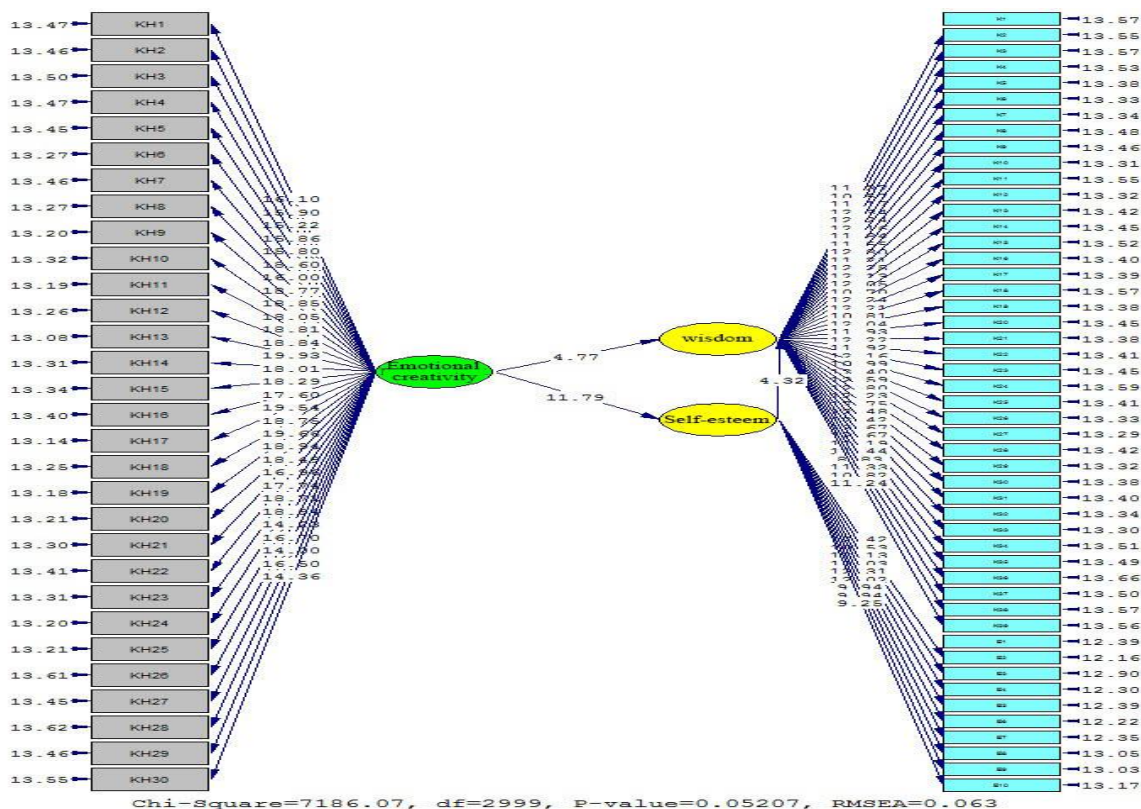


Figure 2. Path coefficients and factor loadings of the model (in standard mode)



**Figure 3. Significant coefficients of the model**

According to the chi-square and RMSEA criteria, this model provides a good fit to the data. In Table 3, the most important and most common fit indices are given. As seen in Table

3, all indicators have statistical adequacy. Therefore, it can be confidently concluded that the researcher has achieved a relatively perfect fit regarding these indicators.

**Table 3. A selection of important fit indices of the drawing model**

Index	Index name	Value	Acceptable fit
Absolute fit indices	-	7186.07	
	GFI	0.88	> 0.8
Comparative fit indices	AGFI	0.85	> 0.8
	CFI	0.96	> 0.9
Indices of parsimonious fit	RMSEA	0.063	< 0.1

In Table 4, the path coefficients along with the t values for the above hypothesis are given. Test routes are accepted.

**Table 4. Path coefficients and t-values**

Path	Path coefficient	T-value	Condition
Emotional creativity --> self-esteem	0.74	11.79	Approved
Self-esteem --> wisdom	0.40	4.32	Approved
Emotional creativity --> wisdom	0.42	4.77	Approved

Therefore, it can be concluded that the effect of emotional creativity on wisdom with the mediation of self-esteem in middle managers is significant. In order to check the direct and indirect effect of independent variables on the

dependent variable, it is necessary to present the total, direct and indirect effects for the endogenous variable of the model, which can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5. Path coefficients and t-values

Independent variable	Dependent variable	Effect		
		Direct	Indirect	Total
Emotional creativity	Self-esteem	0.74	----	0.74
Self-esteem	Wisdom	0.40	-----	0.40
Emotional creativity	Wisdom	0.42	0.30 = 0.40 * 0.74	0.72

As can be seen in Table 5: the effect of emotional creativity indirectly through self-esteem on wisdom is 0.72.

### Conclusion

The present study was conducted with the aim of mediating the role of self-esteem in the relationship between emotional creativity and wisdom in middle managers. The research results are consistent with the findings of Aghili (2019), Behri et al. (2021), Kim et al. (2020), Grossman et al. (2016). People with emotional creativity have the characteristic of humor and happiness, and a wise person also has the ability to express his opinions without fear in such a way that he achieves his goals. People with emotional creativity focus on the positive and joyful aspects of situations and create an exciting environment for themselves with funny interpretations of any subject. On the other hand, emotionally creative people always come up with new ways to solve their own and other people's crises. Therefore, in a way, the key to solving problems is in their hands. Therefore, they feel self-esteem, usefulness and self-fulfillment and finally have a happy spirit and a sense of humor. Moreover, most of the non-trivial problems are multiple problems. Being open to other perspectives, information, and potential problem-solving strategies optimizes the wise person's efforts to overcome obstacles efficiently. Furthermore, emotional creativity means creating and in a way it expresses a person's ability to create ideas, theories, insights and reconstruction in science and other fields. People who have emotional creativity, due to the fact that they can establish social relations well and provide a safe and secure environment for themselves, and listen to the opinions and opinions of others and react well in this safe context. This feature is effective in the growth of their wisdom. Therefore, due to the fact that wisdom grows and develops as a result of the collision and conflict of thoughts and ideas, a person who has emotional creativity becomes

aware of the type and way of thinking of different people and their different ideas with the social connections he establishes. As Avril and Nunley (1992) state in the definition of emotional creativity, it leads to the "expansion of the lines of thought" of the individual. The findings of this research have theoretical and practical applications. On the other hand, there is very little research related to the dimensions of emotional creativity and wisdom, and mostly in various theories of wisdom, emotional creativity is considered as the basic element and prerequisite for this important practice. In the current research, the relationship between two variables was experimentally confirmed in such a way that emotional creativity was able to predict part of changes in wisdom. Therefore, the results of this research can both help the scientific body of wise psychology and have important messages for policy makers and senior managers in choosing competent managers; Because like in the past, it is no longer possible to emphasize intelligence and thinking skills and consider it the only concern of organizations for work, but by providing rich environments, emotional creativity should be fostered and finally, wise and capable people will enter the labor market.

The results showed that the effect of emotional creativity on wisdom with the mediation of self-esteem in middle managers is significant. This finding is consistent with the results of Hasani (2018), Zabihi Hesari et al. (2017), Ardel and Ferrari (2019). Also, this finding is in line with Sternberg's (2005) balance theory about wisdom. This theory mentions the mediating role of self-esteem between emotional creativity and wisdom. A wise person has special cognitive abilities, such as emotional creativity, who can make decisions that benefit everyone based on the conditions and situation and look at moral values and principles. Based on this, emotional creativity can affect people's self-esteem. Emotional creativity can increase

people's patience in the face of possible problems and also create resistance and endurance against the blows of others so that they can develop more wisdom by choosing challenging activities. In general, self-esteem is one of the influential variables between emotional creativity and wisdom because it is effective on both emotional creativity and wisdom. In other words, self-esteem has both a receiver and a giver effect. Based on this, the mediating role of self-esteem between emotional creativity and wisdom can be explained. Moreover, in explaining this finding from the present research, we can argue three basic elements in the variable of emotional creativity. Emotional creativity has shown that positive mood and psychological health help a person do better and integrate information, creatively solve problems, and increase divergent and more efficient thinking. Emotional creativity is related to the richness of a person's emotional life, and it is often a manifestation and display of free expression, and it is at the highest level among the excellent processes of thinking; in contrast to emotions, it is often a manifestation of people's internal arousals in a way that limits a person in providing answers. In fact, people with emotional creativity take more time to understand their emotions than others, make efforts, and pay more attention and accuracy to their own and others' emotions. At the same time, it is necessary to be wise in life and especially in the field of work, to have attention and accuracy. Among the elements that are mentioned in emotional creativity is the element of innovation. According to numerous studies, including Guilford's studies, divergent thinking, which can be the same as innovation, is needed for creativity and better performance in the field of work. For this reason, emotional creativity can affect managers' feelings, emotions, and self-esteem.

The limitations of the research include the limitation of the variable measurement tool that only self-report questionnaires were used. Since the research was conducted in a limited society, caution should be observed in generalizing the results to other societies. Since the only data collection tool in this research was a questionnaire, it is suggested to use other methods, such as interviews and observation along with questionnaires, to increase the validity of the obtained results. It is suggested

that knowledge arising from organizational environments should be combined with wisdom to take steps within the framework of active educational methods to promote the mental growth and wise thinking of its learners. Indirect training, including involving managers with job strategies and policies, will be effective in order to attract more of their participation in achieving goals and having wise thinking about the future of managers and employees.

#### Conflict of Interest

According to the authors, this article has no financial sponsor or conflict of interest.

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