

The Interplay of Emotional Intelligence, Mental Wellbeing and Performance in the Service Sector

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to investigate the relationships between Emotional Intelligence, Mental Wellbeing, and performance among individuals employed in the service industry. To achieve this objective, data was gathered from employees employed in diverse service industries in Kerala, India using the Online survey, Method. Assessments were conducted using standardized tools and 100 respondents completed the questionnaire, comprising 31 males and 69 females. Analysis of the data indicated a strong positive correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Mental Wellbeing ($r = 0.640, p < 0.001$). The impact of emotional intelligence on mental well-being was also found to be influenced by task performance (estimate = 0.249, SE = 0.792, Z = 3.14, $p < .01$) and contextual performance (estimate = 0.0362, SE = 0.0107, Z = 3.39, $p < .001$). Additionally, insufficient. The findings highlight the significance of Emotional Intelligence in enhancing the mental well-being and job performance of employees, particularly in the service industry.

Keywords: *Emotional Intelligence, Mental Well-Being, Performance*

In the present era characterized by rapid advancements in technology, businesses encounter the task of providing their employees with the necessary skills to adjust to ongoing transformation, cultivating cooperative and all-encompassing teams, and maintaining customers in fiercely competitive marketplaces. This is especially pertinent in Kerala, an Indian state well recognized for its strong service sectors, such as education, information technology, and healthcare. One of the primary drivers of Kerala's economy is the service sector (Thomas, J.J., 2021). Owing to the ever-changing nature of these sectors, it is imperative to analyse and appraise methods to improve employee performance and mental well-being, as these aspects directly influence the success of the firm.

Optimizing employee performance and well-being not only enables firms to attract and retain highly qualified personnel but also eventually enhances the general development and long-term viability of organizations. In service-oriented sectors, where interpersonal communication is crucial, whether with coworkers, managers, or clients, emotional intelligence becomes particularly pertinent. Effective comprehension and regulation of

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emotions are crucial in settings where interpersonal interactions have a substantial impact on results.

Emotional intelligence (EI) is critically important in-service sectors. Emotions possess the capacity to function as a dual-edged instrument, capable of either fostering harmony and enhancing production or instigating conflict and reducing productivity. Individuals that demonstrate exceptional emotional management skills are often more adept and effective in addressing workplace difficulties, participating in constructive peer relationships, and achieving personal and organizational objectives (Grandey, 2000). Skilled regulation of emotions enhances psychological resilience and improves job performance. The objective of this study is to investigate the impact of emotional intelligence on enhancing the mental well-being and performance of employees in the service sectors of Kerala. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of the influence of these elements will offer tremendous insights for employers and stakeholders seeking to establish high-performing teams and foster supportive work environments. By prioritizing these fundamental components, firms may cultivate a culture that encourages both the welfare of employees and the long-term development of the organization.

Emotional Intelligence

Bar-On (1988) initially proposed Emotional Intelligence (EI) as a potential substitute for the Intelligence Quotient (IQ). Rather than prioritizing cognitive ability, Emotional Intelligence (EI) encompasses a collection of social and emotional abilities that enable individuals to adjust and manage the challenges of everyday life. From his perspective, Emotional Intelligence (EI) consists of emotional skills that enable individuals to effectively manage difficult interpersonal relationships. Expanding upon this, Salovey & Mayor (1990) provided a more comprehensive definition of Emotional Intelligence (EI) as the capacity to accurately recognize, understand, control, and use emotions proficiently. It was emphasized that those with high emotional intelligence not only effectively regulate their emotions but also skilfully direct them towards achieving achievement in both their personal and professional spheres.

Goleman (1995) extended the notion of emotional intelligence by placing a substantial focus on empathy and comprehending the feelings of others. Emotional Intelligence (EI) was described by Goleman (1995) as the capacity to identify, comprehend, and regulate one's own emotions, as well as to perceive, comprehend, and impact the emotions of others. The speaker underscored the significance of empathy, self-control, and self-discipline as fundamental characteristics for fostering effective interpersonal connections in both professional and personal spheres.

Emotional intelligence is well recognized as crucial in social interactions, particularly within the professional environment. In the realm of job satisfaction, productivity, and interactions, emotions assume a crucial role (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). Positive emotions, such as enthusiasm and satisfaction, promote innovation and collaboration (Fredrickson, 2001), whereas negative emotions, such as stress and frustration, can impede effective performance (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The ability to identify and regulate emotions proficiently is essential for the overall welfare of individuals and the achievement of organizational objectives (Goleman, 1995). Empirical research has extensively investigated the influence of emotional intelligence on many domains of human existence, notably within professional environments. Gallup's research revealed that the quality of the relationship with one's direct supervisor is the primary determinant of an employee's tenure with a company and their

productivity level (Zipkin 2001). Effective leaders who possess a deep understanding and skilful management of their own emotions are more inclined to inspire and develop trust and loyalty among their colleagues. In contrast, leaders who do not possess emotional regulation skills may isolate people, resulting in decreased productivity (Cherniss, C., 2001). A substantial ongoing debate is around the comparative predictive power of IQ and EQ (emotional intelligence) in determining performance. Goleman (1998) contended that Emotional Intelligence (EI) contributes to 85 to 90 percent of exceptional performance in senior management roles, leading to an increase of up to 20 percent in company earnings (Goleman, 1998). Indeed, this idea is especially valid in-service sectors, where proficient communication and emotional comprehension are crucial. Contrarily, IQ may serve as a more accurate indicator of success in technical domains (Goleman, 1995). In service industries like banking and education, personnel that possess a high level of emotional intelligence (EI) are more proficient in handling client encounters, resolving complaints, and fostering optimistic connections, resulting in enhanced customer retention (Boyatzis, 2008). Indeed, Emotional Intelligence (EI) is a crucial element of people management methods in the service industry (Van Rooy & Viswesvaran, 2004). Elevated emotional intelligence (EI) has been associated with higher levels of job satisfaction, enhanced customer satisfaction, and improved organizational performance (Schutte et al., 2001). Extending beyond customer service, emotional intelligence (EI) significantly influences interpersonal interactions, communication, problem-solving, and decision-making in corporate settings. Goleman (1995) posited that individuals with high emotional intelligence possess greater proficiency in regulating their emotions in alignment with the requirements of the situation and understanding the perspectives of others. This enhances the effectiveness of communication. Based on Boyatzis' (2008) research, empathy enhances trust and cooperation in interpersonal relationships by strengthening them even more. Emotional intelligence (EI) is crucial in the process of problem-solving and decision-making. Individuals possessing elevated emotional intelligence have reduced propensity for impulsive decision-making driven by emotions and demonstrate greater capacity for considering many viewpoints and alternative consequences (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). The process of emotional regulation results in decision-making that is more healthy, balanced, and successful (Goleman, 1995). Considerable research has been conducted on the correlation between emotional intelligence and workplace performance, consistently showing evidence that it has a beneficial effect on job satisfaction and productivity. Individuals with a high level of Emotional Intelligence (EI) has superior skills in stress management, connection building, and decision-making. These abilities are essential for successful collaboration, leadership, and overall performance (Schutte et al., 2007). Contemporary research consistently highlights the importance of Emotional Intelligence (EI) in the professional environment. According to Selvaranee and Rajan (2023), emotional intelligence (EI) plays a crucial role in communication and leadership. They emphasised that leaders who possess high emotional intelligence are able to establish work cultures that are both courteous and productive, thereby enhancing employee happiness and productivity. Furthermore, Aidoo and Dadzie (2023) discovered a notable association between elevated emotional intelligence (EI) and job performance in Ghanaian firefighters, emphasizing the need of emotional resilience in demanding professions. Effective leadership styles are significantly shaped by emotional intelligence. A study by Tyczkowski et al. (2015) revealed that nurse managers with high emotional intelligence (EI) had excellent leadership qualities, which promote enhanced collaboration and job satisfaction. Thus, emotional intelligence emerges as a crucial determinant for achieving satisfactory results in leadership and management. In conclusion, emotional intelligence is crucial for cultivating robust interpersonal connections, efficient communication, and competent decision-making in the professional environment. The effect of this phenomenon

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is especially evident in-service industries, where the ability to comprehend and share emotions is essential for both client satisfaction and employee success. Highly developed emotional intelligence (EI) fosters a conducive work atmosphere, strengthens leadership attributes, and propels the achievement of organizational objectives.

Mental Well-being

When a firm cultivates an environment of psychological safety and its employees demonstrate a high level of emotional intelligence, there is a natural improvement in mental well-being, which ultimately results in enhanced performance. An environment that fosters a healthy psychological climate, characterized by a sense of safety, improves the emotional well-being of employees. In addition, personnel who experience elevated levels of mental well-being make a good contribution to the psychological atmosphere. Organizations that place importance on both emotional well-being and a secure, encouraging work environment frequently observe enhanced job satisfaction, more engagement, and heightened productivity.

Nevertheless, the presence of emotional intelligence may not directly result in improved performance. On the contrary, mental well-being serves as an intermediary in the connection between these characteristics and employee performance. The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) operationalises mental well-being as the combination of hedonic factors, such as happiness and life satisfaction, and eudaimonic factors, such as psychological functioning and purpose in life. The WEMWBS scale, consisting of 14 items, evaluates mental well-being by measuring positive aspects of individuals' emotions and functioning. It focuses on experiences such as optimism, energy, resilience, and relaxation.

The increased prominence of positive psychology has led to significant focus on employee well-being in both academic research and organizational practices (Liu et al., 2009). Encouraging mental well-being has advantages for both people and organizations as it improves productivity, performance, and innovation (Lin et al., 2014). Hence, it is imperative to investigate the elements that contribute to the well-being of employees in order to achieve organizational growth and success (Choi et al., 2017).

Performance

Koopman (2016) classifies employee performance into three distinct domains: task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behavior. Task performance pertains to the fundamental job duties specified in an employee's job description. Individuals who possess a high level of emotional intelligence are capable of effectively handling stress, sustaining concentration, and evading diversions. This ability enables them to achieve exceptional performance in tasks (Goleman, 1995). They possess a greater capacity to adjust to changes and are more adept at managing job pressures, which leads to continuously producing outputs of high quality.

Contextual performance encompasses actions that enhance the organizational atmosphere, such as assisting colleagues or fostering collaboration. Employees who possess a high level of emotional intelligence frequently demonstrate excellent contextual performance by actively participating in organizational citizenship activities, promoting collaboration, and cultivating healthy workplace connections (Organ, 1988). These actions improve the overall efficiency of the company.

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Counterproductive work conduct refers to acts that have a detrimental effect on the organization. Employees with high emotional intelligence are better equipped to effectively handle conflicts and manage their emotions in a positive manner, hence decreasing the probability of engaging in detrimental behaviors (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). Conversely, the lack of psychological safety can result in detrimental behaviors, such as disseminating pessimism or gossip, which can harm team spirit and the overall culture of the firm.

Organizations can enhance employee engagement, performance, and workplace culture by comprehending the impact of emotional intelligence on job performance and counterproductive behavior, and implementing specific interventions accordingly.

Practical Relevance

This study is highly relevant, particularly in the service-based industries of Kerala, where everyday operations rely on human interaction, whether with colleagues or customers. Educational, information technology, and healthcare sectors, which are the primary drivers of Kerala's economy, rely significantly on the emotional intelligence, empathetic comprehension of consumer requirements, and psychological welfare of their employees. In the face of increasing competition, companies have crucial hurdles in maintaining skilled personnel, enhancing customer loyalty, and improving overall organisational performance. Through comprehending the interrelationship among emotional intelligence, and mental well-being, firms can formulate tactics to augment employee engagement, consumer loyalty, and productivity.

Furthermore, by placing significant importance on human connections within service industries, this research can provide valuable guidance to leaders in establishing a favorable work environment, enhancing employee mental well-being, and enhancing customer satisfaction. For example, individuals that possess a high level of emotional intelligence are more adept at managing client demands, establishing a positive relationship, and generating unforgettable experiences, resulting in increased customer loyalty and retention. Moreover, this reduces the expenses associated with marketing and sales. Given that employee well-being has a direct influence on organizational results, cultivating a psychologically secure and emotionally intelligent workforce is a priceless resource for promoting innovation, performance, long-term institutional success, and sustainability.

The objective of this study is to offer organizations valuable insights on how to establish and maintain work environments that promote employee comfort and safety, boost mental well-being, improve employee performance, and contribute to the sustainable success of the organization.

Objectives

- To measure the Impact of EI on Mental wellbeing and performance of employees.
- To study the Mediating role of Mental wellbeing in relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Performance of employees.
- To examine the relationship between service tenure, emotional intelligence, and mental well-being among employees.

Hypotheses

- There is a significant correlation between Emotional Intelligence & Mental Wellbeing.

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- There is a significant correlation between Mental wellbeing and Performance.
- Mental wellbeing mediates the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Task Performance.
- Mental wellbeing mediates the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Counter Performance.
- There is a significant correlation between service period, Emotional intelligence and Mental wellbeing.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

A group of 100 employed persons, ranging in age from 20 to 50, was sampled from several service-oriented organizations in Kerala. Of the total, 61 individuals were female and 31 were male. Upon obtaining the employees' consent to participate in the study, the researcher distributed an online survey comprising 61 items to assess four constructs: Emotional Intelligence, Mental wellbeing, and Performance.

Instruments

- 1. Emotional Intelligence:** The Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (BEIS-10) developed by Davies and colleagues was used to measure Emotional Intelligence. This scale consists of 10 items, each item has 5 alternatives, Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). The BEIS-10 assesses five dimensions of emotional intelligence: Appraisal of Own Emotions, Appraisal of Others' Emotions, Regulation of Own Emotions, Regulation of Others' Emotions, and Utilization of Emotions. The score will be summed up and the Higher total scores indicate higher emotional intelligence, while lower scores indicate lower emotional intelligence.
- 2. Mental Well-being:** The Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) was used to assess mental well-being. WEMWBS focuses entirely on the positive aspects of mental health, comprising 14 items that are rated on a 5-point Likert scale from *none of the time* (1) to *all of the time* (5). The items cover both eudaimonic and hedonic aspects of mental well-being and are all positively worded. The total score is obtained by summing the individual item scores, yielding a range from 14 to 70, with higher scores indicating greater mental well-being.
- 3. Individual Work Performance:** To measure individual work performance, the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) developed by Koopmans was used. The original version of the IWPQ consists of 18 items, assessing three key factors: (1) Task Performance, (2) Contextual Performance, and (3) Counterproductive Work Behavior. Each item is rated on a 5-point scale, with responses ranging from *seldom* (1) to *always* (5) for task and contextual performance, and *never* (1) to *often* (5) for counterproductive work behavior. A mean score for each scale is calculated by summing the item scores and dividing by the number of items in the respective scale. The IWPQ produces three distinct scores, each ranging from 0 to 4, with higher scores reflecting higher levels of task and contextual performance, and higher counterproductive work behavior.

Data Analysis

Data was coded after collecting the data with the help of the manual of each test. Descriptive statistics were applied to get the demographic details of the data. Karl Pearson correlation

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has been used to get different correlations among each variable. To get the mediation effect, the regression mediation analysis has been used.

RESULTS

There were seven hypotheses in the study. Those have been analyzed by using Karl Spearman correlation and Mediation analysis. The hypothesis and the statistical results have been given with the indication of statistical significance.

H1- There is no significant correlation between Emotional Intelligence & Mental Wellbeing

Table No.1 Correlation Matrix of Emotional Intelligence & Mental Wellbeing

| | | Emotional Intelligence |
|-------------------|-------------|------------------------|
| Mental Well being | Pearson's r | 0.640*** |
| | df | 98 |
| | p-value | < .001 |

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

The result shows that there is a significant positive correlation between Emotional intelligence and Mental wellbeing $r = 0.640$ $p < 0.001$. Which indicates that those who have a high level of emotional intelligence, have high Mental wellbeing.

H2- There is no significant correlation between Mental wellbeing and Performance

Table No. 2 Correlation Matrix of Mental Wellbeing & Performance

| | | Mental Well being | Task Performance |
|------------------------|-------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Task Performance | Pearson's r | 0.548*** | — |
| | df | 98 | — |
| | p-value | < .001 | — |
| Contextual Performance | Pearson's r | 0.551*** | 0.794*** |
| | df | 98 | 98 |
| | p-value | < .001 | < .001 |

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

The result shows that there is a significant positive correlation between Task Performance and Mental wellbeing $r = 0.548$ $p < 0.001$. And Contextual performance has high positive correlation with Mental wellbeing $r = 0.551$ $p < 0.001$.

Which indicates that those who have a high level of Mental wellbeing, perform better in both Task and Contextual works.

H3- Mental wellbeing does not mediate the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Task Performance

Table No. 3 Mediation Analysis: Emotional Intelligence & Task Performance

| Effect | Estimate | SE | Z | p |
|----------|----------|---------|------|--------|
| Indirect | 0.0330 | 0.00943 | 3.50 | < .001 |
| Direct | 0.0269 | 0.01338 | 2.01 | 0.045 |
| Total | 0.0598 | 0.01102 | 5.43 | < .001 |

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The indirect effect of emotional intelligence on Task performance through mental well-being was statistically significant (estimate = 0.0330, SE = 0.009, Z = 3.50, $p < .001$), indicating that Mental wellbeing partially mediated this relationship.

The direct effect of emotional intelligence on Task Performance, after accounting for mental well-being, remained significant (estimate = 0.269, SE = 0.1338, Z = 2.01, $p < .05$). The total effect of emotional intelligence on Task Performance was also statistically significant (estimate = 1.060, SE = 0.1274, Z = 8.32, $p < .001$).

These results suggest that both direct and indirect pathways contribute to the relationship between emotional intelligence and Task performance, with mental well-being acting as a significant mediator.

H4- Mental wellbeing does not mediate the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Contextual Performance

Table No. 4 Mediation Analysis: Emotional Intelligence & Contextual Performance

| Effect | Estimate | SE | Z | p |
|----------|----------|--------|------|-------|
| Indirect | 0.0362 | 0.0107 | 3.39 | <.001 |
| Direct | 0.0358 | 0.0153 | 2.34 | 0.019 |
| Total | 0.0720 | 0.0125 | 5.75 | <.001 |

The indirect effect of emotional intelligence on Contextual Performance through mental well-being was statistically significant (estimate = 0.0362, SE = 0.0107, Z = 3.39, $p < .001$), indicating that mental well-being partially mediated this relationship.

The direct effect of emotional intelligence on Contextual performance, after accounting for mental well-being, remained significant (estimate = 0.0358, SE = 0.0153, Z = 2.34, $p < 0.05$). The total effect of emotional intelligence on Counter performance was also statistically significant (estimate = 0.0720, SE = 0.0125, Z = 5.75, $p < .001$).

These results suggest that both direct and indirect pathways contribute to the relationship between emotional intelligence and Contextual performance, with mental well-being acting as a significant mediator.

H5- There is no significant correlation between service period, Emotional intelligence and Mental wellbeing

Table No. 5 Correlation Matrix of Service tenure, Emotional Intelligence & Mental Wellbeing

| | | Service Period | Emotional Intelligence | Mental Well being |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Service Period | Pearson's r | — | | |
| | df | — | | |
| | p-value | — | | |
| Emotional Intelligence | Pearson's r | 0.227* | — | |
| | df | 98 | — | |
| | p-value | 0.023 | — | |
| Mental Well being | Pearson's r | 0.253* | 0.640*** | — |
| | df | 98 | 98 | — |
| | p-value | 0.011 | < .001 | — |

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

The result shows that there is a significant positive correlation between service tenure and Emotional Intelligence $r = 0.227$ $p < 0.05$. Service tenure has a high positive correlation with Mental wellbeing also $r = 0.253$ $p < 0.001$.

Which indicates that the employees who have spent more time in an organization tend to improve their Emotional intelligence and Mental wellbeing.

DISCUSSION

The main objective of the study was to explore the relationships between Emotional Intelligence (EI), and Mental Well-being with various forms of employee performance in service sectors in Kerala. The results offer valuable insights into the complex interplay of these variables, providing implications for employee well-being and performance in the workplace.

First, the significant positive correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Mental Well-being ($r = 0.640$, $p < 0.001$) underscores the crucial role of EI in fostering mental health among employees. This finding is consistent with previous research that suggests emotionally intelligent individuals are better equipped to manage stress, regulate emotions, and maintain positive mental states, which in turn supports overall psychological health (Zeidner et al., 2012). The strong link between EI and mental well-being highlights the importance of emotional intelligence training in the workplace to enhance employees' psychological resilience and well-being.

The study also found a significant positive relationship between Mental Well-being and both Task Performance ($r = 0.548$, $p < 0.001$) and Contextual Performance ($r = 0.551$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that employees with better mental well-being are more likely to perform well, both in their core job tasks and in behaviors that support the broader organizational environment (Wright & Cropanzano, 2000). These findings align with existing literature, which suggests that mental well-being is crucial for sustaining high levels of performance across different work domains.

The mediation analysis revealed that Mental Well-being partially mediates the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and both Task Performance and Contextual Performance. The indirect effects for both task (estimate = 0.0330, $p < .001$) and contextual performance

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(estimate = 0.0362, $p < .001$) were statistically significant, indicating that while Emotional Intelligence directly influences performance, its effects are also channeled through improved mental well-being. These findings suggest that employees who possess higher EI are not only more effective in managing workplace demands due to their emotional regulation but also perform better because they maintain a higher level of mental well-being (Law et al., 2004). Interestingly, the direct effects of EI on Task Performance (estimate = 0.269, $p < .05$) and Contextual Performance (estimate = 0.0358, $p = .019$) remained significant after accounting for mental well-being, indicating that EI has both direct and indirect pathways of influence on employee performance (Côté & Miners, 2006).

Another important finding of the study was the positive correlation between Service Tenure and both Emotional Intelligence ($r = 0.227$, $p < 0.05$) and Mental Well-being ($r = 0.253$, $p < 0.001$). These results suggest that employees with longer service tenure tend to have higher EI and better mental well-being. This may indicate that over time, employees develop greater emotional maturity and coping skills, which in turn benefits their mental health (Bar-On, 1997). It also highlights the value of retaining employees long-term, as they contribute to a healthier and more emotionally intelligent workforce.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

While this study offers valuable insights, there are several limitations that need to be addressed. First, data were collected from only 100 employees across various service sector organizations. This relatively small sample size and cross-industry approach may limit the generalizability of the findings.

Future research should consider sampling larger and more homogeneous populations from specific industries or organizations to strengthen the validity and applicability of the results (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Second, the study only focused on employees from the service sector, which may limit the applicability of the findings to other industries. Different sectors may exhibit distinct patterns of emotional intelligence, psychological safety, and well-being that could influence performance outcomes. Future research should include participants from diverse industries to explore whether these relationships hold true across different work contexts.

Additionally, the use of self-reporting scales to assess performance introduces the potential for bias, such as social desirability or self-enhancement, which may have influenced the results. Incorporating alternative methods of performance evaluation, such as supervisor or peer ratings, could provide a more objective assessment of employee performance (Oh & Berry, 2009). Future studies should aim to integrate these multi-source data collection methods to better assess performance across various dimensions and reduce common method bias.

In conclusion, the findings of this study suggest that Emotional Intelligence plays a pivotal role in enhancing both employee mental well-being and performance. Organizations looking to improve employee performance & better outcomes should consider investing in EI development programs to mitigate negative behaviors and enhance performance. Furthermore, retaining employees long-term may provide additional benefits, as service tenure is positively linked to both EI and mental well-being. Future research could explore the potential moderating factors between Emotional Intelligence and mental well-being, as well as examine how organizational interventions might strengthen these relationships.

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Conflict of Interest

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