Nexus between Emotional Intelligence, Perceived Organizational Supportiveness, and Innovative Work Behaviour of Employees in Sri Lankan Biscuit Manufacturing Companies

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ABSTRACT

In highly competitive manufacturing environments, employee-driven innovation has become a critical source of sustainable competitive advantage. Within the Sri Lankan biscuit manufacturing industry, firms face increasing pressure to enhance innovation amid rapid market changes and technological advancement. Grounded in Resource-Based Theory, this study investigates the relationships between Emotional Intelligence (EI), Perceived Organizational Supportiveness (POS), and Innovative Work Behaviour (IWB), while examining the moderating role of Technological Orientation (TO).

A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was adopted, and data were collected from 384 employees representing leading biscuit manufacturing companies in Sri Lanka. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling was employed to test the hypothesis. The findings reveal a strong and positive relationship between EI and IWB, indicating that organizational support mechanisms play an important role in translating emloyees~emotional capabilities into innovative outcomes. However, the moderating effect of technological orientation on the POS-IWB relationship.

The study contributes to the literature by empirically demonstrating how psychological and organizational resources jointly influence innovation in a developing -economy manufacturing context. From a practical perspective, the findings underscore the importance of investing in emotional intelligence development and cultivating supportive organizational environments to stimulate employee innovation. The study also acknowledges methodological limitations and proposes directions for future research.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Organizational Support, Innovative Work Behaviour, Technological Orientation, Biscuit Manufacturing, Employee Innovation.

INTRODUCTION

Innovation is widely recognized as a key determinant of organizational survival and long-term competitiveness in today`s dynamic global business environment(Damanpour,1991; Jimenez-Jeimenez & Sanz-Valle,2011).In manufacturing industries, employee-driven innovation -commonly conceptualized as Innovative Work Behaviour(IWB)-plays a pivotal role in generating, promoting and implementing new ideas that enhance organizational performance (De Jong & Den Hartog,2010). As global competition intensifies, firms increasingly rely on internal human and organizational resources to sustain innovation and growth.

Within Sri Lanka’s export-oriented manufacturing sector, the biscuit industry represents a strategically significant yet underexplored context for innovative research. Despite meeting international quality standards and benefitting from cost advantages, many Sri Lankan biscuit manufacturers struggle to fully exploit innovation potential at the employee level. Limited organizational support mechanisms, insufficient attention to emotional capabilities, and uneven technological orientation often constrain employees' ability to contribute innovative ideas. These challenges are further amplified by economic volatility and heightened international competition.

The global business market continues to expand, driven by changing consumer preferences and increasing demand for value-added and health-oriented products. While Sri Lanka possesses favourable conditions for product diversification and export growth, innovation within the sector remains limited. This gap suggests that innovation constraints may not stem solely from technological or financial limitations but also from the underutilization of human capital and organizational resources. From a theoretical standpoint, prior research has extensively examined emotional intelligence, perceived organizational support, and innovation as separate constructs. However, empirical studies integrating these variables within a unified framework-particularly in South Asian manufacturing contexts-remain scarce. Moreover, the mechanisms through which emotional intelligence influence innovative behaviour and the conditions under which organizational support enhances this relationship are not yet fully understood.

Addressing these gaps, the present study examines the nexus between emotional intelligence (EI)Perceived Organizational Supportiveness (POS), and Innovative Work Behaviour (IWB)among employees in Sri Lankan biscuit manufacturing companies. Drawing on Resource-Based theory, the study further investigates whether POS mediates the EI-IWB relationship and whether Technological Orientation moderates the relationship between POS and IWB.By doing so, the study aims to contribute to both theory and practice by offering context-specific insights into employee innovation in manufacturing organizations.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Theoretical foundation: Resource-based theory.

Resource-based theory (RBT)posits that organisations achieve sustainable competitive advantage by acquiring and effectively utilising valuable, rare, inimitable, and non -substitutable resources (Barney,1991). While early RBT research emphasised tangible assets, contemporary perspectives increasingly highlight the strategic importance of intangible resources such as employee skills, emotional intelligence and perceived organisational support, which can therefore be viewed as intangible resources that enhance firms' innovative capacity by shaping employee attitudes and behaviours.

Emotional Intelligence (EI)and Innovative Work behaviour

Emotional intelligence refers to an individual`s ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and utilise emotions effectively in oneself and others (Salovey & Mayer,1990). In organizational settings, emotionally intelligent employees are better equipped to manage stress, collaborate with colleagues, and adapt to changing work demands. Prior empirical studies have demonstrated a positive association between emotional intelligence and creativity-related outcomes, including innovative work behaviour (Carmeli & Josman,2009; Joseph & Newman,2010). Employees with high emotional intelligence are more likely to engage in idea generation, champion new initiatives and persist in the face of implementation challenges. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Emotional intelligence has a positive effect on innovative work behaviour.

Emotional Intelligence (EI)and perceived organisational supportiveness.

Perceived organisational support reflects employees' general belief that their organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al.,1986). Emotionally intelligent individuals tend to develop more positive workplace relationships and interpret organisational actions more favourably, which can enhance perceptions of organisational support. Empirical evidence suggests that emotional intelligence positively influences employees` perceptions of fairness, recognition, and support within organisations (Carmeli,2003). Based on this reasoning, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H2: Emotional intelligence positively influences perceived organisational support.

Perceived organisational support and Innovative work behaviour.

Perceived organizational support has been consistently linked to positive work outcomes, including job satisfaction, commitment and discretionary effort (Rhoades & Eisenberger,2002). When employees perceive high levels of organizational support, they are more willing to take risks and engage in innovative behaviours. Supportive organisational climates provide psychological safety, which is essential for idea experimentation and innovation (Janssen,2000). Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H3: Perceived organisational support positively influences innovative work behaviour.

Mediating role of perceived organisational supportiveness.

While emotional intelligence equips employees with the capacity to innovate, organisational support mechanisms may determine whether these capabilities are effectively translated into innovative outcomes. POS can serve as a mediating mechanism by reinforcing employees' motivation and willingness to apply their emotional competencies toward innovation. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H4: Perceived organizational support mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and innovative work behaviour.

Moderating role of technological orientation.

Technological orientation reflects an organisation's strategic emphasis on adopting and utilising new technologies to enhance processes and products (Zhou et al.,2005). Organisations with a strong technological orientation may provide an environment that facilitates the translation of support into innovation. However, the strength of this effect may vary across contexts and industries. Accordingly, the following hypothesis has been derived.

H5: Technological orientation positively moderates the relationship between perceived organisational support and innovative work behaviour.

Emotional Intelligence (EI)

In organisational contexts, emotional intelligence (EI) has become more and more important, especially when it comes to workplace conflicts, employee motivation, and creating positive team dynamics (Boyatzis, Goleman, & Rhee, 2000). The implementation of EI principles has become essential for accomplishing corporate goals and creating a healthy work environment as businesses struggle with challenges like shared culture, psychological contracts, and coaching. In essence, emotional intelligence (EI) is the capacity to identify, control, and react to one's own emotions as well as those of others (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Understanding emotions helps to know what motivates people, while managing emotions permits individuals to deal with their feelings constructively at work (King & Gardener 2006. Emotional Intelligence cannot lead to higher performance, and the most important aspect is how people use emotions in the working environment (Shahzad et al., 2011).

High EI and positive organisational results are strongly correlated, according to the theoretical and empirical literature. For example, studies show that those with high emotional intelligence are more adept at handling stress, forming solid bonds with others, and handling conflict (Goleman, 1998). Additionally, as emotionally

Intelligent leaders are better able to inspire and encourage their teams; it has been demonstrated that EI enhances leadership effectiveness (Boyatzis et al., 2000). These findings demonstrate how important it is for businesses to foster emotional intelligence (EI) through training programs, leadership development initiatives, and the establishment of an atmosphere that values and promotes emotional intelligence and management.

Perceived Organisational Support (POS)

Employee perceptions of how much their employer appreciates their contributions and is concerned about their well-being are reflected in perceived organisational support (POS) (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Positive employee-employer connections, which are the cornerstone of organisational performance, depend on this impression (Li Sun, 2019). The foundation of POS is organisational support theory, which postulates that workers form opinions about the actions of their company based on perceptions of discretion, a sense of duty to reciprocate, the satisfaction of social and emotional needs, and performance-reward expectations (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LA Mastro, 1990). In essence, a sense of reciprocal commitment is fostered, and the employee-company link is strengthened when employees believe that their organisation truly values them and their efforts. Workers are more likely to exhibit loyalty, dedication, and a stronger psychological bond when they feel appreciated and encouraged by their company (Meyer & Allen, 1997). POS encourages workers to put in more work and make valuable contributions to the company (Eisenberger et al., 1990).

A reciprocal process is frequently involved in the creation of a sense of POS. People feel psychological pressure and a sense of duty to return favours when they believe they are being treated well (Azevedo & Eisenberger, 2003). According to Eisenberger et al. (1990), employees who feel organisational concern, gratitude, and affirmation are more likely to exhibit positive attitudes and behaviours. As a result, POS represents how employees perceive their interactions with the company, and research has repeatedly shown that it has a favourable effect on both individuals and the company. In terms of definitions, dimensions, and underlying theories of POS, the theoretical development of the construct is presented in the following section. It symbolises how employees view their contacts with the firm, and research has consistently. Demonstrated that it benefits both people and the company.

Technological Orientation (TO)

Models of technology adoption can be used to analyse TO. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis et al., 1989), the Theory of Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) (Rogers, 1960: 1995), the Theory of Task-technology Fit (TTF) (Goodhue & Thompson, 1995), the Theory of Reasonable Action (TRA) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1985). The extent of these implications depends on the firm's concentration on technology.

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As products become more technologically sophisticated, the advantages of learning, sharing, and using knowledge will grow. In other words, the greatest benefits come from incorporating new information into innovation processes. But as was already mentioned, integrating IT into innovation processes presents several challenges, primary among them being its complexity and rigidity.

Innovative Work Behaviour

By encouraging a creative culture and propelling organizational innovation, innovative work behaviour (IWB) is essential to the success of a business. IWB is the deliberate introduction of new concepts or goods by staff members within an organization

(De Jong & Den Hartog, 2010). This behaviour is acknowledged as a major factor in increasing an organization's capacity for innovation, which enables it to obtain a competitive advantage and adjust to changing market conditions (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2010). Businesses that place a high priority on IWB gain from having employees who can come up with and carry out creative solutions, which eventually improves organizational performance. Innovation is now essential to an organization's survival and success in the quickly evolving commercial environment of today. Businesses that embrace innovation are better able to maintain competitive advantages and adjust to changing economic conditions (Damanpour, 1991; Jiménez & Sanz-Valle, 2011). Innovation helps businesses to take advantage of new market trends, investigate new product prospects, and react swiftly to obstacles. To promote organizational growth and competitiveness, innovative work behaviour (IWB) is essential. However, different viewpoints on the nature and extent of this construct have made it difficult to develop a cohesive understanding of it. Farr and Ford (1990) provided a more comprehensive definition of IWB, describing it as individual behaviours aimed at initiating and intentionally introducing new and useful ideas, processes, products, or procedures within a work context.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine the proposed relationships. Data were collected from 384 employees working in Sri Lankan biscuit manufacturing companies using a structured questionnaire. Simple random sampling techniques were employed to ensure representative participation.

All constructs were measured using previously validated scales and assessed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. A pilot study involving 30 respondents was conducted to ensure reliability and clarity of the instrument. Partial Least Squares Structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was used for data analysis, given its suitability for complex models and exploratory research.

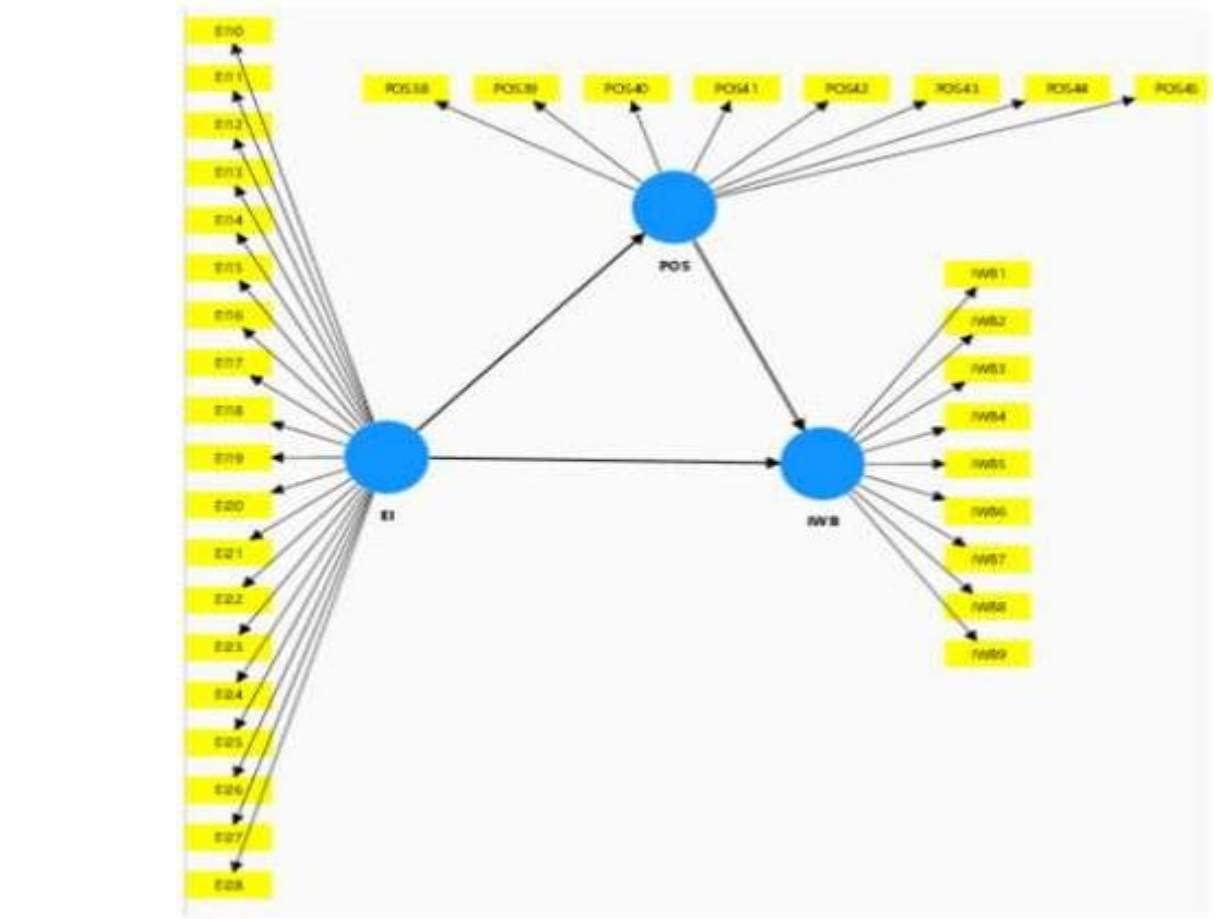

Figure 4.1: Mediator Analysis

Table 3.1.: Summary of Research Design

Research philosophy	Over roll Approach	Design	Method	Role of researcher	Kind of data collected	Intended Analysis
Positivism	Explanatory	Survey	Questionnair	Removed	Quantitative	Deductive

Population, Sampling and Data Collection

The research population is all types of institutions in the biscuit companies in Sri Lanka, and a set of 384 individuals (N = 387) will be extracted from the above-defined population as the sample of the present study. The data collection method of the present study is a simple random sampling technique.

FINDINGS

The measurement model demonstrated satisfactory reliability and validity, with Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted values exceeding recommended thresholds. Structured model analysis revealed a strong positive effect of emotional intelligence on innovative work behaviour and a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and perceived organizational supportiveness.

The mediation analysis indicated that perceived organizational supportiveness partially mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and innovative work behaviour. In contrast the moderating effect of technological orientation on the PS-IWB relationship was not satisfactory significant.

Reliability and Convergent Validity

Table 4.1. - Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Conbrach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (ρc)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
POS	**0.922**	**0.937**	**0.651**
EI	**0.984**	**0.986**	**0.782**
IWB	**0.936**	**0.944**	**0.656**
TO	**0.941**	**0.950**	**0.682**

This study examines Smart PLS to analyse the given Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (hoc), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) statistics to assess a study's reliability. Four constructs are the main focus of the study: POS, EI, IWB, and TO. All constructions' Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha ratings are higher than the suggested cut off of 0.70. This suggests that the measuring scales used in the study are very reliable and consistent, providing confidence in the accuracy of the data collected. By comparing the square roots of the AVE with the square of the correlation between the components, the minimum value of discriminant validity was determined. The AVE values for each structure are greater than the recommended cutoff point of 0.50, indicating strong convergent validity. This shows that the constructions effectively capture the intended ideas. AVE, which indicates how much of a construct's variance can be explained by its items, is used to quantify convergent validity. Values of AVE above 0.50 are generally considered acceptable, suggesting that the construction is well-defined and distinct from other constructs in the model.

In the study given, the AVE values for all four constructors are above 0.50, ranging from 0.651 to 0.782. This indicates that the constructions are well-defined and distinct from each other.

Discriminant Validity

Table 4.2: Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT)

Constructs	EI	POS	TO	IWB
EI	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**
POS	**0.330**	**-**	**-**	**-**
TO	**0.322**	**0.848**	**-**	**-**
IWB	**0.549**	**0.374**	**0.354**	**-**

The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) criterion (Hair, 2021) was used to provide further evidence of discriminant validity as shown table. 4.2. All HTMT ratios are below the more conservative threshold of 0.85 (Henseler, 2015), supporting the claim for further evidence of discriminant validity. In Study provided data, the HTMT values for all construct pairs are below 0.85, suggesting satisfactory discriminant validity. For example, the HTMT between 'EI' and 'POS' is 0.330, indicating that the correlation between items within 'EI' is stronger than the correlation between items in 'EI' and 'POS.' EI & POS: HTMT = 0.330 (below 0.85, satisfactory discriminant validity)

According to the table above, all the values were above zero, indicating the predictive relevance of the model. These findings provide evidence that Study constructs are indeed distinct and not merely measuring the same underlying factor. This is a positive indication for the reliability and validity of Study measurement model.

Structure Model Assessment

Table 4.3.: Structure Model Assessment

Path	Original Sample (O)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T statistic (O/STDEV)	P value
EI – IWB	**0.541**	**0.050**	**10.919**	**0.000**
EI – POS	**0.324**	**0.058**	**5.590**	**0.000**
POS – IWB	**0.131**	**0.526**	**0.249**	**0.043**

The path coefficient between EI and IWB shows a strong and statistically significant positive relationship (p-value = 0.000, t-statistic = 10.919). Similarly, the path coefficient between EI and POS demonstrates a significant positive relationship (p-value = 0.000, t-statistic = 5.590). While the direct path coefficient between POS and IWB is statistically insignificant (p-value = 0.043, t-statistic = 0.249), This finding suggests that POS does not directly influence IWB, but rather its impact on IWB is likely mediated by EI

Hypothesis testing

Table 4.4: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	β (beta)	P value
H1	**EI -> IWB**	**0.541**	**< 0.000**
H2	**EI -> POS**	**0.324**	**< 0.000**
H3	**POS -> IWB**	**0.131**	**0.043**
H4	**EI -> POS -> IWB (Mediation)**	**0.058**	**0.013**
H5	**POS × TO -> IWB (Moderation)**	**0.043**	**0.608**

Result: Significant (β = 0.541, p < 0.000). Emotional intelligence has a strong positive impact on innovative work behavior

Result: Significant (β = 0.324, p < 0.000) Emotional intelligence also has a significant positive impact on perceived organizational Supportiveness.

Result: Significant (β = 0.324, p < 0.000) Emotional intelligence also has a significant positive impact on perceived organizational supportiveness

Result: Marginally significant (β = 0.131, p = 0.043) Interpretation: Perceived organizational supportiveness has a small but significant positive impact on innovative work behaviour

Result: Significant (β = 0.058, p = 0.013). Interpretation: Perceived organizational supportiveness partially mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and innovative work behaviour

Result: Not significant (β = 0.043, p = 0.608). Interpretation: Technological orientation does not moderate the relationship between perceived organizational supportiveness and innovative work behaviour.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence on the combined influence of emotional intelligence and perceived organizational support on innovative work behaviour in Sri Lankan biscuit manufacturing companies. By integrating psychological and organizational perspectives within a resource-based framework, the study contributes to the innovation literature in developing economic manufacturing contexts.

From a managerial perspective, organizations should invest in emotional intelligence development initiatives and strengthen supportive organizational practices to foster employee innovation. While technological orientation remains important, its role should be considered in conjunction with human and organizational factors.

Recommendations

- Companies should regularly assess employee perceptions of support through surveys or feedback mechanisms, allowing for timely intervention when gaps are identified.
- It has been identified that technological adoption played a vital role of motivating innovative work behavior of employees .Rather in pact on creating innovative culture in the organization.
- By integrating IWB into the performance evaluation metrics and ensuring that innovative contributions are recognized and rewarded, organizations can inspire a culture of creativity, which will likely lead to product and process improvements in the biscuit manufacturing sector
- Moreover, organizations should actively look to create an atmosphere conducive to trust within the workplace

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