

Unlocking Employee Engagement through Emotional Intelligence: The Mediating Effect of Knowledge Sharing Behavior

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Abstract

The present study investigated the impact of emotional intelligence on employee engagement through the mediating role of knowledge sharing behaviour. A quantitative research design was employed using a cross-sectional survey employed to the employees in the higher education sector. PLS-SEM was utilized to analyze the measurement and structural model and to examine the mediating effect of knowledge sharing behaviour. The results revealed that emotional intelligence has a positive impact on employee engagement. Furthermore, the results also revealed that emotional intelligence positively influences employee's willingness to share knowledge, which in turn enhances their level of engagement. The mediation analysis revealed that knowledge sharing mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and employee engagement, suggesting that emotionally intelligent employees become more engaged not only because of their emotional competencies but also through their active participation in knowledge sharing practices.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Employee Engagement, Knowledge Sharing Behaviour

Introduction

Knowledge sharing is a fundamental tenet of knowledge management (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Knowledge is regarded as a valuable intangible resource that plays a crucial role in generating and maintaining advantages for both individuals and organisations (Baardsen, 2011). The exchange of knowledge within organisations plays a crucial role in enhancing organisational performance and fostering innovation (Noor & Salim, 2012). The act of sharing information is a crucial factor in assessing the progress and expansion of organisations within the context of global competitiveness (Stella et al., 2015). In the current international economy, knowledge may be seen as a fundamental economic resource (Stella et. al., 2015). The use of knowledge has significant importance for organisations, as it provides them with a competitive advantage in the global market, enabling them to effectively compete with other entities (Bouthilier & Shearer, 2002). Knowledge sharing behaviour may be described as the voluntary activity shown by a person, whereby they willingly provide other workers with access to their extensive knowledge and expertise (Hansel & Avital, 2005). Van den hooff and De ridder (2004, p.no.118) define "Knowledge sharing as a process where individuals mutually exchange their explicit and implicit knowledge and jointly create new knowledge". Entities across various sectors have recognized the advantages associated with the implementation of knowledge sharing practices. Such methodologies have facilitated the attainment of their organizational objectives (Al-Kurdi et al., 2020). The advancement and prosperity of a nation are fundamentally influenced by the caliber of its higher education, which concomitantly shapes its social, political, technological, and economic contexts as well as its processes of modernization (Nawaz & Gomes, 2014). In light of the competitive and increasingly dynamic landscapes characteristic of the 21st century, the efficacy of a successful higher educational institutions resides in its capacity to generate, administer, and leverage knowledge in the most optimal manner (Geng et al., 2005). In particular, higher education institutions (HEIs) function as pivotal centers for knowledge management, playing an integral role in the socio-economic development of nations (Shaukat et al., 2023). Knowledge management within the realm of higher education constitutes the strategic enhancement of value derived from specific knowledge assets, thereby potentially augmenting its overall effectiveness (Biloslavo & Trnavcevic, 2007). Moreover, with the globalization of educational

establishments and the evolution of knowledge societies globally, there exists heightened pressure on HEIs to cultivate a conducive environment for knowledge sharing within their domains. It has become imperative for higher educational institutions to implement knowledge management systems and foster knowledge sharing initiatives within their organizational frameworks. The significance of emotional intelligence in the context of knowledge sharing bears consequences for performance outcomes (Zulfadil, 2020). While a number of institutional and contextual factors might influence knowledge-sharing behaviour in higher education, this study focuses on how human qualities in particular, emotional intelligence promote a greater desire to share information among faculty members. While prior studies have explored the role of emotional intelligence in predicting employee engagement, there is still insufficient clarity on how this relationship is affected by mediating variables like knowledge-sharing behaviour, especially in the realm of higher education. Drawing on Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), it can be observed that individuals possessing high emotional intelligence tend to establish trust and reciprocity more effectively, thereby enhancing their propensity to share knowledge. Additionally, Bakker and Demerouti, (2007) indicate that personal resources, including emotional intelligence, when paired with knowledge sharing behaviour, can markedly improve employee engagement. Therefore, examining the mediating role of knowledge sharing behavior provides valuable insights into the relationship between emotional intelligence and employee engagement in academic environments and hence will be a novel contribution as no such study has been undertaken in the context of higher education. Therefore, this study will significantly add to the overall body of knowledge.

Review of Literature

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence has received significant attention over the past two decades from academics and professionals, emerging as a prominent subject of debate in psychology, education, and management (Pradhan & Nath, 2012). Emotional intelligence is acknowledged as a favourable predictor of well-being, academic achievement, organisational management, and work satisfaction (Yang et al., 2022). Other scholars see emotional intelligence as a vital factor in organisational performance (Goleman, 1995; Salovey and Mayer, 1990). The conceptual evolution of emotional intelligence is grounded in social intelligence, initially recognised by Thorndike in 1920 (Wong and Law, 2002). Research has established two distinct frameworks for understanding emotional intelligence: the ability model, formulated by Mayer and Salovey in 1997, and the mixed model, proposed by Goleman in 1995 and 2001. Mayer and Salovey (1997) posited that emotional intelligence encompasses the capacity to effectively sense, evaluate, and articulate emotions; comprehend emotional information; and manage emotions to foster emotional and intellectual development. Goleman (1995, 2001) acknowledges that emotional intelligence comprises a diverse array of motivational, dispositional, and affective characteristics that affect an individual's capacity to manage everyday environmental challenges and stresses. The mixed model of emotional intelligence is criticised for its overly wide conceptualisation and insufficient empirical foundation (Murphy, 2006; Joseph & Newman, 2010). Consequently, this study's conceptualisation and operationalisation of emotional intelligence are grounded in the Ability Model, which is widely recognised for its comprehensive representation of the Emotional Intelligence literature (Wong and Law, 2002; Law et al., 2004; Shih and Susanto, 2010).

Knowledge Sharing Behaviour

Lin (2007) characterizes knowledge sharing as a practice in which organisational personnel engage socially to exchange experiences, skills, information, and expertise across departments or the organization. Van Wijk et al. (2008) characterize knowledge sharing as “the process through which organisational actors – teams, units, or organisations – exchange, receive, and are influenced by the experiences and knowledge of others” (p.832). 2007. Knowledge sharing is essential, as several researches indicate, because it enables firms to enhance their innovation efficiency and diminish redundant learning efforts (Calantone et al., 2002; Scarbrough, 2003). A corporation may cultivate a knowledge-

sharing culture by enhancing staff attitudes and behaviours to promote voluntary and consistent information exchange (Connelly & Kelloway, 2003; Lin and Lee, 2004).

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement, as defined by Kahn (1990), refers to the mobilisation of organisational members towards their work responsibilities, wherein individuals utilize and express themselves physically, emotionally, and intellectually throughout their execution of these duties. Employee engagement denotes the emotional and intellectual commitment of employees to their organization (Richman, 2006; Shaw, 2005). An individual who is dedicated to his work demonstrates significant commitment (Saks, 2006) to the organization, which in turn aids organizations in enhancing performance (Maslach et al., 2001). Committed personnel collaborate with their colleagues to enhance organisational effectiveness. Numerous studies indicate that highly engaged workforces are more inventive, since they are more inclined to produce and exchange new ideas and perspectives with their peers (Khan et al., 2019).

Emotional Intelligence and Employee Engagement

Due to technological improvements and globalisation, organisations acknowledge that the success of any business relies on the human capital that propels and sustains the attainment of organisational objectives (Arora et al., 2012). Engagement may enhance cohesiveness within an organization by cultivating a collective feeling of purpose and allegiance. An engaged employee is intellectually and emotionally connected to the organization, performs at their highest level, is enthusiastic about its objectives, and is dedicated to its values. Research findings indicate that a higher demonstration of emotionally intelligent behaviour by employees correlates with increased levels of engagement. This suggests that elevated engagement outcomes can be attributed to emotional intelligence (Arora et al., 2012). An individual's capacity to favorably react to their emotions will result in increased job engagement (George et al., 2022).

Emotional intelligence enhances work engagement due to its intrinsic emotional component, whereby work activities are fueled by emotional experiences, specifically, the capacity to regulate one's own emotions and those of others, serving as a vital source of energy for accomplishing work tasks (Green et al., 2017). When individuals practice emotional control in response to emotional experiences at work, it acts as a motivating force for good work behavior (Elfenbein, 2007). Consequently, organisations are implementing measures to enhance the physical, psychological, emotional, and mental capacities of their personnel. Emotional intelligence alleviates stress in the workplace and positively influences employee productivity. Emotional intelligence is therefore crucial for managing employee performance and engagement in the workplace. Therefore, organisations must comprehend the connection between emotional intelligence and employee engagement (Arora et al., 2012). In the light of the above, we hypothesize that

H₁: Emotional intelligence has a positive impact on employee engagement.

Emotional Intelligence and Knowledge Sharing Behaviour

The likelihood of employees engaging in knowledge sharing is probably affected by organisational elements and human characteristics such as employee tendencies, attributes, and motivations (Biwott, 2024). A critical individual-level aspect in the establishment of knowledge-sharing initiatives is emotional intelligence. Darabi et al. (2012) posits that emotional intelligence is a fundamental human characteristic encompassing the capacity to adjust to one's surroundings. According to Chow et al. (2018), employee emotional intelligence is seen as a significant factor in shaping their motivations for knowledge sharing. Social interactions occurring during knowledge sharing among staff members are influenced by personal connections (Nahapiet et al., 2018). Chang et al. (2011) assert that knowledge owners with elevated emotional intelligence would manage their own emotions while also considering the sentiments of others. This will facilitate improvements in the knowledge owner's behaviour, encouraging them to disseminate their insights (Gurbuz et al., 2012). According to Abzari et al. (2014), emotional competence influences workers' knowledge sharing behaviours. A notable and substantial impact of emotional intelligence competency on knowledge sharing behaviour has been identified. Individuals exhibiting elevated emotional intelligence tend to engage in more

socially adept reasoning and behaviour, particularly in contexts involving knowledge sharing (Biwott, 2024). Emotional intelligence connects the cognitive and behavioural dimensions within an individual. Kessel et al. (2012) assert that emotional intelligence fundamentally serves as a psychological safety that promotes the sharing of knowledge. Therefore, in the light of above statemts, we hypothesize that:

H₂: Emotional intelligence has positive impact on knowledge sharing behaviour.

Knowledge Sharing Behaviour and Employee Engagement

Research constantly indicates a substantial, positive correlation between knowledge sharing and employee engagement (Jaun et al., 2018; Santoso & Nugraheni, 2022; Engidaw et al., 2024). In academic environments, the structural, cognitive, and relational aspects of knowledge sharing enhance engagement by promoting effective communication, training, and cooperation across teams (Jaun et al., 2018). In the hospitality sector, the social processes involved in knowledge exchange promote competence growth, which in turn enhances engagement levels (Naim et al., 2024). This connection is also corroborated by evidence from the public sector and digital platform workers, where active knowledge sharing correlates with improved organizational results and individual performance (Mahmoud et al., 2018). Therefore, in light of the above arguments, we hypothesize that

H₃: Knowledge sharing behaviour has a positive impact on employee engagement.

The mediating effect of knowledge sharing behavior between emotional intelligence and employee engagement

Knowledge sharing serves as a conduit that converts the potential of emotional intelligence into concrete organizational and individual results. Emotional intelligence provides the basis for interpersonal collaboration, while the exchange of knowledge functions as the mechanism that transforms such emotional competencies into effective work behaviors (Verma et al., 2024; Malik, 2022). Knowledge sharing leads to a more engaged workforce through collaborative problem solving and collective development (Ansari & Talan, 2017) knowledge sharing is acknowledged as a predictor of employee engagement; the iterative process of sharing knowledge enhances the employee's connection to their duties and team (Malik, 2022), hence maintaining elevated levels of engagement. By cultivating an atmosphere conducive to the sharing of knowledge, firms may adeptly use emotional intelligence of their staff to enhance enduring commitment and performance. (Verma et al., 2024; Malik, 2022). Therefore, in the light of above, we hypothesize that

H₄: Knowledge sharing behaviour mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and employee engagement.

Data and Methodology

The target population of this study were the faculty members of colleges in Jammu and Kashmir. As per the information provided by the Directorate of Colleges, there are a total of 145 colleges in Jammu and Kashmir, among which 25 colleges were selected randomly. After choosing the sampling frame, next step involved selecting the sampling size. Cochran formula was used to determine the sample size, and the minimum sample size came out to be 385. A total of 399 questionnaires were distributed out of which 308 usable questionnaires were received back. Hence, the sample size for this study was 308. The simple random sampling technique was employed to collect data from respondents. A sampling frame consisting of eligible faculty members was prepared from the participating colleges, and each academic had an equal chance of being selected.

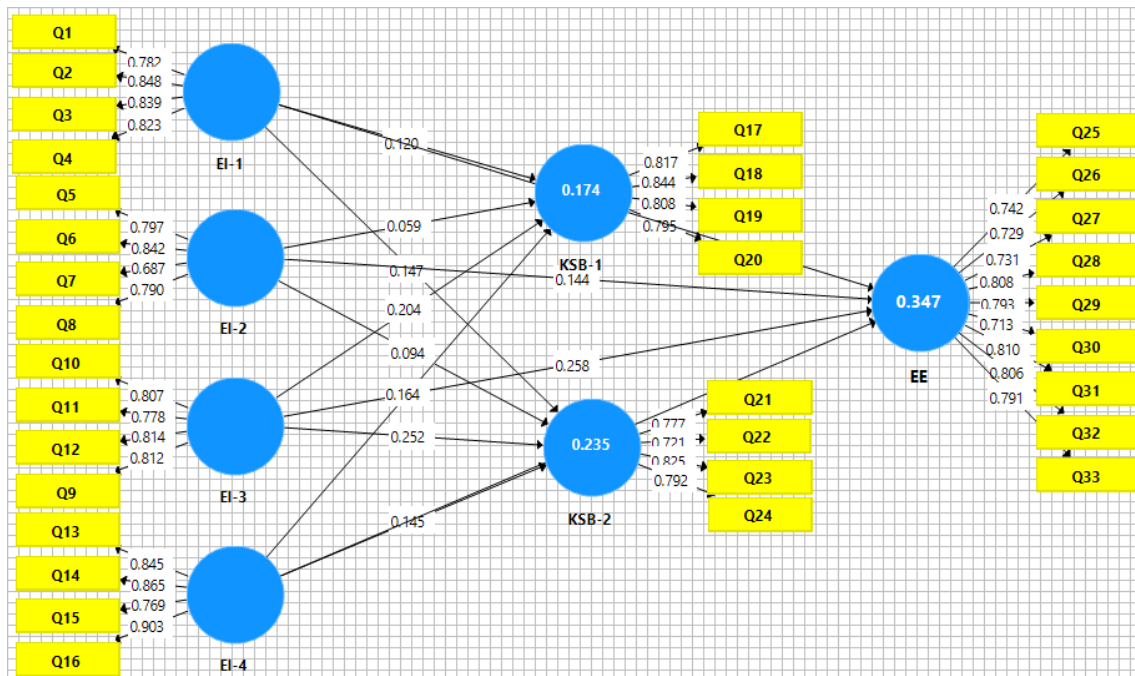
Measurement Instruments

A systematic survey tool was used to gather responses from participants. In order to assess emotional intelligence, the sixteen-item scale developed by Wong and Law (2002) was utilized comprising of four dimensions i.e self-emotional appraisal, others emotional appraisal, regulation of emotion and use of emotion while the assessment of knowledge sharing behavior utilized an eight-item measuring instrument developed by De Vries et al., (2006), which comprises

two dimensions knowledge donating and knowledge collecting. To measure employee engagement, the UWES-9 scale developed by Schaufeli (2006) was utilized. A five-point Likert scale was used to gather responses from participants.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using smart PLS. There are two steps to execute the PLS-SEM model: the measurement model and the structural model. Furthermore, the measurement model is evaluated in two steps: reflective and formative measurement models. Given the nature of the constructs, this study employed reflective-formative model where lower order constructs are specified as reflective constructs (See Figure 1), while higher-order constructs are modelled as formative constructs. An assessment of validity and reliability was conducted to evaluate the quality of the measurement model. Convergent validity was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted. The confirmatory factor analysis findings demonstrated that Cronbach Alpha, composite reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) exceeded the established criterion of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2019). Furthermore, the square root of the AVE surpassed all related relationships, thereby affirming the reliability and validity of the reflective measurement model (See Table 1). Additionally, to assess the discriminant validity of the models, two metrics were utilized: the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criteria and HTMT. The results of the discriminant validity study indicated that the model effectively achieved discriminant validity, as the indicators had the strongest connection with their corresponding indicators according to the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criteria (See Table 2). Furthermore, for HTMT, all values were within the predetermined threshold of 0.90 (See Table 3), hence confirming the discriminant validity of the model (Hair et al., 2017). Moreover, the formative model was also evaluated. The statistical significance and importance of outer weights were determined (See Table 4). All the outer weights were significant except for others emotional appraisal dimension labelled as EI-2. Moreover, the formative model was also checked for outer loadings; all the outer loadings surpassed the threshold limit of 0.50 (Sarstedt et al., 2019), thereby affirming the validity and reliability of formative measurement model.



Source: Authors Own Work

Figure 1: Reflective Measurement Model

Table 1-Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and AVE

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
EI-1	0.841	0.894	0.678
EI-2	0.784	0.862	0.61
EI-3	0.817	0.879	0.644
EI-4	0.867	0.91	0.717
KSB-1	0.835	0.889	0.666
KSB-2	0.785	0.861	0.608
EE	0.914	0.929	0.593

Notes: EI=Emotional Intelligence; KSB=Knowledge Sharing Behaviour; EE=Employee Engagement EI-1=Self emotional appraisal; EI-2=Others emotional appraisal; EI-3=Use of emotion; and EI-4=Regulation of emotion; KSB-1=Knowledge Donating KSB-2=Knowledge Collecting

Table 2-Discriminant Validity-Fornell and Larker Criteria

	EE	EI-1	EI-2	EI-3	EI-4	KSB-1	KSB-2
EE	0.77						
EI-1	0.423	0.824					
EI-2	0.386	0.463	0.781				
EI-3	0.478	0.44	0.405	0.803			
EI-4	0.445	0.406	0.291	0.41	0.847		
KSB-1	0.503	0.304	0.245	0.348	0.314	0.816	
KSB-2	0.493	0.36	0.306	0.414	0.335	0.642	0.78

Table 3- Discriminant Validity-HTMT

HTMT	EE	EI-1	EI-2	EI-3	EI-4	KSB-1	KSB-2
EE							
EI-1	0.481						
EI-2	0.455	0.572					
EI-3	0.546	0.532	0.504				
EI-4	0.499	0.473	0.352	0.485			
KSB-1	0.576	0.354	0.3	0.41	0.368		
KSB-2	0.585	0.442	0.391	0.513	0.406	0.789	

Table 4-Formative Model Assessment

Constructs	Outer weights	t-statistics	p-values	Outer loadings
EI-1 -> EI	0.265	2.563	0.01	0.725
EI-2 -> EI	0.216	2.353	0.019	0.639
EI-3 -> EI	0.467	5.405	0	0.828
EI-4 -> EI	0.381	3.814	0	0.743
KSB1 <- KSB	0.536	22.859	0	0.900
KSB2 <- KSB	0.568	23.907	0	0.911

Structural Model Assessment

Multicollinearity evaluation is the first step of structural model assessment. The present model was checked for multi collinearity issues, there were no issues of multicollinearity in the model (See Table 5). The next step involves assessing the significance and relevance of the structural model relationships. Hypotheses were tested using the 5000 bootstrap samples. The results indicated that all the hypotheses were accepted. H_1 was related to the impact of emotional intelligence on employee engagement. H_2 was related to the impact of emotional intelligence on knowledge-sharing behaviour. H_3 was related to the impact of knowledge sharing behaviour on employee engagement and H_4 was related to the mediating effect of knowledge sharing behaviour between emotional intelligence and employee engagement. As indicated in Table 6 and figure 2, all the hypotheses were accepted.

In relation to the first hypothesis, the bootstrapping technique revealed that there is a significant and positive impact of emotional intelligence on employee engagement (beta coefficient=0.416 $p=0.000$) (See Table 6). Similarly, for the second hypothesis, the bootstrapping technique revealed that there is a significant and positive impact of emotional intelligence on knowledge sharing behaviour (beta coefficient=0.496; $p=0.000$) (See Table 6). In relation to third hypothesis, the bootstrapping technique revealed that there is a significant and positive impact of knowledge sharing behaviour on employee engagement (beta coefficient=0.347; $p=0.000$) (See Table 6). For the fourth hypothesis, the results revealed that knowledge sharing behaviour mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and employee engagement because the specific indirect effects were significant, thereby confirming mediation (beta=0.172; $p=0.000$) (See Table 6). Moreover, the models r square was also examined. Knowledge sharing behavior exhibited the r square value of 0.246 and employee engagement exhibited the r square of 0.437(See Figure 2). The value for R^2 should be above 0.1 (Falk & Miller, 1992), hence the model possesses adequate predictive relevance.

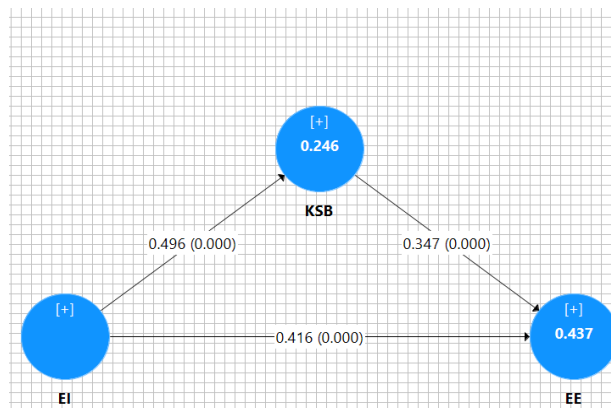


Figure 2: Structural Model

Table 5: Structural Model: VIF Values		
Emotional Intelligence	EI-1	1.497
	EI-2	1.365
	EI-3	1.421
	EI-4	1.305
Knowledge Sharing Behaviour	KSB1	1.692
	KSB2	1.692
Employee Engagement	Q25	2.187
	Q26	2.176
	Q27	1.959
	Q28	2.521
	Q29	2.246
	Q30	1.859
	Q31	2.599
	Q32	2.507
	Q33	2.345

Table 6-Hypotheses Testing and Mediation Analysis

	Beta Coefficient	Standard Deviation	T-Statistics	P Values
EI -> EE	0.416	0.058	7.216	0.000
EI -> KSB	0.496	0.052	9.531	0.000
KSB -> EE	0.347	0.057	6.115	0.000
Specific Indirect Effects				
EI -> KSB -> EE	0.172	0.034	4.998	0.000
Total Effects				
EI -> EE	0.588	0.047	12.541	0.000

Conclusion

This study significantly contributes to the growing body of research by demonstrating that knowledge sharing behaviour acts as a mediator between emotional intelligence and employee engagement, especially in the context of higher education. It also highlighted that emotional intelligence is a significant predictor of employee engagement and that knowledge sharing behaviour serves as an important mechanism through which this relationship is strengthened (Mayer et al., 2016; Miao et al., 2017). The findings suggest that employees with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to engage in knowledge-sharing activities, which enhance collaboration, learning, and interpersonal relationships, ultimately fostering greater employee engagement (Carmeli et al., 2013; Naim & Lenka, 2018). By identifying the mediating role of knowledge sharing behaviour, this study provides a deeper understanding of the behavioural processes linking emotional intelligence with positive workplace outcomes. Based on the study findings, it can be concluded that the knowledge sharing behaviour application is an integral component of the university, and its implementation enhances staff knowledge and information, thereby improving their performance and subsequently increasing the university's productivity and effectiveness. Understanding human capital is a fundamental university capability and is regarded as the foundation of competitive advantage, while knowledge serves as a crucial source that enhances employee morale and enables the university to attain a competitive edge across all domains. By utilizing the employee knowledge sharing, the institution may acquire and sustain a relevant competitive advantage. If universities cultivate and disseminate information, they will simultaneously enhance their capacity and capability to address the diverse challenges of contemporary society. This research originates from a rigorous scientific methodology, and the findings encompass both academic and practical domains. The study findings addressed the gap in the literature about the link among emotional intelligence, knowledge sharing behaviour and employee engagement. This study is among the few that examine how universities may effectively utilize knowledge sharing behaviour to engage their workers in the workplace, hence aiding in the achievement of employee engagement and enabling institutions to secure and maintain competitive advantages.

Implications

This study offers several practical implications. This study highlights that emotional intelligence is essential for regulating employee performance and engagement in the workplace. Consequently, management consultants must develop and improve the emotional competencies of their staff. To effectively enhance emotional intelligence within organizations, it is crucial to implement comprehensive training programs that not only focus on developing individual emotional intelligence competencies but also promote a culture of knowledge sharing. Such initiatives can lead to a synergistic effect, where improved emotional intelligence fosters greater collaboration among employees, ultimately enhancing overall job performance and satisfaction. For instance, organizations that actively support knowledge-sharing behaviors have been shown to experience increased utilization of information and communication technologies, which facilitates more effective knowledge exchange and collaboration. Moreover, by integrating emotional intelligence training with knowledge-sharing practices, managers can create an environment that encourages open communication and collective problem-solving, leading to improved organizational outcomes and employee engagement.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The research has certain limitations. First, this study employed a cross-sectional research methodology, limiting the capacity to establish causal relationships among variables. Future researchers are advised to take longitudinal data to examine the relationship over time. Second, this study adopted a quantitative methodology. Future researchers are encouraged to employ qualitative approaches to gain more profound insights into the relationship. Third, this study was confined to only higher educational sector and particular geographical location, rendering the conclusions non-

generalizable. Future researchers are advised to explore other geographical areas and sectors. Fourth, this study only examined knowledge sharing behavior as a mediator between emotional intelligence and employee engagement; future researchers are encouraged to explore other mediating and moderating variables to gain deeper insights into the constructs under study.

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