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Enhancing Creativity in Educational Institutions: Does Emotional Intelligence Matter?

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Academic experts have emphasised the significance of leadership elements like emotional intelligence in cultivating innovative thinking among workers in professional settings. There is a lack of understanding about how emotional intelligence affects various types of creativity. This study sought to determine the antecedent role of emotional intelligence on different dimensions of creativity. The study used an explanatory design methodology to explain the hypothesised relationship between study variables in a detailed and comprehensive manner. The research aimed to understand better how emotional intelligence affects creativity. The research revealed that emotional intelligence significantly and positively affects various forms of creative behaviour. Although the extent of impact varies across the three categories of creativity, idea championing and idea generation are the two categories most influenced by emotional intelligence. The research findings were obtained from a public educational institution, rendering the results potentially only applicable to similar institutions. This is due to the differences in work environments between public and private educational settings, which could impact the creative potential of employees. Additionally, the data was sourced from Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions, making the results particularly relevant to tertiary-level establishments. It is worth noting that this study was cross-sectional, so employees' creative abilities could change over time. Nonetheless, this research provides an opportunity for a future longitudinal study to be conducted in the same field. To help employees overcome their fear of the repercussions of creativity, organisations should focus on enhancing positive leadership behaviours such as emotional intelligence. However, it is important to consider the stage of creative behaviour when enhancing emotional intelligence among leaders, as studies have shown that emotional intelligence can have varying effects on creative behaviour. This research holds both practical and theoretical significance. This is a novel study to establish the direct impact of emotional intelligence and individual dimensions of creative behaviour in public TVETIs in developing countries such as Kenya. The study also extends the application of social cognitive theory by confirming that the role of leaders' personality traits, such as emotional intelligence, varies with the type of creative behaviour. This is because the embedded tasks in the dimensions of creative behaviour tasks differ.

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INTRODUCTION

In the challenging world of higher education, creativity is a crucial aspect that institutions must focus on to survive. With diverse student populations and demand for programs that cater to the needs of the labour market, institutions need to keep up with the rapidly changing society. Creative behaviour involves actions to generate, promote, and realise novel ideas within organisations. Employees are responsible for creative potential. In educational institutions, creative activities involve the acceptance and development of new services, such as research projects and courses, as well as the creation of new teaching resources, sound financial management, and improved skills and work processes, such as the generating and using of new technology (Al-Husseini & Elbeltagi, 2018; Ahamad, 2020; Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). Based on prior scholars' argument, emotional intelligence's influence varies with the creative task's variation, enhancing different creativity dimensions (exploring, generating, and championing ideas).

Research has shown that activating cognitive resources like emotional intelligence can have a positive impact on enhancing creative behaviour (Goleman, 2001; Malik, 2021; Geher *et al.*, 2017; Furnham, 2016; Neubauer *et al.*, 2018; Andrabi & Rainayee, 2020; Ameen *et al.*, 2022; Rodrigues *et al.*, 2019). Emotional intelligence involves

understanding and expressing emotions, adapting to changing situations, empathising with others, and promoting a sense of autonomy and empowerment. These traits are crucial in motivating and inspiring a workforce (Lumpkin & Achen, 2018).

Since creativity involves risks, employees must have an optimistic outlook towards present and future achievements. This trait is commonly found in emotionally intelligent individuals (Druskat *et al.*, 2013). Existing literature suggests that emotional intelligence significantly influences creative behaviour (Stawicki *et al.*, 2023; Geher *et al.*, 2017). Creativity is risky (Namono *et al.*, 2022); workers must take risks to create and apply creative ideas. Therefore, such workers require emotional intelligence to succeed and cope with failures. Research has shown that emotional intelligence is linked to creative behaviours like problem-solving (Geher *et al.*, 2017; Durnali *et al.*, 2023; Stawicki *et al.*, 2023; Turnham, 2016; Darvishmotevali *et al.*, 2018). However, most studies have focused on general creativity, with little concrete evidence on how emotional intelligence affects various forms and aspects of creative behaviour. This highlights the fact that while there is a significant body of literature on creative activity, it remains insufficient and requires further investigation.

Studies have shown that different dimensions of creativity can be influenced by different

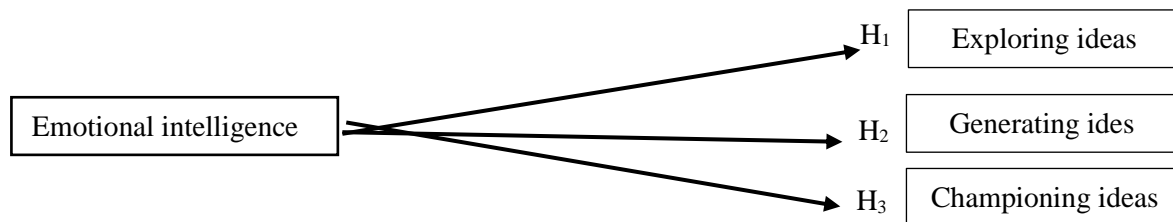
leadership behaviours (Ng & Lucianetti, 2016). This is because the creativity process, which consists of three initial stages, involves generating an idea and communicating it to colleagues, each of which may require a different personality trait. In line with the social cognitive theory by Bandura (2012), this study suggests that emotional intelligence can affect different types of creative behaviour in various ways. However, most studies on creativity have focused only on areas like business and technology (Cropley & Cropley, 2009; Namono *et al.*, 2022), while the education sector has been unheeded (Zainal & Matore, 2019; Thurling *et al.*, 2015).

Alencar *et al.*, (2017) opine that creativity is a critical factor that requires attention in educational settings. However, studies on emotional

intelligence in educational settings have primarily focused on secondary schools (Neubauer *et al.*, 2018). In the education sector, employees in tertiary institutions require creative skills as they deal with students who are being prepared to apply these skills.

The current study sought to bridge the gaps in available research by testing the role of EI on creativity among Technical and Vocational Education and Training Institutions (TVETIs) in Kenya. Earlier research (Shalley *et al.*, 2009) has shown that workers in the service sector are more reliable in self-reporting their own creativity than supervisor-rated. Therefore, the study utilised a self-rated measure to gather data on creative behaviour.

Table 1: Hypothesised effect of emotional intelligence on three dimensions of creativity



Source: Adapted from Ng & Lucianetti (2016) and modified by the researcher (2023)

The current study on creativity literature aimed to achieve three objectives. The study is based on Bandura's argument that the degree to which a behaviour is intense relies on the degree to which a belief is consistent with the specific conduct. Through empirical research, the study enriches the Social Cognitive Theory by determining the extent of emotional intelligence's impact on the different types of creative behaviour. By understanding how emotional intelligence affects each dimension of creative behaviour, the study contributes to theoretical and practical knowledge. It provides insight into how intervention strategies can be tailored to enhance emotional intelligence while considering the desired creative behaviour. This study shows how emotional intelligence impacts creativity in tertiary education institutions. Despite the limited research on creativity in the service industry, particularly in non-Western countries, this research fills the gap in creativity research. It

provides external validity for the study variables in the Kenyan context.

The paper is divided into three sections. The first section explains the study's theoretical framework, which links emotional intelligence to three types of creativity. The second section describes the research methodology, including the measures used, sample selection, data collection methods, and analytical approaches. Finally, the third section presents the findings, discussions, conclusions, and recommendations.

Hypothesis Development

The concept of emotional intelligence has become a crucial aspect in the field of employment, particularly concerning behaviours such as organisational citizenship behaviour. EI is the capability to recognise, manage, evaluate, and control emotions. Being able to recognise, accept, and harness emotions for positive outcomes is

emotional intelligence. Self-management, emotional awareness and social skills are all components of emotional intelligence. One of the most significant aspects of the emotional quotient is its capacity to be enhanced. A positive mood, through understanding feelings and managing emotions, boosts creative output and perceived creativity.

Emotional intelligence enhances trust, collaboration, and, ultimately, creativity. Moreover, it enables interdisciplinary creativity teams to identify creativity opportunities. Employees with high emotional intelligence exhibit great teamwork, cooperation, and communication skills because they recognise the contributions of other team members, demonstrate empathy and compassion, manage emotions triggered by various social situations, display self-control, possess a growth mind-set, and are motivated, optimistic, and energetic. As they respect competing ideas and ideologies, they are also more flexible and better able to handle disagreements, which makes them more collaborative.

This argument aligns with existing literature that suggests a link between EI and creativity. According to research, people with high emotional intelligence are more likely to preserve the positive effects of an effective response that has been well-documented. This response can boost inventiveness by expanding the range of idea production and encouraging constancy in the pursuit of ideas. People with high emotional intelligence are able to redirect negative emotions into change-oriented thought processes, such as looking for ways to alleviate dissatisfaction and coming up with innovative solutions. According to these findings, numerous research has demonstrated a beneficial relationship between EI and creativity in test subjects, such as children, adults, and elderly people.

Research conducted by Mumford and Licuanan (2004) has delved into creative activity as a presentation, examining several unique ideas such as regulating processes, problem analysis, idea discovery, concept development, and idea fusion,

along with their theoretical testing and benefits. Another study conducted by Dincer and Orhan (2012) investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and innovative behaviours in the Turkish banking industry, where they discovered a significant correlation between the two. Furthermore, they observed a substantial difference in the emotional intelligence and creative behaviour between private and state banks.

There is a strong link between emotional intelligence and creative activity, according to numerous studies. One research focusing on managers revealed a significant connection between emotional intelligence and inventiveness. The regression analysis to evaluate managers' creative behaviour revealed that the self-management component had the most significant influence, followed by the relationship management, self-awareness, and social awareness components. Besides, a study on telecommunications engineers in the Jordanian telecoms industry found a substantial correlation between emotional intelligence and innovative behaviour. Research has shown a strong correlation between innovative activity in the workplace and emotional intelligence. A study found that emotionally intelligent leaders encourage team creativity. Based on this argument, we hypothesise;

H₁: Emotional intelligence significantly influences idea exploration

H₂: Emotional intelligence significantly influences idea generation

H₃: Emotional intelligence significantly influences idea championing

METHODOLOGY

Data and Sampling

The data was collected from all 27 Technical and Vocational Education and Training Institutions (TVETIs) in Kenya comprising the academic staff with full-time employment contracts with the respective institutions. Academic staff are directly involved in creative activities in an educational

setting (Kasule, 2016). The survey sample size included 384 respondents out of a population of 9,009 employees, determined using the Cochran (1970) formula. A response rate of 83.07% was considered satisfactory, with 319 questionnaires filled and returned for further analysis (Rea & Parker, 1997). Of all the questionnaires received, 13 were excluded from the analysis due to missing values, equivalent to 4.07% of the responses. The majority of the respondents (44.9%) fell under the age bracket of 31 to 40 years, with male respondents (52.3%) being slightly higher than their female counterparts (47.7%). Most respondents (34.3%) held a master's degree, followed by a bachelor's degree (34.3%) in terms of educational qualifications. In terms of work experience, 116 (37.2%) respondents had worked for less than five years, 98 (31.4%) had worked between 6 to 10 years, 61 (19.6%) had worked for 11 to 15 years, 22 (7.1%) had worked for 16 to 20 years, while only 7 (7.2%) had worked for more than 20 years in their respective institutions.

Instruments Validation

The research constructs were evaluated using established items on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 represents "strongly disagree", and 5 represents "strongly agree." Creativity was assessed as a subscale comprising multiple items corresponding to three dimensions: idea exploring, idea generating, and idea championing. The items were developed and validated by Jeroen and Hratog (2010), and Cronbach's alpha values were .69, .70, and .78, respectively. Sample items for each dimension include: "I pay attention to issues that are not part of my daily work" (idea exploration), "I search out new working methods, techniques, and instruments" (idea generation), and "I make important organisational members passionate about creative ideas" (idea championing).

EI was assessed by an 18-item EQQ questionnaire developed by Goleman (1998). Sample items include: "I recognise other people's feelings and views and take an active interest in their concerns" and "I know my emotional strengths and weaknesses."

The study included control variables such as age, gender, education level, and tenure. Age was determined by the number of years, while educational attainment was determined by the degree level (ranging from 1 for a certificate to 6 for a post-PhD degree). We used the amount of time respondents worked for the institution to determine their tenure.

To ensure that our results were not skewed by any common method, we conducted Harman's single-factor test using exploratory factor analysis and a common latent factor test using confirmatory factor analysis. Using a multi-item scale, we also assessed the validity and reliability of our measurement items, including construct validity for creative behaviour. All Cronbach's alpha coefficients were acceptable, except for idea exploration, which had a value of 0.69. However, we decided to keep this data as previous studies have shown it to be reliable.

To verify the construct validity and one-dimensionality of our measures, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Our results, presented in *Table 1*, include standardised factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha, Averaged Variance Explained (AVE), and composite reliability of our measures. We ensured that each indicator's loading was above .50 at the t-value ($t > 2.0$), following the recommendation of Li *et al.*, (2007). All our loadings were well above .50, which was a pleasing result. We kept them for further analysis.

Table 2: Validity and reliability

Construct Creative behaviour	Code	Loadings	Cronbach's α	AVE	Composite Reliability
Idea Exploration	IE1	.73	.69	.50	.62
	IE2	.58			
Idea Generation	IG1	.53	.70	.51	.65
	IG2	.68			
	IG3	.68			
Idea championing	ICH1	.75	.78	.66	.79
	ICH2	.85			
Emotional intelligence	EI1	.55	.70	.57	.88
	EI2	.77			
	EI3	.70			
	EI4	.72			
	EI5	.61			
	EI6	.71			
	EI7				
	EI8				
	EI9				
	EI10				
	EI11				
	EI12				
	EI13				
	EI14				
	EI15				
	EI16				

Analytical Procedure

The data was converted into numerical symbols for analysis purposes. We removed any outliers to ensure consistency within the data. To ensure accurate and complete responses, any missing data was deleted. The data was entered into SPSS version 22 for analysis. The research instrument underwent reliability and validity assessment using Cronbach's alpha, and factor analysis was performed for data reduction.

RESULTS

Correlation

The table presented in the study displays Pearson's correlation coefficients between different variables. It was found that emotional intelligence is positively and significantly correlated with all three categories of creative behaviour, namely concept exploration ($r=.27, P<.01$), idea-generating ($r=.38, P<.01$), and idea championing ($r=.37, P<.01$).

Table 3: Correlations

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
1. Idea exploration	3.92	.88	.57**	1							
2. Idea generating	4.00	.80	.79**	.37**	1						
3. Idea championing	3.90	1.00	.74**	.15**	.45**	1					
4. Emotional intelligence	3.55	.82	.50**	.27**	.38**	.37**	.43**	1			
5. Tenure	2.03	1.04	-.02	-.05	-.09	-.01	-.04	-.05	1		
6. Gender	1.48	.50	.000	.01	.03	-.03	-.00	-.04	.02	1	
7. Education level	3.37	1.01	.11*	.07	.04	.07	.07	.07	.23**	.02	1

*N=306, ** P<.01*

Hypothesis Analysis

The study conducted a regression analysis and presented the results in *Table 3*. The study controlled for four variables - age, gender, education level, and tenure - and found that these factors did not significantly affect the three types of behaviour under investigation. Hypothesis 1 predicted that emotional intelligence would have a significant impact on idea exploration, and the study discovered a statistically significant effect of emotional intelligence on idea exploration

($\beta=.25, P<.05$). Hypothesis 2 anticipated that emotional intelligence would significantly influence idea generation, and the study results showed that emotional intelligence had a statistically significant influence on idea generation ($\beta=.38, P<.05$). Regarding Hypothesis 3, which predicted a link between emotional intelligence and idea championing, the study findings revealed a statistically significant effect of emotional intelligence on idea championing ($\beta=.14, P<.05$).

Table 4: Regression Analysis

Controls	Dependent variable		
	Idea exploration	Idea generation	Idea championing
Gender	.03 (.09)	.05 (.08)	-.01 (.10)
Educational level	.06 (.05)	.03 (.04)	.05 (.05)
Organisational tenure	.05 (.04)	.07 (.04)	.00 (.05)
Main effect			
Emotional intelligence	.25 (.06)	.38 (.05)	.36 (.06)
R ²	.07	.16	.14

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

Discussion

A survey was conducted to analyse the impact of EI on creativity in different dimensions, using Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory as a framework. The study took place in 27 public TVETIs, and the results showed that emotional intelligence had a positive and significant effect on all three dimensions of creativity: idea exploration, idea generation, and idea championing.

Interestingly, the effect of emotional intelligence on these dimensions varied, with idea championing being the most influenced, followed by idea generation, then idea exploration, which was the least influenced by emotional intelligence. It was found that employees who demonstrate emotional strength and understand how emotions affect others are more likely to explore new ideas and go beyond their routine tasks.

Moreover, individuals who have integrity and act consistently and those ready to act on opportunities can explore new work ideas.

Emotional intelligence also played a statistically significant role in idea generation. Employees who can sense the organisation's development needs and initiate and manage changes are more likely to generate new ideas for the organisation's growth.

Finally, EI has a statistically significant effect on idea championing. Employees who sense the need to strengthen organisational teams and inspire others are more likely to champion their newly generated ideas to colleagues. These findings align with prior research by scholars such as Malik (2021), Geher *et al.*, (2017), and Buehring and Moore (2018), who revealed that applying emotional intelligence enables interdisciplinary teams to discover creativity opportunities.

In addition, the study findings agree with those by Chin *et al.*, (2011) which suggested that individuals with high emotional intelligence demonstrate high teamwork, cooperation, and interactive skills. People who have a high level of emotional intelligence can recognise and value the efforts made by their team members. They show sincere empathy and compassion, which ultimately leads to an improvement in various aspects of creative behaviour. This study

contributes to the existing literature by showing how emotional intelligence can specifically boost different dimensions of creative behaviour.

Conclusion

The study aimed to determine how emotional intelligence affects creativity. The results showed that emotional intelligence improves employees' creativity. Those who can use their emotional flexibility to enhance their knowledge are more likely to generate new ideas and develop innovative work methods, thus becoming resourceful in their creativity. It can also be concluded that emotional intelligence leads to more creative behaviour. Therefore, individuals who have confidence in their ability to implement new work methods exhibit creative behaviour.

Implications to Theory and Practice

The current study sheds light on the influence of EI on different types of creative behaviour, contributing to the existing literature in several ways. Firstly, it extends the literature by exploring how emotional intelligence influences different types of creative behaviour. It was observed that the magnitude of influence of emotional intelligence varied across the three types of creative behaviour, implying that different types of creativity involve different tasks that are influenced by emotional intelligence differently. Although Goleman (2001) claimed that emotional intelligence impacts creative behaviour, our study argues that this effect varies depending on the type of task involved. Our study is the first to establish how emotional intelligence affects creativity dimensions. Managers in organisations can improve employee morale by implementing various management practices that empower employees to carry out tasks effectively. Providing clear guidance on decisions is also crucial for boosting employee motivation. Our study delves deeper into the impact of emotional intelligence on creativity, shedding light on how it influences different types of creative behaviour.

Limitations and Areas for Further Research

Although the study results are fascinating, it is important to note that certain limitations should be considered. Firstly, a survey with a cross-sectional design was utilised in this study. However, since leadership behaviours such as emotional intelligence are subject to change depending on the passage of time and the nature of the working environment, it is recommended that future researchers carry out a longitudinal study to obtain a clearer understanding of how a shift in the leaders' leadership emotional intelligence affects employee creative behaviour over varying time intervals.

Confirmatory factor analysis reduced standard method variance, but further research is needed to link emotional intelligence ratings from subordinates to gain a comprehensive view of its influence on their creativity.

Thirdly, it is important to note that this research was conducted at TVETIs in Kenya, which may not represent the management practices and procedures of private teaching institutions due to the differences between these educational institutions. Therefore, additional research should be conducted to replicate the same conclusions using empirical evidence from private education settings.

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