



RESEARCH PAPER

The Mediating Role of Self-Efficacy Between Emotional Intelligence and Employees' Creativity

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ABSTRACT

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Employees' creativity has been an area of concern in the public healthcare sector of Balochistan, Pakistan. This study aims to examine the direct and indirect effect of emotional intelligence on employees' creativity through self-efficacy. The data for the study was collected from 94 employees working in People's Primary HealthCare Initiatives (PPHI) through a self-administered survey and was analysed using PLS-SEM through Smart PLS software. The findings of the study revealed that EI is positively related to employees' creativity and self-efficacy. The study also showed that self-efficacy has a positive relationship with employees' creativity. Moreover, the results revealed that self-efficacy mediated the impact of EI on employees' creativity. The findings of this study are crucial for the management of the PPHI in designing policies and practices that enhance employees' self-efficacy and help improve their creativity. Results and discussion of the study are presented at the end.

Introduction

Employees' creativity is considered one of the most significant sources of organisation competitiveness and success. Previous studies have shown that employees with creative ideas are critical for firms' performance and productivity (Yang et al., 2016), workers' job performance (Kaveski & Beuren, 2020) and employees' service productivity (El-Said, 2014). Studies also show that employees with creative ideas have a high tolerance for ambiguity, attraction to complexity, self-confidence (Bormann, 2020), and employees with creativity always take part in social networking (Sigala & Chalkiti, 2015). In addition, employees with creative ideas always bring change to the organisation and solve complex problems (Madjar, 2005).

Although employees' creativity is widely acknowledged as a significant predictor of organisational performance and innovation, minimal studies have examined the predictors of employees' creativity. For instance, according to Lubart & Getz, (1997), employees' motivation, awareness, personal traits, social environment, affection, and emotion are potentially essential for creativity. Other critical factors for

employees' creativity are leadership effectiveness, working experience, process management (Yang et al., 2016), and transactional and transformational leadership (Shoghi et al., 2013). Research also shows that one of the most critical factors for organisational creativity is organisational culture (Andriopoulos, 2001) and emotional intelligence (EI). However, empirical evidence of the impact of EI on employees' creativity is limited. Therefore, the first objective of this study is to examine the impact of EI on employees' creativity.

Previous studies also show that EI's impact on employees' creativity and other work-related outcomes is not always direct; instead, it is mediated by other variables (Carmeli et al., 2014). For instance, Farhan & Rofi'ulmuiz (2021) found that EI's impact on learning effectiveness is mediated by learning management. In another study, Hussein and Yesiltas (2020) found that transformational leadership mediates the relationship between EI and counterproductive work behaviour. Self-efficacy, which refers to people believing in their capabilities, is also a mediator between numerous work-related outcomes. For instance, Tsarenko and Strizhakova (2013) found that self-efficacy mediates the impact of EI on active coping strategies. Gurbuz et al. (2016) found emotional self-efficacy as a mediator between EI and employees' creativity. However, the mediating role of self-efficacy between EI and employees' creativity has got little attention. The second objective of this study is to examine the impact of EI on self-efficacy and self-efficacy mediating the role between EI and employees' creativity.

In sum, this study aims to examine the impact of EI on employees' creativity and self-efficacy and self-efficacy impact on employees' creativity. Finally, the study explores the mediating role of self-efficacy between EI and employee creativity.

Literature Review

Emotional Intelligence

The concept of EI was proposed by American psychologists Salovey and Mayer in 1990. Salovey and Mayer (1990) defined EI as the ability of an individual to recognise his or her emotions and use emotions to recognise the problem, guide thinking, and his/or her behaviours. Salovey and Mayer (1990) argue that there are three types of emotional abilities. These include the ability to express or evaluate emotions, the ability to regulate emotions, and the ability to use emotions to solve problems. Lopes (2016) define EI as a "set of interrelated abilities at the interface of emotion and cognition, including perceiving, understanding, using, and managing emotions", (pp 213). There are three components of emotions: emotion appraisal, management of emotion, understanding and utilisation of emotions (Mayer et al., 2016). These studies suggest that a person with high EI has the capacity to perceive, understand, appraise, and utilise his or her emotions and emotions of others to adapt to a particular context (Duckett & Macfarlane, 2003). Prior research has also shown that people high on EI are productive and effective (Kulshrestha & Sen, 2006).

Employees' Creativity

Employees' creativity has become an essential element for various industries, occupations, and tasks because of its importance for organisations (Kim et al., 2009; Tu & Liu, 2017). Organisations that fail to be innovative often lose competitive advantages and productivity (Shalley et al., 2004). According to Liao and Chen (2018), employees' creativity involves bringing or generating novel and valuable ideas about

work, products, and services in organisational settings. Research also shows that creative people are intelligent (Beatty & Kenett, 2020), creative entrepreneurs (Herlina & Harianto, 2021), and more accurate than non-creative people (Stemler & Kaufman, 2020).

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is defined as people's belief in performing a specific task or accomplishing targets (Bandura et al., 2003). Employees with self-efficacy believe that they have enough skills, knowledge, and capacities to perform specific job-related tasks (Munir et al., 2016). Research shows that people with high self-efficacy are more likely to handle complex and complicated problems arising in the workplace (Bandura et al., 1999; Judge et al., 2007). Besides, employees with high self-efficacy often take the initiative to solve specific job requirements and work beyond their job requirements (Chen et al., 2015). Moreover, previous studies also provided evidence that employees with self-efficacy are more productive, innovative, and enthusiastic in finding solutions to the problem (Javed et al., 2021).

Hypotheses Development

Relationship between EI, Self-efficacy, and Employees Creativity

EI, which refers to the individual ability to control his or her emotion and or the emotions of others, has been linked to various work-related outcomes. For instance, Carmeli et al. (2014) conducted an empirical study and found that EI is indirectly related to employees' creativity through generosity. Lassk and Shepherd (2017) argue that leaders' EI has a profound and significant impact on the follower's creative performance. Other scholars have found a positive and significant relationship between EI and employees' creativity (Khalid & Zubair, 2014; Rego et al., 2007). EI is also a significant predictor of employees' self-efficacy. For example, Mahasneh (2016) conducted an empirical study and found that the EI of teachers was positively related to their self-efficacy. In another study among school teachers in Beijing, employees' EI was positively associated with their self-efficacy. Gatsis et al. (2021) argue that employees with a higher level of EI were more likely to believe in their capabilities and had higher self-efficacy. In addition, Wenn et al. (2018) conducted a study and found that employees with a higher level of EI were likely to have self-efficacy. Khalid and Zubair (2014) conducted an empirical study among advertising agencies employees and found that employees' EI was positively related to their self-efficacy. Hence, based on the related literature, we predict that:

H1: EI is positively related to employees' creativity.

H2: EI is positively related to employees' self-efficacy.

Relationships between Self-Efficacy and Employees' Creativity

Self-efficacy refers to employees' belief in their capabilities to perform a task or goal (Bandura, 1977). People who are self-efficacious always strive hard and accept challenging tasks (Bandura, 1977). Research also shows that employees with higher self-efficacy always propose new and novel ideas and are more creative than employees with low self-efficacy (Rego et al., 2012). Self-efficacy is also considered a generating capacity and thus presumed to be essential for creativity (Bandura, 1977; Rego et al., 2012). Therefore, we predict that:

H3: Self-efficacy is positively related to employees' creativity.

The mediating role of Self-efficacy between EI and Employees Creativity

In the preceding section, we predicted that EI and self-efficacy might positively affect employees' creativity. Furthermore, we also hypothesised that self-efficacy is positively related to employees' creativity. Thus, keeping in view the preceding discussion, it is logical to predict that self-efficacy mediates the positive effect of EI on employees' creativity.

Previous literature also provides empirical evidence of the presence of mediating variables between EI and employees' creativity. For instance, literature shows that EI is positively related to employees' creativity (Khalid & Zubair, 2014; Rego et al., 2007). Prior studies also provide empirical evidence of the positive effect of self-efficacy on employees' creativity (Bandura, 1977; Rego et al., 2012). Likewise, scholars also argue that the impact of EI on work-related outcomes is not always direct; instead, it is mediated by other variables such as employees' creativity (Dastgeer, 2022), occupational stress (Rajapakshe & Jayaratne, n.d.), and social support (Zia et al., 2021). This study extends the body of knowledge by proposing self-efficacy as a mediator between EI and employees' creativity. Thus, we suggest that:

H4: Self-efficacy mediates the relationship between EI and employees' creativity.

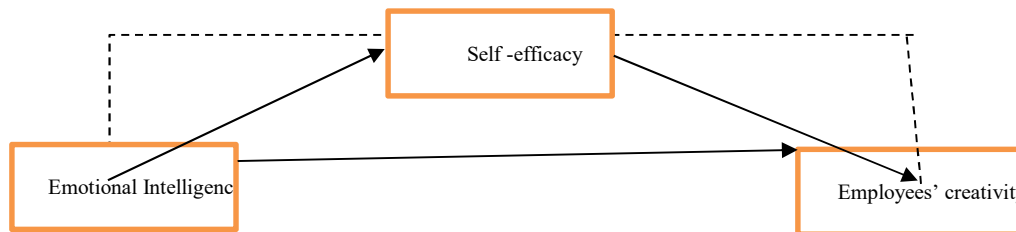


Figure: Conceptual Model; the dashed line indicates mediation

Material and Methods

Sampling and Data Collection

Data for this study were collected from the employees working in PPHI. The employees of PPHI included District Support Managers (DSMs), Assistant District Support Managers (A-DSMs), Monitoring & Evaluation Officers (M&Es) and Finance Officers (FOs). Initially, the researcher contacted the respondents or management staff for data collection; and distributed questionnaires regarding EI, self-efficacy, and employees' creativity. The questionnaire included information about the purpose of the study, the study's nature, and information about filling up the questionnaires. In addition, the participants were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of the survey. The information about age, gender, working experience, and marital status were also collected.

For this study, the researcher used the convenience sampling technique for data collection. Initially, 134 questionnaires were distributed among participants. Out of 134, 113 were returned. This represents an initial response rate of (84%). Out of 113, Nineteen (19) returned cases had missing values and suspicious responses. These cases

were deleted from the final data analysis. The final data for the study included 94 cases (see Table 1).

Table 1
Staff Details

S.No	Designation	Number of Staff
1	District Support Manager (DSM)	Forty (40)
2	Assistant District Support Manager (A-DSM)	Sixteen (16)
3	Monitoring & Evaluation Officer (M&E)	Forty (40)
4	Finance Officer (FO)	Thirty Eighty (38)

Common Method Bias

Common method bias is a common issue in quantitative studies. The researcher used Podsakoff et al's. (2012) procedural remedies to avoid CMB. For instance, we assured the respondents that the survey is anonymous and that all information will be used only for research purposes. Further, we ran Harman's single factor test, where all items were loaded on a single factor. The study results revealed that the single factor only explained 42.93%, which is less than the minimum threshold of 50% (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Thus, CMB is not a concern in the present study.

Measures

This study adapted variables from the literature, and all study variables were measured on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 = strongly agree, and five was equal to strongly disagree. For the measurement of EI, thirteen items were adapted from Deshpande and Joseph (2009). An example of the scale is "I have a good sense of why I have certain feelings most of the time, I have good understanding of my own emotions". For the measurement of SE, ten items were adapted from Rimm and Jerusalem (1999), and an example of the scale is "It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals". Finally, the variables of employees' creativity was measured with 13 items adapted from Rego et al. (2018). The sample of the scale is "Suggests new ways to achieve goals or objectives"

Material and Method

In this study, we used a partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) keeping in view the small sample size and objectives of the study. Since this study aims to predict the impact of EI on employees' creativity, PLS-SEM is suitable for use. We also used PLS-SEM because of the study's small sample size, as suggested by Hair et al. (2017). PLS-SEM is a multivariate statistical technique that can be run with Smart PLS software. Following Hair et al.'s (2017) suggestion, the data were analysed in two steps, including the assessment of the measurement model and structural model.

Results and Discussion

Assessment of Measurement Model

Prior to the analysis of SEM, we run confirmatory factor analysis to examine the reliabilities and validities of the items and variables of the study. The items' reliabilities were assessed using the PLS algorithm in SmartPLS3 software. The results of the analysis revealed that all items had factor loading higher than 0.60 (Table 2).

According to Bryne (2010), if the values of the items factor loading are higher than 0.60, then all items are reliable. Further, we assessed the reliabilities of the variables of the study through Cronbach Alpha. The results o the study revealed that all variables' values of Cronbach Alpha were greater than the threshold of 0.70 as suggested by Hair et al. (2011). Hence, the findings revealed that reliabilities are not an issue in this study.

Table 2
Measurement Model

Constructs	Items	Factor Loadings	Cronbach Alpha	AVE
Creativity	CR1	0.812	0.959	0.671
	CR10	0.862		
	CR11	0.826		
	CR12	0.820		
	CR13	0.852		
	CR2	0.809		
	CR3	0.787		
	CR4	0.800		
	CR5	0.798		
	CR6	0.832		
Emotional Intelligence	CR7	0.747		
	CR8	0.873		
	CR9	0.827		
	EI1	0.786	0.963	0.647
	EI10	0.815		
	EI11	0.760		
	EI12	0.846		
	EI13	0.711		
	EI14	0.826		
	EI15	0.684		
	EI16	0.841		
	EI2	0.884		
	EI3	0.855		
EI4	0.792			
EI5	0.854			
EI6	0.800			
EI7	0.794			
EI8	0.800			
EI9	0.793			
Self-Efficacy	SE1	0.872	0.958	0.728
	SE10	0.897		
	SE2	0.805		
	SE3	0.853		
	SE4	0.860		
	SE5	0.796		
	SE6	0.880		
SE7	0.859			

SE8	0.854
SE9	0.851

Furthermore, we examine the convergent validities of the study through AVE. The results of the PLS algorithm also revealed that all variables' AVE were greater than the minimum threshold of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2019); thus, convergent validity was not an issue in the study. Finally, the variables' discriminant validities were examined using Fornell and Larcker (1981) criteria. The result also showed that all variable values of the square root of AVE were more than the values of variables correlations with other variables of the study (see Table 3).

Table 3
Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Constructs	Creativity	Emotional Intelligence	Self-Efficacy
Creativity	0.819	-	
Emotional Intelligence	0.371	0.804	-
Self-Efficacy	0.436	0.535	0.853

Assessment of Structural model

The structural model, which shows the relationship between variables of the study (Hair et al., 2019), was assessed using 5000 bootstraps in SmartPLS3 software. In assessing the structural model, we first examined the standardised root means square (SRMR) values. According to Henseler et al. (2016), for PLS-SEM model's goodness of fit, SRMR value less than 0.080 is appropriate. In this study, the value of SRMR was 0.063, thus depicting the model's goodness of fit. Next, we calculated the values of coefficients of determination or R-square. R-square shows the explanatory power of the model. The structural model's results showed that EI explained 21% variance in employees' creativity and 28% in self-efficacy.

Finally, we estimated the significance of the path coefficients using 5000 subsample bootstraps. The results of the study showed that EI is positively and significantly related to employees' creativity ($\beta = 0.193$, t -value = 2.905; $P < 0.05$), thus supporting H1. The results also provided support for the direct effect of EI on employees' self-efficacy; hence H2 is also supported ($\beta = 0.535$, t -value = 6.120; $P < 0.05$). H3 stated that self-efficacy is positively and significantly related to employees' creativity ($\beta = 0.333$, t -value = 4.689; $P < 0.05$). This study's results provided support for the positive relationship between self-efficacy and employees' creativity.

The study also examined the mediating role of self-efficacy between EI and employees' creativity using Preacher and Hayes' (2008) bootstrapping procedure. The results supported the indirect effect of EI on employees' creativity through self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.178$, t -value = 3.561; $P < 0.05$). Hence, H4 is also supported.

Conclusion

EI is a significant predictor of work-related outcomes—the purpose of this study is to examine EI's direct and indirect effects on employees' creativity through self-efficacy. The study's findings revealed that EI is positively related to employees' creativity. These findings suggest that employees with a high level of EI are more likely to create new ideas and bring innovation to their daily and official activities. This finding is in line with the work of Khalid and Zubair (2014), and Rego et al. (2007), who found that EI improves organisation innovation. The study also revealed that EI is positively related to self-efficacy. This suggests that EI enhance individual belief in their strength and capabilities and thus improves their performance. This finding concurs with the results of Khalid and Zubair (2014), and Wenn et al. (2018) who found that EI enhances individual self-efficacious belief. One of the novel contributions of this study was examining the relationship between self-efficacy and employees' creativity. The study found a positive and significant relationship between self-efficacy and employees' creativity. Previous scholars such as Bandura (1977) and Rego et al. (2012) have also found a positive and significant relationship between self-efficacy and employees' creativity. Moreover, the results of this study found that self-efficacy mediated the relationship between EI and employees' creativity. These results suggest that individuals with a high level of EI are more likely to believe in their strengths and capabilities; and in accomplishing specific work-related goals (Khalid & Zubair, 2014; Wenn et al., 2018). These perceptions of self-belief, in turn, encourage individuals to bring innovative ideas and concepts to the working environment (Rego et al., 2012). Previous studies have found similar results that EI increases individual self-efficacy, which, in turn, results in creativity (Gurbuz et al., 2016; Kim & Ko, 2021).

Limitation and Direction for Future Research

This research provides meaningful findings of predictors of employees' creativity working in People's Primary Healthcare Initiatives, but the study's findings are subject to some limitations. First, this study has been conducted in Balochistan, the largest province of Pakistan, thus, limiting its generalizability on a global scale. Future researchers may replicate this study in other countries and non-healthcare industries. The future researcher may also conduct comparative studies on EI in different countries. Second, this research is cross-sectional in nature, therefore cause and effect cannot be established. Thus, future researchers are encouraged to consider the implementation of longitudinal studies. Third, the sample size in this study is small; therefore, conducting and testing the same model with a larger sample size may enhance the generalisability of this study. Finally, since we have tested self-efficacy as a mediator in this study, future researchers may also use a moderator such as organisation support, psychological empowerment, compensation and benefits in the relationship between EI and employees' creativity. The inclusion of a mediator and moderator in a single may improve the model's explanatory power and model predictive relevance.

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