

Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Employee Engagement at the Workplace: Evidence from Service Sector within Pokhara Metropolitan City

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Abstract

Background: In the dynamic landscape of the service sector, the management of a diverse workforce with varying emotions and motivations presents a compelling challenge. Within this context, unraveling the intricacies of emotional intelligence assumes paramount significance. Understanding the factors that influence emotional intelligence and its subsequent impact on employee engagement is crucial for cultivating a positive work environment and augmenting overall organizational effectiveness.

Objectives: The objective of this study is to analyze the impact of various dimensions of emotional intelligence on employee engagement at the workplace in various service sectors in Pokhara metropolitan city.

Methods: The study utilized a causal comparative research design with a sample of 350 employees from the service sector in Pokhara. Purposive sampling was employed, and structured questionnaires were used for data collection. The analysis included Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Path Analysis to explore causal relationships between emotional intelligence dimensions and employee engagement levels.

Results: The result of Confirmatory Factor Analysis showed a good fit with model fit indices as $\chi^2/df = 1.231$, $GFI = 0.944$, $AGFI = 0.931$, $RMSEA = 0.024$, $CFI = 0.901$, $TLI = 0.887$. The result of Path Analysis revealed that there is a significant positive impact of all emotional intelligence dimensions on employee engagement, explaining 61% of the variance in the Nepalese service sector.

Conclusion: The research highlights the positive relationship between emotional intelligence and employee engagement in the service sector in Pokhara, emphasizing the importance of fostering emotional intelligence competencies for organizational success. Organizations should invest in targeted interventions and training programs to enhance emotional intelligence among employees, aiming to improve their well-being, job satisfaction, and overall performance, thereby cultivating a highly engaged workforce.

Keywords: Confirmatory factor analysis, emotional intelligence, employee engagement, structural equation modeling

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Introduction

In the dynamic landscape of contemporary organizational research, the spotlight has increased on the interesting interplay between emotional intelligence and employee engagement (Thor, 2012). Acknowledging the pivotal role emotional intelligence plays in shaping workplace dynamics and fueling organizational performance, both scholars and practitioners have boarded a collective mission to loosen its deep influence on employee engagement. Against this backdrop, the study endeavors to inject fresh insights into this increasing field of knowledge. The research delves into the intricacies of emotional intelligence factors and their distinctive impact on employee engagement in the service sector within Pokhara metropolitan city.

Emotional intelligence, a complex construct involving the recognition, understanding, and management of emotions in oneself and others, plays a vital role in individual behavioral management, social interactions, and decision-making processes (Chan & Mallett, 2011). The essential dimensions of emotional intelligence, including identifying, utilizing, understanding, and regulating emotions, collectively shape how individuals tackle social challenges and make decisions leading to positive outcomes (Morrison, 2007).

The concept of emotional intelligence traces its origins back to the work of original psychologists Howard Gardner, Peter Salovey, and John Mayer in the 1970s and 80s, gaining mainstream importance with Daniel Goleman's seminal book, "Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ" (Goleman, 1996). Especially, the significance of emotional intelligence spreads beyond individual achievements, closely linking with employee engagement in the organizational context. Employee engagement, a critical driver of organizational effectiveness, refers to the extent to which employees invest themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally in their work roles (Sundaray, 2011). Engaged employees are more likely to exhibit higher levels of commitment, productivity, and creativity, thereby positively impacting an organization's overall performance and profitability (Bin & Shmailan, 2015). In light of this connection, researchers have explored how emotional intelligence influences employees' levels of engagement in the workplace (Arghode et al., 2022).

Within the diverse Nepalese service sector, encompassing industries such as finance, education, communication, and healthcare, managing a diverse workforce with varying thoughts, feelings, and emotions poses unique challenges. In this context, the role of emotional intelligence, particularly among managers, becomes essential in influencing employees' willingness to engage (Singh, 2010). Especially, leaders displaying positive emotions, such as inspiration and happiness, foster higher levels of employee engagement, while negative emotions, like fear and dullness, contribute to disengagement (Brad Shuck et al., 2011). Despite the growing interest in emotional intelligence and employee engagement, a dearth of empirical research exists in the Nepalese service sector (Gautam & Gautam, 2022).

Responding to these observations, this study seeks to shed light on the extent to which emotional intelligence influences employee engagement within this specific context. By conducting an inclusive examination of emotional intelligence's impact on employee engagement, the research aims to provide practical insights into enhancing workplace dynamics, improving employee motivation, and ultimately stimulating organizational performance in the Nepalese service sector. To address the current scenario of this issue, the study will provide a more robust rationale, specifying the theoretical underpinnings supporting the hypotheses and offering a clearer depiction of the ultimate impact of employee engagement on organizational success. The research questions guiding this study are: 1) To what degree does the level of emotional intelligence influence employee engagement in the workplace? 2) How do factors related to emotional intelligence impact employee engagement in the workplace?

Review of Literature

The concept of emotional intelligence (EI) and its relationship with employee engagement has gained significant attention in both the public and private sectors (Shrestha & Baniya, 2016). Daniel Goleman, a renowned psychologist and science writer, played a crucial role in popularizing the idea of emotional intelligence through his landmark book, "Emotional Intelligence" (1995). Goleman's model of emotional intelligence outlines four main constructs that contribute to effective leadership performance: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Emotional intelligence (EI) and its impact on employee engagement have become increasingly important topics of study, particularly in the service sector (Jena & Pradhan, 2018). Employees working in service sectors, such as finance, education, communications, and healthcare, play a vital role in delivering quality services to customers.

Understanding the relationship between emotional intelligence and employee engagement from the employee's perspective can provide valuable insights into enhancing job satisfaction, productivity, and overall organizational performance (Carmeli, 2003). The study by Barreiro and Treglown (2020) investigates trait emotional intelligence (EI) at a facet level to predict employee engagement, revealing that specific EI traits significantly impact engagement levels. Notably, employees with higher happiness, effective emotion management, self-motivation, and fluctuations in emotion regulation experience heightened engagement, emphasizing these traits as personal resources. Aziz et al. (2021) focus on the relationship between employee commitment and job satisfaction in private universities, finding a positive correlation and highlighting the impact of various factors on organizational commitment. Another study by Afwindra et al. (2022) analyzes emotional intelligence, human resource quality, and work discipline on employee performance, with job satisfaction as an intervening variable. Results indicate positive impacts of emotional intelligence and work discipline on job satisfaction and employee performance, while the quality of human resources has a negative effect on job satisfaction. These studies collectively contribute insights into the nuanced dynamics of emotional intelligence,

commitment, job satisfaction, and performance in organizational contexts. The relationship between these four constructs and employee engagement is given below:

Self-awareness and Employee Engagement

Self-awareness refers to the ability to recognize and understand one's own emotions, motivations, and behaviors in the workplace (Sosik & Megerian, 1999). It involves being aware of one's strengths, limitations, and emotional reactions to different situations. Employees who possess a high level of self-awareness are more likely to have a clear understanding of their emotions and how they impact their work (Burns & Engdahl, 1998). They can identify their own needs, set appropriate goals, and manage their emotions effectively. Self-awareness is crucial for employees in the service sector as it enables them to navigate challenging customer interactions, handle work-related stress, and make informed decisions (Megerian & Sosik, 1996). Employees with higher levels of self-awareness are more likely to be engaged in their work, leading to improved job satisfaction and performance (Sterrett, 2000). This leads to the development of the following hypothesis:

H1: There is a significant positive impact of self-awareness on employee engagement in the service sector.

Self-management and Employee Engagement

Self-management is essential for employees in the service sector to effectively regulate their emotions and behaviors in the workplace. It involves managing stress, maintaining a positive attitude, and exhibiting self-discipline in challenging situations (Castaneda et al., 1999). Employees with strong self-management skills are better able to handle customer complaints, adapt to changing work demands, and maintain professionalism even in high-pressure situations. Self-management contributes to employee engagement by promoting a sense of control, reducing emotional exhaustion, and fostering a positive work environment (Kirkman & Rosen, 1999). Employees who possess effective self-management skills are more likely to be engaged in their work, leading to higher job satisfaction and performance (Griffin et al., 1994). This leads to the development of the following hypothesis:

H2: There is a significant positive impact of self-management on employee engagement in the service sector.

Social Awareness and Employee Engagement

Social awareness involves understanding and empathizing with the emotions, perspectives, and needs of others in the workplace (Maignan et al., 1999). It includes recognizing and responding to the emotions of colleagues, supervisors, and customers. Employees with strong social awareness skills are better able to build positive relationships, communicate effectively, and provide excellent customer service (Cohen et al., 1996). Social awareness plays a crucial role in employee engagement by fostering a sense of belonging, teamwork, and cooperation among employees. Employees with higher levels of

social awareness are more likely to be engaged in their work, leading to improved job satisfaction and performance (Granziera & Perera, 2019). This leads to the development of the following hypothesis:

H3: There is a significant positive impact of social awareness on employee engagement in the service sector.

Relationship Management and Employee Engagement

Relationship management is vital for employees in the service sector to effectively navigate interpersonal interactions and build strong relationships with customers, colleagues, and supervisors (Jiang & Shen, 2023). It involves skills such as effective communication, conflict resolution, and building rapport. Employees with strong relationship management skills are better able to handle customer complaints, resolve conflicts, and collaborate with colleagues to achieve shared goals (Shen & Jiang, 2019). Relationship management contributes to employee engagement by fostering a positive work environment, promoting teamwork, and enhancing job satisfaction. Employees with effective relationship management skills are more likely to be engaged in their work, leading to higher job satisfaction and performance (Dhakal et al., 2023; Verčič, 2021). This leads to the development of the following hypothesis:

H4: There is a significant positive impact of relationship management on employee engagement in the service sector.

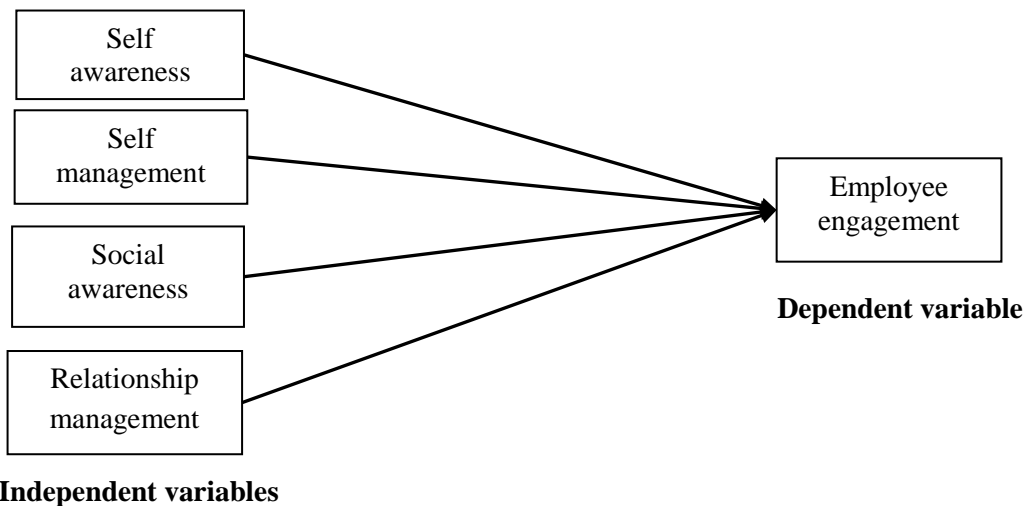
Theoretical Framework

Based on various past empirical literatures and the above hypothesis, the theoretical framework on the impact of emotional intelligence on employee engagement at the Workplace consists of four independent variables i.e., self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management; and the dependent variable is employee engagement. The theoretical framework of the study is given by following Figure 1.

Figure 1

Theoretical framework showing the Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Employee Engagement at the Workplace

Dimension of Emotional Intelligence



Source: Goleman (1996), Kahn (1990)

Materials and Methods

This research aimed to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and employee engagement within the service sector of Pokhara City, Nepal. To achieve the research objectives, the causal comparative research design was adopted. The causal comparative approach aimed to examine the causal relationships between emotional intelligence and employee engagement. Due to the absence of a sampling frame, a non-probability sampling technique i.e., purposive sampling was employed. This technique allowed for the selection of participants based on specific criteria that align with the research objectives. The sample size consisted of 350 employees, determined based on a calculated required sample size of 384 that is based on a significance level of 5%, an error margin of 5%, and an expected respondent rate of 90% (Kotrlík & Higgins, 2001).

Data were collected through a survey method utilizing structured questionnaires. The questionnaire consisted of three sections. The first section gathered demographic information about the respondents, such as age, gender, educational background, and work experience. In the second section, the study employed a comprehensive measurement approach to assess emotional intelligence constructs based on Goleman's (1996) influential model. This model, widely recognized in the field, encapsulates key dimensions essential for understanding emotional intelligence using a 5-point Likert scale: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Through carefully crafted survey instruments and targeted questioning, the research sought to capture nuanced insights into participants' self-awareness, their ability to regulate and manage their emotions, their awareness of social dynamics, and their proficiency in building and managing relationships within the workplace. Following this, the third section was dedicated to the meticulous evaluation of employee engagement, a crucial aspect in understanding the dynamics of organizational behavior. Drawing from Kahn's (1990) well-established framework, the study employed a 5-point Likert scale to gauge the levels of employee

engagement. This scale, reflecting a spectrum of responses ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, allowed us to capture the varied nuances of employee engagement within the organizational context. Kahn's framework, rooted in the psychological conditions that drive engagement, provided a robust foundation for our assessment, enabling a comprehensive understanding of how employees perceive and connect with their work roles.

The operationalization of variables for emotional intelligence and employee engagement is shown in the appendix. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated to assess the internal consistency of the items within each construct. Composite reliability and average variance extracted (AVE) were used to evaluate the convergent validity of the constructs. Additionally, Fornell-Larcker criteria were applied to examine the discriminant validity between constructs. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS 26 version and AMOS 22 software. Descriptive statistics were utilized to summarize the demographic information. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the measurement model's fit, determining the validity and reliability of the measurement instruments. Finally, path analysis was employed to examine the causal relationships between emotional intelligence and employee engagement, exploring how different dimensions of emotional intelligence influenced employee engagement.

Result and Discussion

Demographic Profile

The demographic profile of the respondents working as employees in various service sectors is presented in Table 1:

Table 1

Demographic profile of employees in various Nepalese service sectors

Demographic Profile	Sub categories	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	244	69.7
	Female	106	30.3
Age	Below 20 years	12	3.4
	Between 20-30 years	146	41.7
	Between 30-40 years	121	34.6
	Between 40-50 years	59	16.9
	Above 50 years	12	3.4
Marital status	Married	221	63.1
	Unmarried	123	35.1
	Others	6	1.7
Education	SLC/SEE	8	2.3
	Plus 2	38	10.9
	Bachelor	157	44.9
	Masters	143	40.9

	PhD	4	1.1
Monthly income	Below Rs 20,000	53	15.1
	Between Rs 20,000 and 40,000	129	36.9
	Rs 40,000 and 60,000	81	23.1
	Above Rs 60,000	87	24.9
Experience	Below 3 years	86	24.6
	Between 3 to 5 years	73	20.9
	Between 5 to 10 years	94	26.9
	Above 10 years	97	27.7
Current Status	Junior management	145	41.4
	Middle management	119	34.0
	Senior management	86	24.6
Department	HR	39	11.1
	Sales	50	14.3
	Finance	116	33.1
	IT	118	33.7
	Others	27	7.7
Service Sector	Tourism	47	13.4
	Information and communication	36	10.3
	Construction	45	12.9
	Financial sector	112	32.0
	Education sector	57	16.3
	Health	25	7.1
	Transportation	21	6.0
	Others	7	2.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of employees in the Nepalese service sector. The dataset comprises 350 participants, among whom 69.7% are male and 30.3% are female. The majority of employees (41.7%) fall within the age range of 20 to 30 years, while age groups between 30 to 40 years and 40 to 50 years account for 34.6% and 16.9% of the sample, respectively, and those above 50 years constitute 3.4%. The marital status distribution reveals that 63.1% of the participants are married, 35.1% are unmarried, and a minor fraction (1.7%) falls under the category of "Others." Regarding educational qualifications, a substantial portion of the participants hold a bachelor's degree (44.9%), followed closely by those with a Master's degree (40.9%). Furthermore, the monthly income distribution reveals that 36.9%, 23.1%, and 24.9% of the employees earn salaries falling within the ranges of below Rs 20,000 to 40,000, and above Rs 60,000 and between Rs 40,000 and 60,000 respectively. Additionally, the work experience of the participants exhibits variability, with 27.7% having accumulated over 10 years of professional experience, and 24.6% having less than 3 years. In terms of organizational hierarchy, 41.4% of the participants occupy positions in junior management, while middle management and senior management account for 34.0% and 24.6% of the sample,

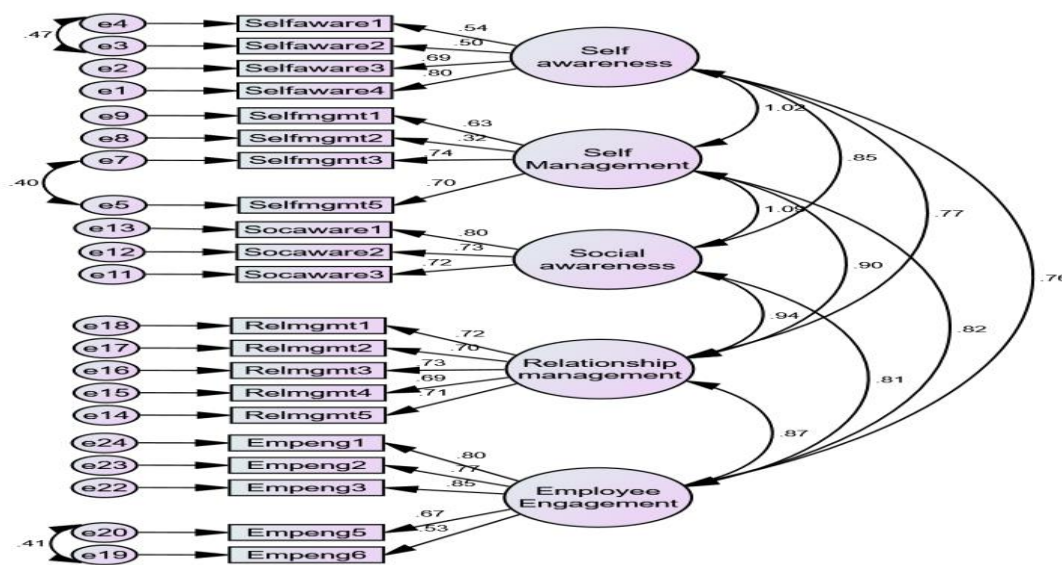
respectively. Concerning departments, Finance and IT emerge as the most prominent, employing 33.1% and 33.7% of the participants, respectively, followed by departments such as Sales, HR, and "Others." Lastly, the Nepalese service sector encompasses a range of industries, with the financial sector being most prevalent (32.0%), trailed by the Education sector (16.3%) and Tourism (13.4%).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

Confirmatory factor analysis is a statistical technique used to evaluate the validity of a hypothesized measurement model by examining the relationship between observed variables and their underlying latent factors (Hair et al, 2011). In this study, the CFA was utilized to evaluate the validity of their measurement model using the software AMOS (version 22). To estimate the parameter of the model, a maximum likelihood estimator was used (Byrne, 2016). The observed variables labeled as Selfmgmt 4, Socaware 4, and Empeng 4 have been excluded from the analysis due to their factor loadings being below 0.30. The goodness of fit indices (GFI) and absolute goodness of fit indices (AGFI) show that the proposed model fits the collected data rather well, with values of 0.944 and 0.931, respectively. The normal chi-square (χ^2/df) is 1.231, falling short of the 3.0 threshold that is considered acceptable (Hair, 2011). The fit is good as evidenced by the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), which is 0.024 and less than 0.08(Hair et al., 2011). The incremental fit indices for the comparative fit index (CFI) and Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) are 0.901 and 0.887, respectively. To summarize, the findings of confirmatory factor analysis show that the measurement model seems to be a great fit. The diagrammatic representation of the measurement model is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Measurement Model of Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Employee Engagement at Workplace



Reliability and Validity

Construct Reliability

Reliability is defined as how well-founded and trustworthy its findings are. The reliability of the scales was evaluated using Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability. The construct is considered reliable if both the CR and the alpha are larger than 0.70 (Simşek & Noyan, 2013). All Cronbach's alpha values are more than 0.70, with the least being 0.743 for self-awareness and the highest being 0.892 for self-management, according to the basis of empirical evidence (Table 2). Furthermore, the model's composite reliability is better than 0.70, with self-awareness having the lowest at 0.786 and self-management having the highest at 0.927. As a result, the construct's reliability is obviously indicated.

Table 2

Construct Reliability of Scale

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Self-awareness	0.743	0.786
Self-management	0.892	0.927
	0.815	0.846
Social awareness	0.826	0.839
Relationship management	0.851	0.867
Employee engagement		

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Construct Validity

Validity is defined as the degree to which a concept is accurately measured in a quantitative study. The concept validity ratings for its two subcategories, discriminant and convergent validity, are shown in Tables 3 and 4. According to the construct reliability table, the model satisfies the proposed criteria of CR>0.70 and AVE>0.50 (Simşek & Noyan, 2013).

Table 3

Convergent and Discriminant Validity

Variables	Average Variance Extracted	Maximum Shared Variance
Self-awareness	0.682	0.642
Self-management	0.701	0.653
	0.738	0.698
Social awareness	0.725	0.681
Relationship management	0.719	0.702
Employee engagement		

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Table 4

Square Root of AVE and Construct Correlation Analysis

Variables	Self-awareness	Self-management	Social awareness	Relationship management	Employee engagement
Self-awareness	0.826				
Self-management	0.451	0.837			
Social awareness	0.399	0.381	0.859		
Relationship management	0.512	0.509	0.487	0.851	
Employee engagement	0.419	0.458	0.398	0.319	0.848

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Additionally, the proposed requirements of MSV smaller than AVE and Square Root of AVE greater than Inter-construct correlation were fulfilled, confirming discriminant validity.

Path Analysis

The emphasis shifts from the relationships between latent constructs and observable variables to the nature and magnitude of the linkages between the constructs when the research proceeds from the measurement model to the structural model. It is hypothesized that there is a significant positive impact of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management on employee engagement in the workplace. The SEM path analysis findings are provided in Table 5.

Table 5

SEM Path Analysis

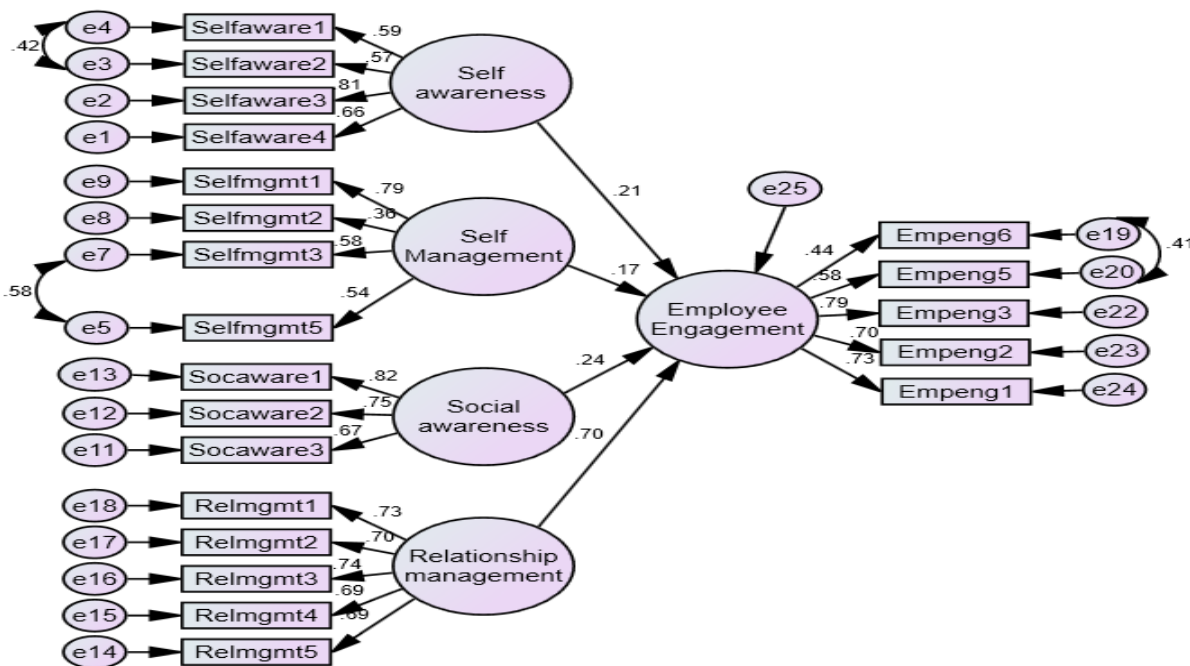
Structural Path	Estimate	SRW ^a
Employee engagement ← Self-awareness	0.145*** (0.041)	0.21
Employee engagement ← Self-management	0.124** (0.045)	0.17
Employee engagement ← Social awareness	0.159*** (0.040)	0.24
Employee engagement ← Relationship management	0.435*** (0.065)	0.70

SRW = Standardized regression weights *** indicates p<0.001, ** indicates p<0.01

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Figure 3

SEM Path Analysis showing the Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Employee Engagement at Workplace



The path analysis findings display the overall fit measures stated in the previous section, which offer judgment on how well the structural or path model matches the data. The analysis of path model outputs reveals that the normal chi-square (χ^2 /df) is 1.462, which is less than the cutoff value of 3, indicating that the model fit is adequate. Furthermore, the RMSEA value of 0.031 is lower than the allowed level of 0.08. The goodness of fit indices (GFI) and absolute goodness of fit indices (AGFI) show that the proposed model fits the collected data rather well, with values of 0.927 and 0.919, respectively. Similarly, the values of the incremental fit indices CFI and TLI are frequently stated near the cut-off values of 0.892 and 0.875 indicating acceptable model fit (Hair et al., 2011). As a result, the model is considered to be sufficiently suitable to proceed with additional investigation.

The path analysis results provide evidence for testing the hypothesized relationships among the constructs as depicted in Figure 3. Beginning with H1, the findings reveal that self-awareness has a significant positive impact on employee engagement. This suggests that individuals with higher levels of self-awareness, who possess a better understanding of their emotions and strengths, are more likely to be engaged in their work, possibly because they can align their skills and motivations with job tasks more effectively. Moving on to H2, it was hypothesized that self-management would also have a significant positive impact on employee engagement. The results support this hypothesis, indicating that individuals who can effectively manage their emotions and behaviors are more likely to be engaged in their job roles. Self-management skills may help employees cope with stress, maintain focus, and display adaptability, all of which can contribute to higher levels of engagement.

Similarly, H3 suggests that social awareness has a significant positive impact on employee engagement, and the results align with this hypothesis. Employees who exhibit social awareness, showing sensitivity and empathy towards others' emotions and needs, may foster positive workplace relationships and contribute to a supportive work environment, consequently enhancing their own engagement. Finally, the analysis supports H4, which hypothesized that relationship management would have a significant positive impact on employee engagement. The results indicate that individuals who excel in building and maintaining positive relationships with colleagues and superiors tend to have higher levels of engagement. Positive work relationships can foster a sense of belonging and support, positively influencing employees' commitment and involvement in their work. Furthermore, the squared multiple correlations demonstrate that approximately 61 percent of the variation in employee engagement can be attributed to the combined effect of the independent variables: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. This highlights the substantial influence these factors collectively exert on shaping employees' engagement levels.

This research explores the complex relationship between emotional intelligence and employee engagement within the Nepalese service sector. The findings lighten a strong positive correlation between emotional intelligence and employee engagement, with sensitive levels of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management contributing significantly to greater work engagement. Collectively, these four dimensions of emotional intelligence account for approximately 61% of the variance in employee engagement, underlining their crucial role in shaping workplace dynamics. The study aligns with existing literature, particularly the works of Burns and Engdahl (1998), Kirkman and Rosen (1999), and Cohen et al. (1996), all of whom observed similar outcomes in service sectors. Their research highlighted the positive association between higher emotional intelligence and increased engagement and job satisfaction, reflecting the current findings.

Furthermore, the present study resonates with the research conducted by Sterrett (2000), Granziera and Perera (2019), and Shen and Jiang (2019), expanding its scope to the Nepalese service sector. These studies explored emotional intelligence competencies in various service sectors and consistently identified a positive correlation with higher employee engagement, thereby contributing to improved organizational performance. To increase our understanding, three additional relevant studies were considered. Barreiro and Treglown's (2020) research on engaged employees introduces a facet-level approach to attribute emotional intelligence, highlighting specific facets such as dispositional happiness, emotion management, self-motivation, and emotion regulation. This nuanced exploration provides valuable insights into how these facets act as personal resources influencing engagement levels. Aziz et al. (2021) investigate the relationship between employee commitment and job satisfaction, revealing a positive correlation. This study underscores the importance of organizational commitment in predicting work variables and highlights the reciprocal relationship between job

satisfaction and employee commitment. Afwindra et al.'s (2022) research explores the effects of emotional intelligence, human resource quality, and work discipline on employee performance, with job satisfaction as an intervening variable. Their findings emphasize the significant positive impact of emotional intelligence and work discipline on job satisfaction and, subsequently, employee performance.

In conclusion, this study contributes valuable insights to the growing body of knowledge on emotional intelligence and employee engagement. By aligning with and extending existing literature, the research highlights the universal applicability of the emotional intelligence-employee engagement relationship.

Conclusion and Suggestions

In conclusion, this research has shed light on the critical relationship between emotional intelligence and employee engagement in the Nepalese service sector. The findings revealed that individuals possessing higher levels of emotional intelligence, specifically in the dimensions of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management, were more likely to exhibit greater engagement in their work. The results of this study align with prior research in various industries and settings, emphasizing the consistent and positive relationship between emotional intelligence and employee engagement. Furthermore, the research contributes to the existing literature by providing specific insights into the Nepalese service sector, offering a unique perspective on the emotional intelligence-employee engagement relationship within a distinct cultural and organizational context.

This research has important implications for organizations in Nepal and beyond. Recognizing the significant role of emotional intelligence in shaping employee engagement, organizations can design targeted interventions and training programs to enhance emotional intelligence competencies among their employees. By fostering emotional intelligence skills, organizations can improve employee well-being, job satisfaction, and overall performance, leading to organizational success. However, it's crucial to acknowledge the study's limitations, such as the cross-sectional data and focus on the Nepalese service sector. Future research with longitudinal designs and broader industry and geographic inclusion can provide a more comprehensive understanding of emotional intelligence's impact on employee engagement. In conclusion, this research highlights the essential role of emotional intelligence in cultivating a highly engaged and committed workforce. Investing in emotional intelligence development offers a promising path for organizations to maximize employee engagement and foster long-term organizational prosperity.

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Appendix

Operationalization of variables

Constructs	Indicators	Statement
Self-awareness	Selfaware1	I am always aware of my feelings and emotions.
	Selfaware2	I am aware of my strengths and weaknesses.
	Selfaware3	I am decisive, and able to make sound decisions despite uncertainties and pressures.
	Selfaware4	I am always aware of what makes me happy or unhappy.
Self-management	Selfmgmt1	I manage my impulsive feelings and distressing emotions well.
	Selfmgmt2	I always set goals for myself and try my best to achieve them.
	Selfmgmt3	I tell myself that I am a skilled/competent person.
	Selfmgmt4	I always encourage myself to perform my best.
	Selfmgmt5	I utilize the given resources fully and appropriately.
Social awareness	Socialaware1	I am sensitive to others' feelings and emotions.
	Socialaware2	I always understand my friend's or colleagues' emotions from their behavior.
	Socialaware3	I happily offer appropriate support. I always understand what my supervisor and colleagues expect from me.
	Socialaware4	
Relationship management	Relmgmt1	I am skilled in the art of persuasion.
	Relmgmt2	I think about others' opinions and take them into consideration. I usually cooperate with my colleagues and help them guide their work.
	Relmgmt3	
	Relmgmt4	I can identify the conflicts in an organization and help them sort out.
	Relmgmt5	I seek out interactions that are mutually beneficial.
Employee engagement	Empeng1	I feel positive about my job.
	Empeng2	I feel energetic about my job.
	Empeng3	I am interested in my job.
	Empeng4	I exert my full effort on my job to complete my task.
	Empeng5	I try my hardest to perform well on my job.
	Empeng6	At work, I focus fully on my job.

Source: Goleman (1996), Kahn (1990)