

# THE IMPACT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE DIMENSIONS ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to examine the effect of emotional intelligence dimensions (self-emotions appraisal, other-emotions appraisal, use of emotions, regulation of emotions) on employee engagement. A quantitative survey was used to collect data from 445 employees from ministry of education in Oman. SEM based AMOS was used to analyze the data. The results revealed a significant positive relationship between self-emotions appraisal, use of emotions, regulation of emotions and employee engagement. However, other-emotions appraisal does not influence employee engagement significantly. Managers can benefit from the study by understanding the importance of emotional intelligence dimensions (self-emotions appraisal, use of emotions, regulation of emotions) on raising their employees' engagement which enhances their performance. They should consider emotional intelligence level in recruitment process and hold some training workshops to foster employees' emotional intelligence. The study enriches the human resources management literature by examining a theoretical framework about the influence of emotional intelligence dimensions in increasing employees' engagement. This is one of the few studies that focus on the relationship between emotional intelligence dimensions and employees' engagement. It is the first study in an Omani context.

**Keywords:** Employee engagement, Emotional intelligence.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays every organization is planning to create a competitive advantage and build a distinguished reputation that enables it achieve its strategic goals. Employee engagement is one of the main factors that contribute in sustaining in the competitive world as Woodruffe (2006) claims that employees' engagement should be one of the main organisation's strategy because engaged employees can make a competitive advantage in any organization. Rasheed et al. (2013) assert that employee engagement becomes a hot topic for all businesses and among decision makers because it correlates positively with positive organizational performance outcomes such as employee retention, productivity, profitability, customer loyalty, safety revenue growth and customer satisfaction.

Karsan (2007) argues that disengagement costs an organization great amount of money because it restricts the goals' achievement due to the turnover of disengaged employees. Costs also include the exit interviews, training costs, termination cost or even some other legal costs. Disengagement is a global problem; for example, Gopal (2006) states that the number of disengaged employees in Singapore grows up which costs the business billions of dollars and make the business decision makers concern about the alarming phenomenon and put its efforts to decrease it. Disengagement leads to physical and physiological health problems which cost companies a lot which hurt its business climate (Crabtree, 2005).

Oman concerns about employees' disengagement as well which is reflected in strikes in various manufacturing and service sectors like airport staff and oil and gas workers (Rustucci, 2011). Employees of education sector demonstrated, demanding more rights and facilities as well (AlBelushi, 2011)

Engagement is a great challenge for organizations. Managers must take into account how to engage employees. In order for any organization to achieve its strategic goals, it demands engaged employees who are energetic, vicarious, and

passionate about their work. It needs employees who can exert discretionary efforts. Organizations should direct employees' emotions and hearts towards work and this can be attained by integrating emotional intelligence into work environment. Some studies investigated the relationship between employees' emotional intelligence and positive organizational outcomes like employees' engagement (Ravichandran et al., 2011; Ravichandran et al., 2011, Schule, 2014), organizational commitment (Alavi et al., 2013), organizational citizenship behavior (Yunus et al., 2010), job satisfaction (Ngirande & Timothy, 2014), leadership effectiveness (Rosete & Ciarrochi, 2005). There are also some studies that investigated the influence of emotional intelligence dimensions on self-efficacy (Azizian & Samadi, 2012), ethics at the workplace (Singh, 2011), ethical behavior (Fu, 2014). but emotional intelligence dimensions have not been researched widely in relation to employee engagement. Therefore, this study fills this gap. The objectives of the study are:

to examine the relationship between one's own emotions and employee engagement

to examine the relationship between use of emotions (UOE) and employee engagement

to examine the relationship between other's emotions appraisal (OEA) and employee engagement

to examine the relationship between regulation of emotion (ROE) and employee engagement

### **Employee Engagement:**

Employee engagement is defined as employing employees' selves towards organisational roles; in engagement, employees exert themselves physically, cognitively, emotionally and mentally when performing their roles in an organization. The physical domain of employee engagement related to physical energies exerted by employees to perform their duties. The cognitive domain concerns employees' beliefs about organization, its leaders and working conditions. The emotional domain of employee engagement related to employees' feelings towards organization, its leaders and working conditions; and their attitudes toward those three factors (Kahn, 1990).

In 2007, Bakker and Demerouti proposed a model for employee engagement which is called job demands-resources (J D-R) model. It is a widely used in employee engagement literature. They proposed that employees should be equipped with job resources in order to overcome job demands and be engaged at work. Job resources refer to all physical, cognitive, emotional resources such as autonomy, job security, supervisor support, performance feedback, organizational justice and climate, and growth opportunities. Job demands refer to all physical, cognitive, emotional demands such as work overload, role stress and conflict, time pressure which are required from employees (Li et al, 2014).

Engaged employees contribute to the success of their organization. They are motivated to bring innovative ideas and go extra mile. They can lead to superior organizational and financial performance. Employee engagement should be included in organisation's strategy (Moreira, 2013). Engagement leads to positive business outcomes like customer satisfaction, organizational productivity, increase profitability, and decrease employees' turnover and accidents at the workplace (Harter et al., 2002). Employee engagement is the key to unlock talents and increase productivity. It transforms lives of employees to satisfaction which grants an organization sustain and compete in globalization and competitive world (MacLeod & Clarke, 2011).

Employee's engagement is a critical part for human resources managers because if they fail to engage their employees, they would fail to achieve organization strategy. It is a stronger predictor of organizational performance which decreases turnover and intention to leave and increase profitability, productivity, and customer satisfaction (Kompaso & Sridevi, 2010). Employee engagement influences employee performance greatly (Dalal et al., 2012) and leads to job satisfaction, job commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior (Saks, 2006).

Macey and Schneider (2008) stated that engaged employees involved themselves psychologically and physically at their work and therefore Gruman and Saks (2011) consider employee engagement is the key to maintain high levels of employees' performance. Council, C. L. (2004) argue that employee engagement raises shareholder return by up to 47 percent, decrease shrinkage inventory and absenteeism, leads to higher sales and better customer feedback.

### **Emotional Intelligence:**

Conservation of resources theory (COR) provides explanations for hypothesizing a positive association between emotional intelligence dimensions and employee engagement. Based on COR theory, employees accumulate resources in order to attain more resources. Resources like emotional intelligence leads to positive outcomes such as employee engagement (Hobfoll, 1989). Emotional intelligence is a personal resource that increases employee engagement.

Employees who are emotionally intelligent are able to conserve the resources due to their ability to understand their own and others' emotions as well as their ability to use and regulate their emotions effectively. They are able to deal effectively with stressful situations and conserve their physical and cognitive energy to perform their tasks well.

Emotional intelligence, which is the ability to know and manage our emotions, and the ability to understand others' emotions and integrate our knowledge to manage situations and relationships, is a cornerstone for leadership success (Reed, 2014). Emotional intelligence is a key factor for effective leaders and managers. They can understand and react appropriately to the emotions of employees. Littlejohn (2012) stated that a recent research on behavioral modification revealed possibility in improving one's emotional intelligence. Reed (2014) states that emotional intelligence can be learned and developed at any age through mentoring.

Emotional intelligence has been found to correlate positively with positive organizational constructs such as organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior. Alavi et al. (2013) examined 100 employees from Ramin Thermal power plant in Iran and the result showed a significant positive relationship between employees' emotional intelligence and their organizational commitment. Yunus et al. (2010) investigated the influence of emotional intelligence factors on organizational citizenship behavior. The sample of the study was 200 supervisors and subordinates from financial institutions situated in Klang Valley in Malaysia. The findings showed that use of emotions, other's emotions appraisal, and regulation of emotions are factors of emotional intelligence that predict employee's organizational citizenship behavior.

Ngirande and Timothy (2014) chose 92 individuals from Eskom electric power industry in South Africa to examine the effect of leader's emotional intelligence on employee's job satisfaction. The result clarifies a significant positive relationship between leader's emotional intelligence and employee's job satisfaction. Onuoha and Segun-Martins (2013) selected 258 female employees and found that higher emotional intelligence employees have more job satisfaction.

Rosete and Ciarrochi (2005) chose a sample from a large Australian public service organization. It consists of 41 senior executives who completed emotional intelligence test and 140 leader's subordinates and direct managers who evaluated leadership effectiveness through completing 360 assessment. The results showed that the high emotional intelligence leaders have more leadership effectiveness. Rosete and Ciarrochi (2005) surveyed 41 senior executives and found a significant positive relationship between their emotional intelligence and their leadership effectiveness.

Further, emotional intelligence reduces workplace bullying and stress. Ashraf and Khan (2014) collected information from 242 doctors working in five hospitals and six clinics in Islamabad and Rawalpindi and found that emotional intelligence alleviates workplace bullying that affects job performance negatively. Karimi et al. (2014) conducted a study over 312 nurses from Australia and found that emotional intelligence correlate positively with well being and it reduces job-stress.

Various studies investigated the effects of emotional intelligence dimensions on positive organizational constructs. For example, Azizian and Samadi (2012) aimed to explore the relationship between employee's emotional intelligence and their self-efficacy of Hamedan branch of Islamic Azad University. The results indicated a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence dimensions namely self-awareness, self-control, intimacy, social skills, self-motivation and self-efficacy. Another study by Singh (2011) surveyed Indian business organizations and the result indicated a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence dimensions namely self awareness, interpersonal connectivity, emotional regulation and ethics at the workplace which leads to effective performance and employee's satisfaction. Fu (2014) investigated 507 employees from three state-owned Chinese firms and found that regulation of one's emotions which is a facet of emotional intelligence influences ethical behavior significantly.

Johar et al. (2012) examined if leaders' emotional intelligence mediates the relationship between leaders' personality and employees' self-esteem. The sample consists of 285 individuals from local authority in Malaysia. Results indicated the importance of emotional intelligence in mediating the association between leaders' personality and employees' self-esteem.

There are some studies that examined emotional intelligence in relation to employee engagement. For example, Ravichandran et al. (2011) investigated 119 individuals working in information technology services in Chennai in India. Self report inventory developed by Schutte and colleagues in 1998 was used to measure emotional intelligence, and Utrecht work engagement scale developed by Schaufeli and colleagues in 2006 was used to measure employee engagement. The results indicated an association between emotional intelligence and employee engagement.

Schutte and Loi (2014) investigated 319 employees from United States and Australia and found that highly emotional intelligent employees have more mental health, more satisfied and engaged at work, and have more social support. Robertson-Schule (2014) surveyed 107 community college students in Texas and found that individuals' emotional intelligence predicts their engagement.

Based on the studies discussed above the proposed hypotheses are:

H1: Ability to understand one's own emotions relates positively to employee engagement.

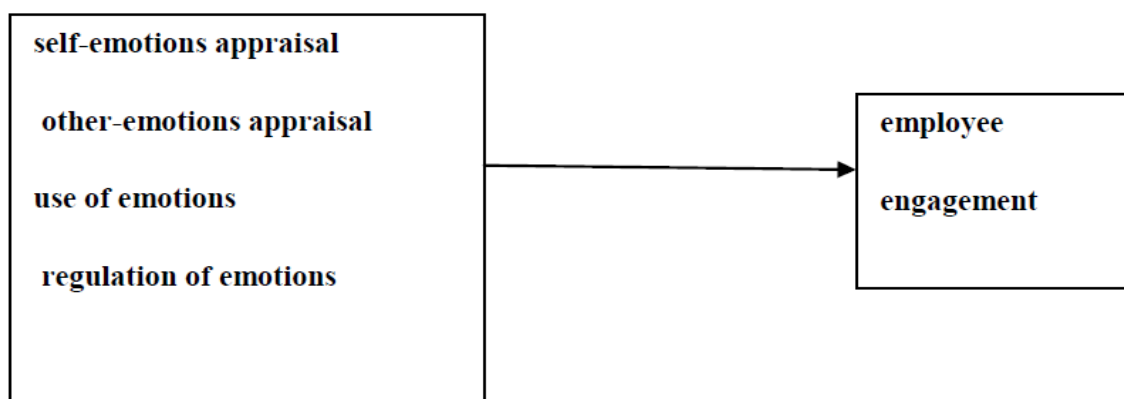
H2: Ability to understand others' emotions relates positively to employee engagement.

H3: Use of emotions relates positively to employee engagement.

H4: Regulation of emotions relates positively to employee engagement.

Framework of the study would be as follows:

Emotional Intelligence dimensions



## II. METHODOLOGY

### Sample and data collection procedures:

The sample of the study consists of 445 employees from ministry of education from Batinah North region in the Sultanate of Oman (215 are males and 230 are females). The total questionnaires distributed 600, 470 employees responded on the questionnaires, but 25 questionnaires were excluded due to missing data so the number of questionnaires used for analysis were 445. The response rate was 74 percent.

The study questionnaire was administered to the target schools during working hours. The researcher assigns an employee from each school to distribute and collect the questionnaires. He is trained to attend to respondents' questions. Once the researcher receives the questionnaires, he sorts them to analyze only completed ones.

### Measures:

#### *Emotional intelligence:*

In 2002 Wong and Law developed a new questionnaire of emotional intelligence based on Mayer and Salovey emotional intelligence model in 1997 (Law et al., 2004). Several studies have used WLEIS and confirm its validity and reliability (Nasser et al., 2011; Fukuda et al., 2011; Li et al., 2012). WLEIS consists of four dimensions and (16) items. It is measured on a 7-point likert scale (7 = always to 1 = never). Details pertaining dimensions are presented here:

- Self-Emotions Appraisal (SEA): assesses the individual's self-perceived ability to understand his or her emotions, items (1,2,3,4).
- Others-Emotions Appraisal (OEA): measures the self-perceived ability to recognize and understand other people's emotions, items (5,6,7,8).
- Use of Emotion (UOE): measures the self-perceived tendency to motivate oneself to enhance performance, items (9,10,11,12).
- Regulation of Emotion (ROE): focuses on the self-perceived ability to regulate one's emotions, items (13,14,15,16).

**Employee engagement:**

Schaufeli, Bakker and Salanova (2006) developed a new version of the UWES that consists of nine items, and proved its validity for cross-national cultures. This questionnaire includes three dimensions (vigor, dedication, absorption) and nine items. Participants are asked to respond to the statements with "Never," "Almost never," "Rarely," "Sometimes," "Often," "Very often," "Always,". Details pertaining the questionnaire's dimensions are as the following:

Vigor: is high energy, resilience, a willingness to invest effort on the job, the ability to not be easily fatigued, and persistence when confronted with difficulties. It includes items (1, 2, 5).

Dedication: is a strong involvement in work, enthusiasm, and sense of pride and inspiration. It includes items (3, 4, 7).

Absorption: is a pleasant state of being immersed in one's work, experiencing time passing quickly, and being unable to detach from the job. It includes items (6, 8, 9).

**Instrument reliability and validity:**

**Reliability:**

Cronbach's coefficient alpha and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were obtained to assess the reliability of the questionnaire. Table 1 presents values of Cronbach's alpha which ranges from 0.85 to 0.92. According to Tavakol and Dennick (2011) the acceptable value of alpha ranges from 0.70 to 0.95.

Fornell and Larcker (1981) formula is used to calculate composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE). Based on Bagozzi and Yi (1988) recommendation, the recommended value for AVE is 0.50 or above and for CR is 0.60 or above. Table 1 shows that the composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) of the measures are within the acceptable levels which supports the reliability of the constructs.

**Validity:**

There are 25 items used first to measure the constructs. However, after checking the loading of each item, two items were deleted (EE6, EE8) which their loadings below 0.70, so 23 items remain (Table 1).

AVE is greater than 0.50 and CR is greater than 0.70 which indicates convergent validity of the constructs (Table 1). Moreover, the constructs achieve discriminate validity as the square roots of the AVE scores are all higher than the correlations among the constructs (Table 2).

**Table 1 Results of measurement model of SEM using AMOS**

Construct	Loading	CR	AVE	Cronbach
Employee engagement		0.92	0.63	0.91
EE1		.758		
EE2		.822		
EE3		.882		
EE4		.836		
EE5		.705		
EE6				
EE7		.794		
EE8				
EE9		.766		
Self-emotions appraisal		0.92	0.75	0.92
EI1	0.85			
EI2	0.89			
EI3	0.87			
EI4	0.85			
Others-emotions appraisal		0.89	0.67	0.89
EI5	0.83			

EI6	0.85			
EI7	0.78			
EI8	0.82			
Use of emotions		0.85	0.58	0.85
EI9	0.75			
EI10	0.76			
EI11	0.75			
EI12	0.81			
Regulation of emotions		0.88	0.65	0.88
EI13	0.80			
EI14	0.86			
EI15	0.78			
EI16	0.78			

**Table 2: discriminate validity**

	<b>UE</b>	<b>employee engagement</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>OE</b>	<b>RE</b>
<b>UE</b>	0.765				
<b>employee engagement</b>	0.634	0.797			
<b>SE</b>	0.728	0.540	0.865		
<b>OE</b>	0.757	0.542	0.700	0.817	
<b>RE</b>	0.733	0.563	0.598	0.673	0.806

The study use various goodness-of-fit indexes which are the ratio of X<sup>2</sup> to the degree of freedom, the goodness of fit index (GFI), the comparative fit index (CFI), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). The fit indices achieve acceptable range as displayed in Table 3, which suggest that the model has a reasonable fit with the data, implying that the indicators represent the corresponding constructs appropriately.

**Table 3: Measurement model fit indices**

Fit indices	Recommended value	Indices value
x <sup>2</sup> (df)	≤ 3.00	2.46
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.91
CFI	≥ 0.90	0.96
RMSEA	≤ 0.080	0.057

### III. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

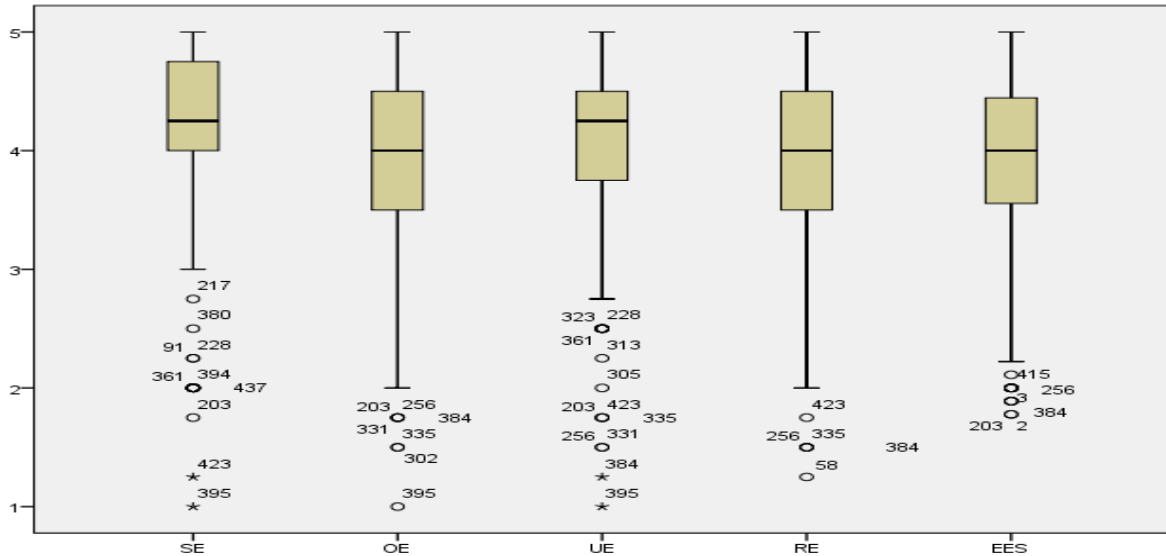
Table 4 shows the profile of the sample; 48.3 percent of the respondents are males and 51.7 of them are females.

**Table 4: Sample Profile**

Description	Frequency (n = 483)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	215	48.3
Female	230	51.7

Checking normality of the data is very important as it affects the statistical result of the study (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Outliers are identified using box-plots. Graph 1 shows that there are no outliers in the data.





Graph 1: box-plots of variables

**Harman’s single-factor test:**

Harman’s single-factor test was done to examine the presence of common method variance (CMV) because of the usage of self-report measures. If one factor accounts for the most of the covariance in the variables, then CMV is present (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

To determine the number of factors needed to account for the variance in the variables, all five variables in this study were entered into the exploratory factor analysis, using unrotated principal components factor analysis. The results of the factor analysis revealed the presence of five distinct factors with eigen values greater than 1.0. The five factors together accounted for 71.1% of the total variance; the first (largest) factor did not account for a majority of the variance (21.5%) (appendix 1). Thus, no general factor was found apparent, and accordingly, the presence of CMV was not detected.

**Hypotheses testing:**

Structural equation modeling (SEM) is employed to examine the relationships between variables by using AMOS because it is the best technique for confirming the relationship between variables and eliminating the errors.

**Structural model results:**

The predictive power of a model can be assessed by R<sup>2</sup> value. AMOS provides the squared multiple correlation (R<sup>2</sup>) for each endogenous construct, which indicates the amount of variance in the construct that is explained by the model (Wixom and Watson, 2001). The R<sup>2</sup> for employee engagement is 0.43 (Table 5), which indicates that the model and its determinants can explain 43 percent of the variance in employee engagement. Thus, the resulting R<sup>2</sup> underlines the fact that employee engagement could be influenced by other factors in addition to emotional intelligence dimensions.

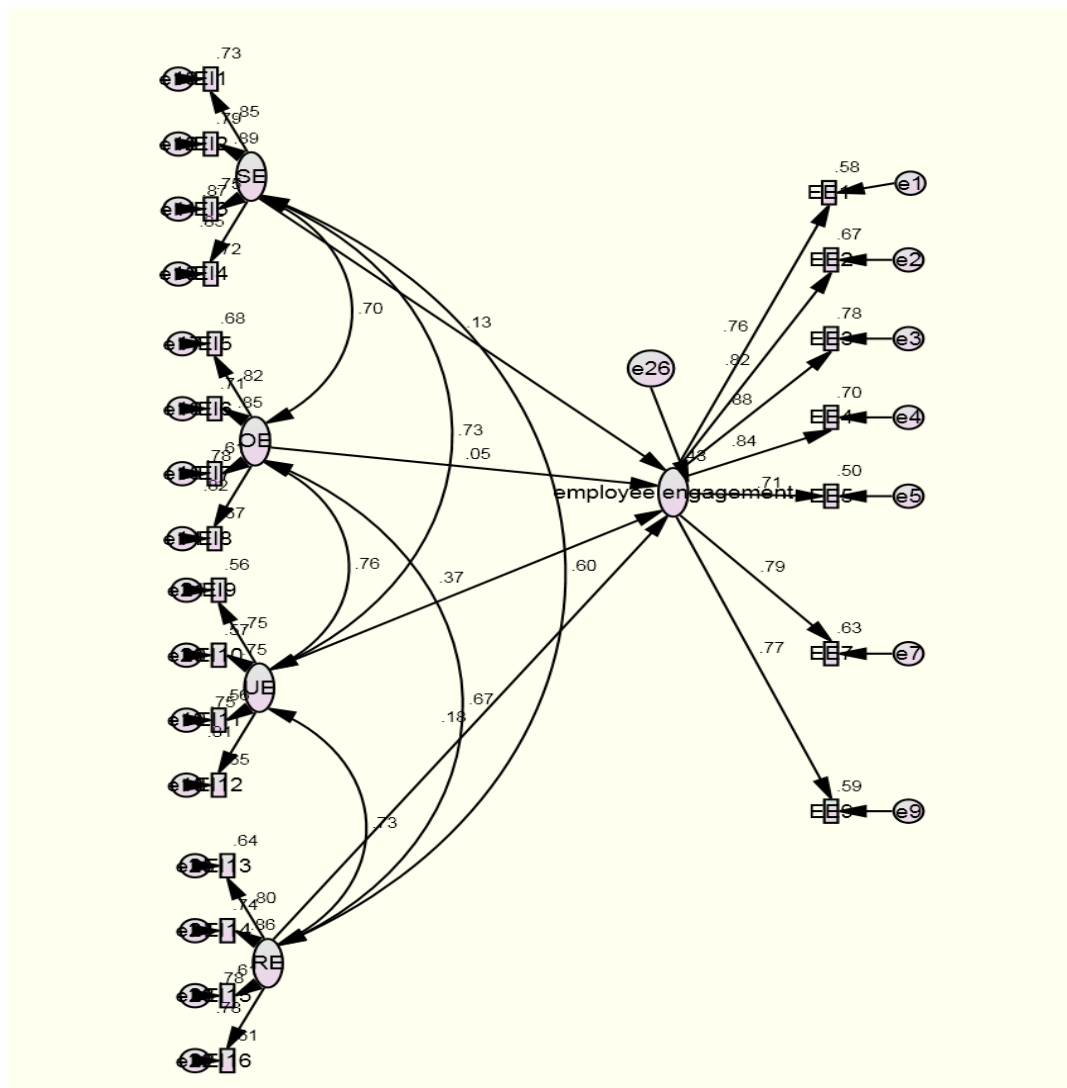
Table 5: R<sup>2</sup> of endogenous variable

Construct	R <sup>2</sup>
Employee engagement	0.433

The analysis of the results support H1 (beta 0.115, t value 1.82, p . 0.05), H3 (beta 0.33, t value 3.81, p . 0.001), H4 (beta 0.18, t value 2.54, p . 0.01). However, it fails to support H2 (beta 0.05, t value 0.65 p ≥ 0.05) (Table 6)

Table 6: results of structural model

Hypotheses	beta	S.E.	t-value	decision
Self-emotions appraisal-EE	.115	.063	1.82*	supported
Other-emotions appraisal-EE	.046	.072	0.647	Not supported
Use of emotions-EE	.333	.088	3.81***	supported
Regulation of emotions-EE	.182	.072	2.54**	supported



#### IV. DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

This section discusses the results of the study based on the existing studies and theories.

##### H1: Ability to understand one's own emotions relates positively to employee engagement

The result of the study reveals a significant positive relationship between ability to understand one's own emotions and employee engagement. Thus supporting hypothesis 1. The result of the study is aligned with previous researches' findings such as (Schutte & LOi, 2014; Robertson-Schule, 2014; Ravichandran et al., 2011) which clarified the importance of emotional intelligence in increasing employees' engagement. Further, studies like Singh (2011) and Azizian and Samadi (2012) showed a significant relationship between understanding self-emotions and employees' engagement. Ashraf and Khan (2014) and Karimi et al. (2014) found that emotional intelligence enhances employees' well being which can be fundamental for their engagement. Therefore, the more an employee understands his own emotions, the more become engaged at his work.

##### H2: Ability to understand others' emotions relates positively to employee engagement

The result of the study failed to support hypothesis 2 which is understanding others' emotions increases employees' engagement. The result is inconsistent with (Schutte & LOi, 2014; Robertson-Schule, 2014) studies that emphasized that emotional intelligence fosters employees' engagement. The result can be explained by the sample of the study which is more than half of them are females who are more conservative. According to Oman culture, women are not allowed to interact openly with anyone except their relatives. Thus understanding others' emotions does not impact employees' engagement significantly.



### **H3: Use of emotions relates positively to employee engagement**

The result of the study supports hypothesis 3 which is use of emotions relates positively with employees' engagement. The result is consistent with (Schutte & LOi, 2014; Robertson-Schule, 2014) studies which revealed a significant positive relationship between employees' emotional intelligence and their engagement. Yunus et al. (2010) study also found that use of emotions enhances organizational citizenship behaviour. Further, Ngirande and Timothy (2014) and Onuoha and Segun-Martins (2013) revealed that emotional intelligence increases job satisfaction. Thus employees who are able to use their emotions become more engaged at work.

### **H4: Regulation of emotions relates positively to employee engagement**

The result of this study revealed a significant positive relationship between regulation of emotions and employee engagement. This result is consistent with previous studies like Singh (2011) who found that regulation of emotions increases employees' engagement. Moreover, some studies found that regulation of emotions relates positively with organizational citizenship behavior (Yunus et al., 2010), organizational commitment (Alavi et al., 2013), and ethical behavior (Fu, 2014) which are considered antecedents for employees' engagement. Therefore, employees who can regulate their emotions are more engaged at work and exert their physical, cognitive, emotional capabilities while performing their roles.

## **V. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

Employee engagement has become interested for many researchers and consultants due to its importance in increasing employee performance. Many studies have been conducted to identify the factors that drive employee engagement, but the relationship between emotional intelligence dimensions and employee engagement has not been researched widely, so this study addresses this issue. Emotional intelligence scale developed by Wong and Law in 2002 and employee engagement scale developed by Schaufeli, Bakker and Salanova in 2006 were used and achieved a reasonable reliability and validity coefficients. SEM based AMOS has been used to analyze the results and the findings revealed a significant positive relationship between the ability to understand one's own emotions, use of emotions and regulate of emotions and employee engagement. However, the ability to understand others' emotions does not have a significant relationship with employee engagement.

Managers should be aware of the importance of raising employees' ability to understand their own emotions, use and regulate them in order to deal appropriately with different tasks allocated for them. Further, consultants should consider employees' emotional intelligence as a strategy to alleviate stress and conflicts in an organization.

## **VI. LIMITATION AND FUTURE SUGGESTIONS**

One limitation of the study can be related to the sample of the study in which they are taken from one region where they are supposed to include all regions to generalize the results. Moreover, some other variables like employees' experience might affect the relationship between investigated variables. As for future suggestions, More variables like experience should be investigated that might moderate the relationship. Further, the sample of the study should be taken from all regions.

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### APPENDIX I: Factor Analysis

#### KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.944
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	7995.663
	df	300
	Sig.	.000

#### Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared			Rotation Sums of Squared		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Loadings			Loadings		
				Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	11.568	46.273	46.273	11.568	46.273	46.273	5.383	21.531	21.531
2	2.572	10.286	56.559	2.572	10.286	56.559	3.476	13.905	35.437
3	1.502	6.007	62.566	1.502	6.007	62.566	3.197	12.789	48.225
4	1.126	4.504	67.070	1.126	4.504	67.070	2.953	11.812	60.037
5	1.004	4.017	71.087	1.004	4.017	71.087	2.762	11.049	71.087
6	.806	3.226	74.312						
7	.713	2.853	77.165						
8	.567	2.267	79.433						
9	.486	1.945	81.378						
10	.456	1.825	83.203						
11	.427	1.708	84.911						
12	.393	1.571	86.482						
13	.390	1.560	88.042						
14	.351	1.405	89.448						
15	.310	1.238	90.686						
16	.291	1.166	91.851						
17	.288	1.151	93.002						
18	.265	1.058	94.060						
19	.248	.991	95.051						
20	.244	.977	96.028						
21	.230	.921	96.949						
22	.226	.903	97.852						
23	.195	.779	98.631						
24	.174	.697	99.329						
25	.168	.671	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.