

Effect of Emotional Intelligence-Based Leadership Traits on Employee Motivation in the Nepalese Higher Educational Institutions

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the effect of leaders' traits based on emotional intelligence leadership framework of Goleman on employee motivation in Nepalese higher educational institutions. The study focuses on four key leadership traits of emotional intelligence; self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills in concern to employee motivation. Data were collected through questionnaire survey from a sample of 223 teaching and non-teaching employees of higher educational institutions of Lalitpur and Kathmandu districts. The employs descriptive and casual comparative research designs and using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and regression analysis techniques. The findings from correlation analysis indicate that all four emotional intelligence traits are positively and significantly associated with employee motivation. The regression results revel three traits social skills, empathy and self-awareness effect employee motivation positively and significantly, however self-regulation failed to predict employee motivation significantly. Among four examined leadership traits, social skills have emerged as the strongest influencer of employee motivation. The empirical findings of the study has indicated that traits of emotional intelligence leadership are effective for enhancement of organizational effective as these foster motivated workforce in higher educational institutions. These findings provide valuable insights in enhancing leadership competencies and maintaining productive human resources in higher education sector.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence leadership, Self-awareness, Self-regulation, Empathy, Social skills, Employee motivation, Higher education institutions

Introduction

Academic institutions are backbones for developing human resources with knowledge and skills. Higher educational institutions (HEIs) involve in developing human capital and fostering socio-economic development (Adhikari & Shrestha, 2023, 2024; Shrestha, 2025; Shrestha et al., 2025a; 2025b; Shrestha & Chhetri, 2025). The role of competent leadership is pivotal in achieving higher educational quality, productivity and effectiveness as effect of globalization, growing competition, and technological advancement are ever increasing (Shrestha, 2019). Consequently, higher educational institutions are encountering challenges in achieving faculty motivation, collaboration, and performance and leadership effectiveness (Shrestha & Parajuli, 2025). To overcome from such growing concerns, competent leadership has become a critical aspect which cannot be satisfied with traditional authority based leadership approaches. Many related studies have indicated that traits based on emotional intelligence leadership are more effective in inspiring, motivating, and managing employees and organizational processes (Goleman, 1998; Cherniss, 2010).

According to Mayer et al. (2016), emotional intelligence denotes to a person's competency to properly recognize, understand, regulate, and utilize emotions more effectively of self and others. Similarly, emotional intelligence includes many traits related to leaders like self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, social skills, and motivation (Goleman, 1998). Emotionally intelligent leadership traits play crucial roles in sound decisions, conflict resolution,

management of interpersonal skills and fostering healthy & creative work climate. Boyatzis and McKee (2005) argue that effectiveness in leadership is not only related to cognitive intelligence and technical skills but dependent largely with emotional capabilities those enable leaders in responding employee needs and organizational challenges. Similarly, Leaders with emotionally intelligent traits create resonant and supportive work climate which is effective in creating harmonious workplace relationships, fostering employee motivation and engagement, and improving organizational performance (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2013)

Motivation is referred as a fuel that stimulates people to act effectively and driven by internal and external forces (Shrestha & Pradhan, 2022; Shrestha, 2017a, 2021a, 2023; Thapa & Shrestha, 2025; Adhikari et al., 2024). In organizational context, motivation is an inevitable element to pursue organizational objectives by satisfying employee's various intrinsic and extrinsic needs (Pradhan et al., 2024). The leadership traits of emotional intelligence are very promising in enhancing leadership competences and qualities which stimulate employees for better performance and motivation (Shrestha, 2014, 2017b). Emotional intelligence leadership traits provide recognition, constructive feedback, emotional support and professional development opportunities those fulfill intrinsic needs at workplace. Previous studies demonstrate traits of emotional intelligence leadership affect positively to employee job satisfaction, commitment, engagement and job performance (Wong & Law, 2002; Miao, Humphrey, & Qian, 2018).

Emotional intelligence based leadership traits are vital in managing happy workforce particularly in talent based institution like academic institutions. The leaders with emotionally intelligence traits contribute to a supportive institutional climate that boosts employee motivation, commitment, job satisfaction, and performance (Adhikari & Shrestha, 2023). Prior studies demonstrate that emotional intelligence leadership traits can enhance cooperation, open communication and trust among employees thus improves organizational outcomes (Wong & Law, 2002; Zeidner et al., 2004). Quality of academic institutions is primarily based on human qualities which are linked with human interactions and participation.

In the context of developing countries like Nepal, the importance of leadership with emotional intelligence traits has become more inevitable where academic institutions face many constraints like lack of resources, policy uncertainties and organizational complexities. Managing human and physical resources using more dynamic and humanitarian approaches is required in today's HEIs. Further, Nepalese higher educational institutions have undergone considerable changes in good governance, competitive pressures, and quality assurance practices to stabilize these transformations leaders' competencies in nourishing employee motivation and institutional harmony. Studies have indicated that leadership practices with emotionally intelligence traits influences positively to employee engagement, job performance and commitment across various sectors (Côté, 2014; Miao et al., 2018). Therefore, leaders' emotional intelligence traits are vital in enhancing leaders' competencies to address stabilizes present transformations and support employee well-being.

There is an ever growing interest globally in leadership effectiveness due of emotional intelligence leadership traits. However, there is lack of empirical evidences in concern to emotional intelligence leadership practices in Nepalese higher educational institutions. Most of the studies have been done in the context of corporate sectors and there is a remarkable gap in analyzing how leadership traits based on emotional intelligence influence employee within the academic institutions. As higher educational institutions are unique knowledge-intensive sector engaging highly qualified workforce, the role of emotional intelligence based traits are more significant to enrich academic autonomy and collaborative decision making process. Understanding effect of emotional intelligence leadership traits proposed by Goleman (1998) self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, social skills, and motivation become more essential. Study in this issue can provide valuable inputs for academic institutions' sustainable development through leadership development.

Literature Review

Emotional Intelligence-Based Leadership Styles

Unlike traditional leadership styles, the leadership style based on emotional intelligence encourage leaders to provide personalized attention to employees. Leaders' ability to recognize, understands, manage and influence emotions of themselves and employees to attain firm goals. Other than traditional leadership approaches centered on authority and technical skills, emotionally intelligent leadership focuses human aspects like relationship, empathy, communication and emotional awareness (Goleman, 1998; Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2004). The emotionally intelligent leadership styles are more important in service and knowledge-intensive sectors where team based practices, employee engagement and collaborative efforts are critical to success.

Goleman (1998) has supported five key competencies of emotionally intelligent leaders as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. These competencies are reflected in leadership styles that encourage trust, open communication, and employee development. This is because leaders with more emotional intelligence capabilities can effectively manage workplace stress, resolve conflicts, and foster a positive work environment, by this means enhancing employee satisfaction and motivation (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013). Similarly, findings from previous studies indicate that the leadership with emotionally intelligent traits donates to stronger team cooperation, improved job performance, and higher organizational commitment (George, 2000).

Emotionally intelligent leaders encourage employee participation, recognition of individual contributions and address employees' emotional needs with adoption of supportive and transformational leadership styles (Barling, Slater, & Kelloway, 2000). The leaders with emotionally intelligent traits encourage followers through better communication and concerns to their well being thus this leadership has been positively related to employee job satisfaction, citizenship behaviors and lesser turnover intentions (Wong & Law, 2002; Miao, Humphrey, & Qian, 2018). Thus, the modern workforce is more effectively managed, motivated, and retained through emotionally intelligence based leadership styles.

Emotional Intelligence-Based Leadership Traits and Employee Motivation

The key five competencies of emotionally intelligent leadership suggested by Goleman (1998) namely self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills are found as effective traits to motivate employees.

Self-awareness and employee motivation: Employee motivation and performance is affected by self-awareness components of is one of the important components of leaders' emotional traits which influence. It is a leader's ability to recognize and understand their own emotions along with strengths, weaknesses, values, and behaviors. Goleman (1998) has stated that self-awareness is a basic element of emotional intelligence which enables leaders to reveal how their emotions affect their decisions and interactions with others. Furthermore, leaders who possess high self-awareness are more found to be authenticity, confidence, and effective decision-making, these traits enhance their credibility amongst employees. The leaders with self-aware character can also understand the impact of their actions on employees and are better able to inspire trust, commitment, and engagement. This trait encourages to supportive leadership behaviors that intrinsic motivation by creating a work climate that satisfies employees' autonomy, competence, and relatedness like psychological needs (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

In addition, self-aware leaders can identify employee concerns more better, provide constructive feedback, and encourage for their development. As a result, a culture of openness and collaboration, which further strengthens employee motivation and job satisfaction. Leaders with strong self-awareness can nurture motivation, boost employee engagement, and promote a positive workplace culture; therefore these contribute to improved organizational performance and long-term success (Goleman, 1998; Ryan & Deci, 2020). Leaders possessing strong self-awareness is more able make better decisions and also maintain credibility among employees. They are self-regulated which allows them to manage their emotions effectively, even in the stressful situations, thereby they create a stable and trustworthy work environment (Goleman et al., 2013).

In conclusion, self-awareness and employee motivation are closely connected aspects of leaders' emotional traits. Further, the leaders who demonstrate emotional stability, integrity, and transparency because these traits foster trust and psychological safety, employees found to be more motivated when they work under such leaders (Goleman, 1998; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013). As result, employees to perform beyond minimum expectations and remain committed to organizational objectives because of trustworthy leadership.

Self-regulation and employee motivation: Self-regulation is an essential dimensions of emotionally intelligent leaders' emotional traits which fosters employee motivation, organizational performance and better workplace relationships. Self-regulation denotes to a leader's ability to control own's emotions, manage impulses, and respond appropriately to challenging situations. A leader with self-regulation remains calm under pressure, shows consistent behavior, and makes rational decisions controlling personal emotions. Goleman (1998) defines self-regulation as a fundamental component of emotional intelligence which promotes characters like adaptability, trustworthiness, and maintaining better interpersonal relationships.

Leaders with strong self-regulation skills create secure, respected, and valued work environment for employees. Such leaders manage their emotions effectively and provide more concern for employee well-being hence foster trust and strengthen employee engagement (Goleman, 1998). According to Self-Determination employee motivation increases when employees experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness within their work environment (Ryan & Deci,

2020). The leaders with self-regulation encourage employees to contribute actively toward organizational goals and maintain positive attitudes in the workplace. Similarly, strongly motivated employees exhibit higher levels of commitment, productivity, creativity, and job satisfaction. In result, this trit help employees to develop greater confidence, commitment, and organizational loyalty (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Accordingly, organizations benefit from improved performance, higher employee satisfaction, and long-term success (Goleman, 1998; Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Therefore, self-regulation of leaders and employee motivation are closely associated and strengthen leadership performance and contribute to long-term organizational success.

Empathy and employee motivation: Empathy denotes to a leader's competency in understanding, recognizing, and responding correctly to the perspectives, feelings, and needs of employees. The emotional intelligence framework of Goleman empathy is considered a vital leadership competency as it supports leaders to build strong relationships individually, resolve conflicts effectively, and fosters a supportive work environment (Goleman, 1998). Empathetic leaders show unaffected concern for their employees' well-being thus helps foster trust, respect, and open communication in organizational work environment. The degree of empathy demonstrated by leaders strongly influence employee motivation.

This happens due to perception of employees when they feel understood and valued, and they reflect positive work behaviors like to be engaged, committed, and enthusiastic. Empathetic leaders provide individualized attention to employees. They actively listen to employee concerns, acknowledge employees' contributions, and during challenging situations provide emotional supports which significantly increase employee motivation and job satisfaction. Similarly, the ability of empathy enables leaders to craft and apply their motivational tools according to each employee's unique needs and expectations, thus enhance individual and team performance (Goleman, 1998).

Empathetic leaders by creating supportive and inclusive workplace climate aslo contribute to employee psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled (Ryan & Deci, 2020). When employees feel connected and respected a better culture of collaboration, creativity, and organizational commitment. When leaders show empathy, employees tend to be more loyal, motivated, and satisfied with their jobs. They are also more willing to put in extra effort to help achieve organizational goals. Furthermore, as basic emotional traits in leadership empathic leadership ability can motivate employees, strengthen workplace relationships, and foster positive organizational culture and effected in terms of increased employee engagement, better performance, and long-term success (Goleman, 1998; Ryan & Deci, 2020). In similar vein, George (2020) has revealed that employees perceiving higher degree of empathy from leaders demonstrate job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intrinsic motivation. As a core dimensions of leaders' emotional intelligence, empathic behavior plays key role in employee motivation. Such leaders properly understand concerns of individual employee, their needs and aspirations providing them recognition and supports. The positive perception of employees due to valued and understood by the leaders feel higher intrinsic motivation, job satisfaction and organizational commitment (George, 2000; Wong & Law, 2002).

Social skills and employee motivation: Social skills in emotionally intelligent leadership are a critical component that not only motivates and satisfies employees but influences workplace effectiveness and organizational success. They are related to a leader's competence in creating better social relationship peers and employees. These skills include leaders' ability to communicate effectively, build, and maintain relationships, manage conflicts, and foster teamwork by influencing others. In the view of Goleman (1998), social skills are a vital element of emotional intelligence which enables leaders to build strong interpersonal connections with people and foster productive and healthy working environments. Since social skills of leaders produces harmony among people thus motivate employees and cultivate participative collaboration among organizational members.

Since social skills is concerned with the social competence revealed by leaders, it can create an encourage work engagement and commitment of employees. When leaders actively listen employee concerns and recognize their contributions they feel rewarded and valued. Such behaviors enrich employee trust and strengthen their willingness to contribute to organizational objectives. Therefore motivated employees produce higher levels of productivity, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Goleman, 1998).

Consequently, leaders' social skills foster teamwork and collaboration at workplace and they are key ingredients of employee motivation. the Self-Determination Theory states that intrinsic motivation of employees increased due to fulfillment of their needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2020). More importantly, a sense of connection and bogginess with the organization also are reflected in behaviors of employees and strengthens motivation and performance. The social skills of Leaders inspire employees, enhance workplace harmony, and create

a supportive organizational culture. This skill of emotionally intelligent leaders results in improved employee engagement, more productivity, and sustainable organizational success (Goleman, 1998; Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Barling, Slater, and Kelloway, (2000) state that emotionally intelligent leaders enforce mutual respect, open communication, emotional support, recognize employee achievements, provide constructive feedback and support professional growth those increase motivation and job performance. Prior studies consistently indicate that emotionally intelligent leadership foster work attitude, commitment and productivity of employees (Miao, Humphrey, & Qian, 2018).

Conceptual framework and study hypotheses

Emotional intelligence (EI) based leadership traits has become an increasing concern in modern organizational settings, particularly in knowledge based industries such as information technology. Emotional intelligence particularly indicates to a person's ability to recognize, understand, regulate, and effectively utilize emotions in one and others (Goleman, 1998; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004). Emotional intelligence enables leaders in building supportive work environment, healthy workplace relationships, managing conflicts constructively, and fostering a supportive environment that induces employee motivation and performance.

The leadership traits with emotional intelligence strengthen leaders' competencies in influencing employees with recognition, trust, support and workplace relationships thus strongly related with employee motivation. Goleman (1998) suggested four major traits of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills. These traits are reflected basic for effective leadership in motivating employees. The conceptual framework of this study incorporates these four emotional intelligence leadership traits respectively self-awareness(SA), self-regulation (SR), empathy (E) and social skills (SS) as independent variables which positively influence employee motivation (EM). Based on the framework the following study hypotheses have been formulated:

H1A: Self-awareness of leaders' emotional intelligence positively affects employee motivation.

H1B: Self-regulation of leaders' emotional intelligence positively affects employee motivation.

H1C: Empathy of leaders' emotional intelligence positively affects employee motivation.

H1D: Social skills of leaders' emotional intelligence positively affect employee motivation.

Research Methods

The study has employed descriptive and casual comparative designs to determine level of emotional intelligence traits of leaders and employee motivation as well as to analyze effect of selected leadership traits on employee motivation. Data collection instrument used was questionnaire survey conducted in 13 higher educational institutions located in Lalitpur and Kathmandu districts. The questionnaire contained total of 26 items as reported in Table 1. A five point Likert scale was used to measure respondents preferences in questionnaire items. Both teaching and administrative staffs were considered for study population. Sampling techniques applied was convenience and snowball as to reach respondents. The online survey as more convenient tool was applied and questionnaire was sent to 260 targeted respondents represented 85.76% response rate . Similarly, duration of data collections was three months from February to April 2026. Table 1 depicts study variable items and associated reliability statistics.

Table 1: Study variables' frequencies and Cronbach's Alpha for reliability statistics

Items	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Self-awareness	5	0.79
Self-regulation	5	0.82
Empathy	5	0.86
Social skill	5	0.84
Employee motivation	6	0.88

Source: Survey 2026

The result of Conbatch's alpha has indicated satisfactory level of reliability of all items of the study variables where self-awareness has satisfactory and others good as suggested by Sekaran and Boggie (2010). The data analysis techniques used were descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and regression analysis to test study hypotheses. The following regression model describes expected effects of the study variables (independent) on employee motivation (dependent):

$$EM = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \times SA + \beta_2 \times SR + \beta_3 \times EM + \beta_4 \times SS + \epsilon$$

Where, four emotional leadership traits; self-awareness (SA), self-regulation (SR), empathy (EM), and social skills (SS) are the predictors of employee motivation (EM).

Results

The result section presents the results of this study. Table 2 presents demographic profile of the respondents.

Table 2: Demographic profile of the respondents (n=223)

Variable	Level	Frequency	Proportion
Gender	Women	75	.34
	Men	148	.66
Work nature	Teaching	173	.76
	Non-teaching	50	.22
Job experience	Below 5 years	55	.25
	6-10 years	112	.50
	Above 10 years	56	.25
Education	Phil/PhD	23	.10
	Masters	153	.69
	Bachelors	23	.10
	Up to Higher secondary	24	.10
Marital status	Married	172	.77
	Unmarried	51	.23
Monthly income(NPR)	Below 30000	75	.34
	30001-60000	106	.48
	Above 60000	42	.18

Out of total 223 respondents, majority was men (66%) and women accounted for 34%. Majority if the respondents belong to teaching job (76 %), whereas 22% were non-teaching staff. Most of the respondents had master degree qualification (69%) and ten percent were highly qualified having MPhil./PhD. degrees. and Regarding job experience half of the participants (50%) had 6-10 years experience. And same remaining proportions found for 6 to 10 years and more than 10 years of job experience. About two-third of the respondents were married (77%) and majority of the respondents had income ranged from NPR 30001 to 60000.

Table 3 report descriptive statistics and associations among the emotional intelligence leadership traits and employee motivation.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics and correlation of the study variables

Variables	Mean	SD	SA	SR	E	SS	EM
SA	2.977	0.857	-				
SR	3.474	0.694	0.492***	-			
E	3.353	0.759	0.524***	0.454***	-		
SS	3.568	0.721	0.431***	0.583***	0.579***	-	
EM	3.309	0.734	0.538***	0.536***	0.610***	0.668***	-

The results reported in Table 3 have indicated mean scores and associations among the study variables. The means scores of the variables have indicated to moderate to high levels of measured constructs. Among five study variables, social skill obtained the highest mean ($M = 3.568$, $SD = 0.721$), tracked by Self-Regulation ($M = 3.474$, $SD = 0.694$), and Empathy ($M = 3.353$, $SD = 0.759$). In addition, Employee Motivation ($M = 3.309$, $SD = 0.734$), and Self-Awareness ($M = 2.977$, $SD = 0.857$) posed relatively lower mean scores.

The result from correlation analysis has demonstrated significant positive association among the study variables. Out of four emotional intelligence leadership traits, Empathy ($r = 0.610$), and Social Skills ($r = 0.668$) have strong positive association. Consequently, Self-Awareness ($r = 0.538$), Self-Regulation ($r = 0.536$) also produced significantly positive association with employee motivation.

Table 4 depicts results of regression analysis along with hypotheses test results. The result of regression analysis results was used to analyze effect of four selected emotional intelligence leadership traits; self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skill on employee motivation.

Table 4: Result of regression analysis

Model	Unstandardized B	Standard Error	Standardized B	t	p	Hypotheses test result
(Intercept)	0.213	0.206		1.031	0.304	
SA	0.169	0.051	0.195	3.310	0.001	Supported
SR	0.116	0.066	0.109	1.761	0.080	Not supported
E	0.231	0.061	0.236	3.766	< .001	Supported
SS	0.396	0.067	0.384	5.948	< .001	Supported

$R^2=0.564$, Adjusted $R^2=0.555$, F statistic=63.098, $p < .001$

As per results obtained from the analysis, the regression model was statistically significant ($F = 63.098$, $p < .001$) and has indicated that the independent variables have explained a considerable proportion of variance in predicted variable employee motivation. Similarly, model parameters ($R^2 = .564$ and adjusted R^2 of .555) indicated a strong explanatory power.

Among the predictors of employee motivation, social skills (SS) has relatively strong effect ($\beta = .384$, $t = 5.948$, $p < .001$) suggesting that leaders with higher social skills tend to display more employee motivation supporting fourth hypothesis. Similarly, other predictor Empathy (E) also has predicted employee motivation positively and significantly ($\beta = .236$, $t = 3.766$, $p < .001$) and highlighted that leadership skills of understanding and responding to employees' others' feelings affects motivation positively and has supported third hypothesis of the study. Self-awareness also has positive and significant effect ($\beta = .195$, $t = 3.310$, $p = .001$) on employee motivation and has supported first study hypothesis but the effect is not strong. Conversely, self-regulation (SR) has not shown significant effect on employee motivation ($\beta = .109$, $t = 1.761$, $p = .080$) and has failed to support study hypothesis. Thus, three of the predictors; social skill, empathy and self-awareness of the leaders are important traits of emotionally intelligent leaders but self-regulation does not contribute significantly to employee motivation in Nepalese higher educational institutions.

Discussion

The empirical findings of this study confirm the emotional intelligence leadership approach of Goleman's (1998) that have emphasized leaders competences in emotional traits can contribute significantly in influencing employee motivation. The findings from correlation analysis have reflected all four dimensions of emotional leadership traits self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy and social skills associate positively with employee motivation in IT sector. These results support findings of many previous result which revealed that leadership with emotionally intelligent contributes positively to employee motivation and then attitudes, teamwork, and organizational performance (Ohagawa, 2025; Ryan & Deci, 2020; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013; Coronado-Maldonado & Benítez-Márquez, 2023)

The next predictor empathy also found to have positive and significant effect on employee motivation as more empathic leaders build strong interpersonal relationship increasing sense of belongings and supportive organizational climate. These results support work of Shaari et al. (2023) and Kock et al. (2019) that reported enhanced employee motivation level due to leaders' concern for employee needs and individualized supports. The finding is also consistent with results of other studies which revealed that more motivation of employee found from higher degree of empathic traits from the leaders due to employee perception of being valued, supported, and understood (Ryan & Deci, 2020; George, 2020; Wong & Law, 2002).

Among four emotional intelligence leadership traits, social skills have emerged as the stronger predictor of employee motivation. This finding supports Goleman (1998) who stated that social skills improve employee motivation as it enables leaders in building networks, influence employees, and foster collaboration. Similarly, Shaari et al. (2023) observed that employees are highly motivated when leaders apply open communication, wider participation, and nurture positive workplace relationships. The result also confirmed findings of their studies arguing higher motivation is induced from leaders' social skills which fulfillment of employees' intrinsic needs as autonomy, competence, relatedness, mutual respect, emotional support, constructive feedback etc. (Goleman, 1998; Ryan & Deci, 2020; Slater & Kelloway, 2000; Miao, Humphrey, & Qian, 2018)

In contrast to these results, one of the predictor- self-regulation failed to predict employee motivation significantly even though the impact was positive. This result has suggested for ability of leaders' to control self-emotions is important to motivate employees. Lack of self-regulation cannot create favourable self-image and trust of leaders. As

Goleman (1998) proposed self-regulation as a basic traits of leaders' emotional intelligence that enhance abilities like adaptability, trustworthiness, and maintaining better interpersonal relationships. The finding is not consistent with previous studies highlighted to leaders' self-regulation as ingredient to foster motivation, satisfaction and loyalty as it enables employee trust, engagement, competence, relatedness, confidence, and creativity (Goleman, 1998; Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Overall, the findings reinforce a growing body of literature indicating that emotional intelligence is a critical leadership capability that enhances employee motivation, engagement, and organizational effectiveness. The results particularly highlight the importance of social skills, empathy, and self-awareness as key leadership competencies. Therefore, organizations should prioritize emotional intelligence development in leadership training programs to strengthen employee motivation and improve overall organizational performance.

Conclusion and Implications

This study intended to reveal effect of leaders' emotional intelligence traits on employee motivation based on Goleman's (1998) approach in the context of Nepalese higher educational institutions. The empirical results have concluded that leaders' traits advocated by emotional intelligence do impact significantly in enhancing employee motivation in the sector. Out of the four leadership traits, social skill, empathy, and self-awareness of leaders indicate positive and significant effect on employee motivation. Among all, social skills of leaders have emerged as strongest predictor in motivating employees. Self-regulation did not emerged as significant predictors. Overall, the findings suggest significance of emotional intelligence leadership traits in Nepalese higher educational institutions which can contribute substantially for productive, committed and supportive academic work climate by motivating employees. The study has relevance of Goleman's emotional intelligence traits of leadership competence in Nepalese higher educational institutions. Findings of this study provide valuable evidence for administrators, owners and policy makers who seek more productive, inspired and committed employees to attain their objectives.

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