

The Mediating Role of Employee Engagement in the Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Change Management

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Abstract: The research paper aims to examine the mediating role of employee engagement in the relationship between emotional intelligence and change management. It focused on organizational leaders at a water utility company on the Copperbelt province of the Republic of Zambia. The study was driven by five research questions on what the relationship between employee engagement and emotional intelligence was; what the relationship between employee engagement and change management was; what the relationship between emotional intelligence and change management was; what the mediating role of employee engagement in the relationship between emotional intelligence and change management was; and, what the implication of the study was in the water sector in the Republic of Zambia. Four hypotheses were developed and tested using well established scales. The research employed both quantitative and qualitative methodology in its approach. A sample of 31 respondents was taken and data collected through a questionnaire with variables of interest being employee engagement as a mediator variable, emotional intelligence as an independent variable and change management as a dependent variable. The outcomes of the study indicated that employee engagement partially mediated the relationship between emotional intelligence and change management. The results also indicated that besides emotional intelligence and employee engagement being significantly related, they were also significantly related to change management. Implications of the results and opportunities for further research were then advanced.

Index Terms: Emotional intelligence, employee engagement, change management.

I. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has shaken the already ailing Zambian economy with innumerable damaging effects on the welfare of its people and the water sector has not been spared [1], [2]. It has resulted in water utilities and many organizations being forced to undergo significant transformation, re-thinking key elements of their business processes and the use of technology as they grapple to maintain operations, whilst adhering to a changing landscape of procedures and guidelines [3], [4].

The present-day world is at the same time facing a growing number of complex and interrelated issues such as slower economic growths, geo-political tensions, climate change, the accelerating pace of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and persistent economic inequality [5]. Such issues have compounded typical problems of capacity limitations, lack of investment, ill-defined institutional frameworks, neglect of rural areas and inappropriate technologies faced by water utilities in developing countries [6].

However, even as firms strive to survive and meet their economic goals in a world full of uncertainties, they are sites of continuously evolving human action that makes it extremely hard if not impossible to make successful organizational change in the long run without the willing or proactive engagement of the organization's employees [7], [8], [9]. Motyka [10] stated that one of the most alarming global economic problems is the low level of employee engagement at work. Consequently, the human resource of organizations has become key in the sustainable realization of organizational outcomes such that the effects of the emotional intelligence of, especially their leaders could not be overlooked for firms striving for competitive advantage [11], [12], [13].

Statement of the Problem

Past studies have posited a direct relationship between emotional intelligence constructs and change management dimensions; however, an inquiry into the mediating role of employee engagement in the relationship has been ignored despite some scholars having stated it as a key variable and outcome of emotional intelligence, while others have advanced it as an important antecedent of change management outcomes [14], [15], [16], [17], [18], [19]. Consequently, there exists a knowledge gap in literature in the water sector concerning informing organizational managers of the process through which emotional intelligence relates with change management as they draft strategies for desired change initiatives.

The results of the study would address the knowledge gap that exists in the water sector and inform utility leaders about the process through which emotional intelligence affects change management dimensions as they develop strategies for targeted change outcomes.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of the research paper is to examine the mediating role of employee engagement in the relationship between organizational leaders' emotional intelligence and successful change management at a water utility company on the Copperbelt province of the Republic of Zambia.

Scope of the Study

The study was undertaken at a water utility company on the Copperbelt province of the Republic of Zambia. It covered a duration of three months commencing December 2021 to March 2022.

Sampling and Instrumentation

The focus of the study was on employees in leadership positions at the water utility company. The population of interest included managers, middle managers and shop floor supervisors that would include departmental managers, officers, engineers, superintendents and supervisors. Participants were selected using convenience sampling technique and data collected using both closed and open-ended self-report questionnaire surveys.

Limitations of the Study

The study relied on self-report measurement scales in its data collection which could be prone to subjective bias arising from participant internal biases. The allocated duration of the study leading to its cross-sectional research design might not have been sufficient to adequately draw conclusions and hence could require further studies with elongated timeframes to conduct similar studies.

Objectives of the Study

The following five objectives were set out to fulfill the aim of the study:

1. Objective 1: Establish the relationship between emotional intelligence and employee engagement.
2. Objective 2: Establish the relationship between employee engagement and change management.
3. Objective 3: Determine the relationship between change management and emotional intelligence.
4. Objective 4: Determine how employee engagement affects the relationship between emotional intelligence and change management.
5. Objective 5: Make conclusions based on observations and findings.

Significance of the Study

The findings of the study become helpful and beneficial to the following:

1. To the water sector employees. It would highlight the importance of their emotional intelligence skills as they get exposed to leadership positions both at work and in their private lives.
2. To the water sector management. It would help them appreciate the process that could effectively realize their change objectives as they draft strategies using their strategic human resource.
3. To future researchers. The study lays an important groundwork upon which future scholars could build on.

Research Questions

The study specifically sought answers to the following sub-problems:

1. What is the relationship between employee engagement and emotional intelligence?
2. What is the relationship between employee engagement and change management?
3. What is the relationship between emotional intelligence and change management?
4. What is the mediating role of employee engagement in the relationship between emotional intelligence and change management?
5. What is the implication of the study in the water sector in the Republic of Zambia?

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 in the following highlights the study's conceptual framework depicting relationships among the constructs under study from four proposed hypotheses and gathered theoretical models and literature. Emotional intelligence is an independent variable, whereas, change management is a dependent variable and employee engagement a mediating variable.

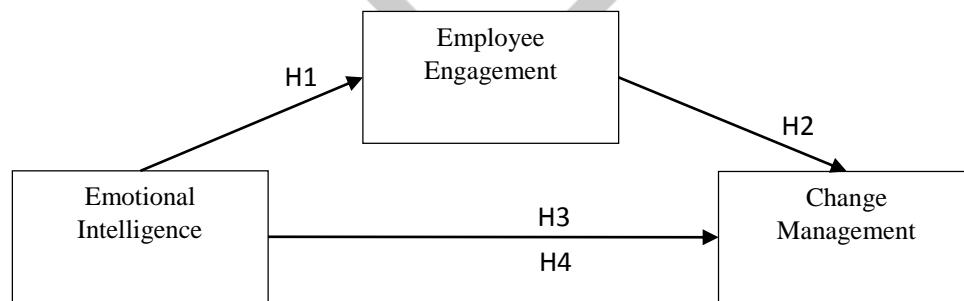


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Note. Source: Author's proposal from research literature.

Research Hypotheses

Four hypotheses were developed and set out to further guide the study as stated in the following:

- 1) Hypothesis 1 (H1): There is a statistically significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and employee engagement.
- 2) Hypothesis 2 (H2): There is a statistically significant positive relationship between employee engagement and change management.

- 3) Hypothesis 3 (H3): There is a statistically significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and change management.
- 4) Hypothesis 4 (H4): Employee engagement has a mediating role in the relationship between emotional intelligence and change management.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional Intelligence

In the early 1990s, emotional intelligence was conceptualized as a set of abilities largely analogous to general intelligence and emerged as a major psychological construct [20]. Nguyen, Nham and Takahashi [21] observed that over the last three decades, progress has been made indicating that emotional intelligence is a valid and independent construct of intelligence which encompasses emotions. Two major conceptual approaches to emotional intelligence in ability emotional intelligence and trait emotional intelligence currently co-exist despite a large number of proposed definitions and theoretical models having been made by scholars in the recent past [22].

The ability emotional intelligence perspective was first developed by Salovey and Mayer [20] who defined it as the ability to monitor others and one's own emotions and feelings, to among them discriminate and guide one's actions and thinking based on the information. The developed four-branch ability model divided emotional intelligence into four abilities of perceiving emotions, using the emotions to facilitate thought, understanding the emotions and managing the emotions [22], [23], [24].

As opposed to the cognitive ability as espoused in the ability emotional intelligence model, trait emotional intelligence is a personality trait which encompasses self-perceptions and emotion-related dispositions measured through self-report [25], [26]. Mixed models such as Bar-On's model of emotional social intelligence has been developed by other scholars that do not see the ability and trait models being in opposition to each other; and considers among others non-cognitive characteristics such as empathy, adaptability and social skills [22], [27].

In the quest to reconcile previous theoretical arguments, some scholars have developed integrative models which consider three levels of emotional intelligence that include dispositions related to emotions, abilities related to emotions and knowledge related to emotions [22].

Studies that have explored emotional intelligence in the workplace have found it to have a major influence on employees and organizational outcomes such as employees' positive attitudes and behaviors, teamwork and organizational performance [28], [29], [30], [31]. The outcomes have, mostly been further validated by studies that have explored the construct in the water sector of developing countries [32], [33].

Employee Engagement

Past studies have well established the conceptualization of employee engagement in that all of them were based on Kahn's concept of personal engagement despite their varying levels of detail in their definitions [10], [34], [35], [36]. Kahn [34] defined engagement in psychological terms when he defined it as the simultaneous expression and employment of a person's preferred self in task behaviors that promote connections to personal presence physically, cognitively, emotionally; to work and active full performances. Eldor and Vigoda-Gadot [35] viewed employee engagement as a representation of a state of mind that is work-related and characterized by feelings of vigor, enthusiasm, absorption, fulfillment and dedication.

Sun and Buchapattanasakda [36] referred employee engagement to employees' cognitive, emotional and physical input into their work and stated that it could be divided into three categories of antecedent variables, although most past studies mostly used one or two of the three factors, that include individual factors such as extraversion, self-consciousness and resilience; job factors such as job participation, job enrichment and work environment; and organizational factors such as superior support, job resources, fairness and leadership.

Barik and Kochhar [37] also posited common key driving factors of employee engagement that included the organization's reward system, job enrichment, effective leadership, scope of advancement and self-development, employment security and self-managed team and decision-making. Bailey, Madden, Alfes and Fletcher [38] added that factors that included leadership, psychological states, organizational and team factors, organizational interventions and job design served as antecedents to employee engagement.

Past scholars that have explored employee engagement have shown that it has a negative effect on turnover intention and a positive effect on employee task performance and organizational performance [39], [40], [41]. Some similar studies that have been done in the work place in developing countries have further validated the outcomes [42], [43], [44]. In support of other research work, studies in the water sector such as Firdaus, Hamidah and Sutanto [45] noted that employee engagement was instrumental in addressing labor turnover and posited that job satisfaction and the work environment, that included the physical and social environment, were significantly related to employee engagement.

Change Management

In view of the theoretical perspective, according to Price and Chahal [46], the concept of organizational change has a close alignment with the conflict theory and theory of social change. Moran and Brightman [47] defined change management as the process of continuously renewing an organization's direction, capabilities and structure so as to serve the ever-changing internal and external needs of customers. Al-Haddad and Kotnour [48] observed that, while psychology and sociology explains how and why people respond to change, management provides practices and principles that assist organizations to plan, organize and direct people and resources towards the accomplishment of the desired change. Past scholars have argued that change is necessary and inevitable because with each new day the business environment is no longer the same [49], [50], [51].

The literature on change management has been filled with prescriptive models, largely aimed at advising senior organizational managers on steps to take in the implementation of planned organizational change interventions; and some of the

most widely used models include Lewin's three-phase process, Beer's six-step change management model, Appreciative inquiry, Judson's five steps, Kanter, Stein and Jick's ten commandments, Kotter's eight-step model and Hiatt's ADKAR model [52].

Previous scholars have posited that change management has an influence on employees' performance in various dimensions [53], [54], [55]. Hornstein [56] stated that organizational change management had an impact on the success or failure of project implementation.

Some studies that have looked into change for sustainability in the water sector such as Straith, Adamowski and Reilly [57] posited the significance of key behavioral strategies such as both informal and formal relationships, passion in communication, work relations along necessary risk taking, humble and respectful networking; and the need to understand the mandate gaps and their contextual realities.

The study considered dimensions of change management as deduced by Bouckenooghe, Devos and Van den Broeck [58] from literature and stated as: climate of change variables such as trust in leadership, politicking and cohesion; process variables such as participation, support by supervisors, quality of change communication, ability of management to lead change and attitude of top management towards change; and, readiness for change variables such as cognitive readiness for change, intentional readiness for change and emotional readiness for change. These variables as predictors of effective change management are further supported by Makumbe [59] who posited that change leadership, communication, employee engagement and employee commitment were key variables in successful implementation of organizational change.

Emotional Intelligence and Employee Engagement

Past studies have, mostly, argued that emotional intelligence has positive effects on employee engagement [17], [60], [61]. Milhem, Muda and Ahmed [61] posited that the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement was strengthened by leaders' emotional intelligence. Deshwal [62] observed that biggest factors that contribute to successful organizations are emotional intelligence and employee engagement; and argued that, highly emotional intelligent employees showed high engagement at the workplace because such people are able to know and manage their emotions properly hence work more competently and in turn bring about employee engagement. Brunetto, Teo, Shacklock and Farr-Wharton [63] added by arguing that emotional intelligence leads to well-being and job satisfaction with positive path relationships leading to organizational commitment and employee engagement.

Employee Engagement and Change Management

Islam, Furuoka and Idris [64] posited that engaged employees are one of the key success factors for effective organizational change management. Some previous scholars have argued that employee engagement is one of the predictors of change management and contributes to individuals' readiness to change [59], [65]. Gill [66] observed that it is important for organizations to invest in the early stages of any of their change management processes so as to prepare their individual employees and embed behavioral change more effectively and quickly. Swarnalatha and Prasanna [18] argued that organizations could have employees that were better able to adapt to their changing business environment if they promoted a positive organizational culture and got their employees to become more engaged. Other studies into the construct of employee engagement have, also posited that it is key for organizations to have engaged employees because they are a competitive advantage in the attainment of change initiatives [67], [68].

However, Parent and Lovelace [69] argued that despite organizational engagement having a positive effect on the ability of individuals to adapt to changes, job engagement had the opposite effect as a result of a tendency to resist job changes by employees registering high levels of job engagement and enjoying what they do. Consequently, employees with high levels of job engagement, as opposed to organizational engagement, would be less adaptable to change because the root of their engagement could be altered by the adopted changes [69].

Emotional Intelligence and Change Management

Ugoani [70] posited that emotional intelligence had a strong positive relationship with successful change management; and that through emotional intelligence competencies, employees were able to remove barriers to change, acknowledge the need for change and enlist others towards organizational change initiatives. Previous scholars have argued that emotional intelligence and leadership behavior had significant effects on employees' readiness for change [71], [72]. Sharma and Singh [73] also posited that the training of organizational managers on emotional intelligence could help them better deal with change more appropriately and effectively. Dhingra and Punia [74] added that emotional intelligence dimensions related with change management skills with, particularly, self-awareness and self-management being significant contributors and predictors in change management skills.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Methodology

Quantitative and qualitative approaches to research are two of the most commonly used research methodologies [75], [76]. Qualitative research provides a conceptual base for discovery and anchored on explaining a theory behind captured data by focusing on the understanding and explanation of the dynamics of social relations [76], [77]. It is often difficult to quantify its subject of research as it is concerned with aspects of reality that could not be quantified and relies on verbal and visual cues [76], [78].

Quantitative studies focus on objectivity and are appropriate where there is a possibility of collecting quantifiable measures of variables and inferences from population samples [76]. They provide more information to test the hypotheses and are capable of reaching more participants than other study designs [79]. However, they may fail to provide an in-depth description of the experience of the affected population and characteristics that cannot be meaningfully reduced to numbers [75].

Quantitative research approach has been used in studies that have explored the relationship between emotional intelligence and change management [70], [74]. It has been useful in answering some questions regarding change management and employee

engagement [68]. Similarly, many studies that have inquired into the constructs of emotional intelligence and employee engagement have widely used quantitative research in their approaches [16], [17].

The study used mixed – methods or triangulation in its approach by using both quantitative methodology in order to test the four hypotheses and qualitative methodology in order to capture participants' experiences. The use of the methodology derives from documented research works that have explored the individual constructs under study.

Research Method

Population and Sampling Technique

The research focused on employees of a water utility company on the Copperbelt province of the Republic of Zambia. Participants were drawn from employees in leadership positions from managers, middle managers to shop floor supervisors that would include departmental managers, officers, engineers, superintendents and supervisors. All participants were selected using convenience sampling technique for data capture and participation was on voluntary basis.

Instrument and Measurement

Data to be collected was premised on the constructs of emotional intelligence as an independent variable, employee engagement as a mediator variable and change management as the dependent variable. A questionnaire with both closed-ended and open-ended questions was used for primary data collection.

Emotional intelligence was measured using the Wong Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) [80], [81], [82]. The WLEIS is a valid and widely used 16-item scale used to measure emotional intelligence and captures dimensions that include regulation of emotion (ROE), self-emotion appraisal (SEA), use of emotion (UOE) and others' emotion appraisal (OEA) [83]. The WLEIS questionnaire questions were based on a 7-point Likert scale with ratings ranging from: 1 – strongly disagree to 7 – strongly agree.

Employee engagement was measured using the 9-item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) because of its good construct validity and ability to capture factors that include vigor (VI), dedication (DE) and absorption (AB) [84], [85], [86]. The UWES questionnaire questions were based on a 7-point Likert scale with ratings ranging from: 0 – never to 6 – always.

The construct of change management was measured as adopted from scales from 18 internal context items and 9-item readiness for change from Bouckenooghe, Devos and Van den Broeck [58]. The questionnaire questions were based on a 5-point Likert scale with ratings ranging from: 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree.

The open-ended questions on questionnaires included a question on how emotional intelligence skills impact the participants' successful management of change initiatives. Another open-ended question was on how employee engagement affects the participants use of their emotional intelligence skills in realizing desired change outcomes.

Reliability and Validity

The questionnaire's Cronbach 's Alpha of the variables contained in it were tested using IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28.0 software; and ascertained to be above the satisfactory level of 0.5 as a measure of the questionnaire' s consistency in achieving the same results when applied in another area. Table 1 in the following highlights the questionnaire's Cronbach's Alpha at 0.89 which demonstrates greater internal consistency of its variables in the scales.

Table 1 Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.89	.90	60

Note. Source: SPSS version 28.0, Research findings.

The questionnaire questions were test run on three (3) pilot employees to teeth out any challenges that respondents could face and only the two open-ended questions were observed with the need for clarity and were adjusted accordingly.

Data Collection

The questionnaires distributed to participants for data collection were administered to them either through mail or in person for those that preferred hard copies. A code of ethics was distributed together with the questionnaires to the participants. The participants were taken through on what the research was all about and any clarification they needed concerning the questions in the questionnaire or the code of ethics. In order to assure the participants of the confidentiality of their data, the questionnaires would bear no name, address or office location of the respondents to ensure that their identity was as anonymous as possible as guided in the code of ethics. 31 respondents delivered questionnaires without missing values. Questionnaires with incomplete values were discarded.

Data Analysis

The data captured during the research using questionnaires without missing values was input into Microsoft Excel 2016 spreadsheet. The input data in excel was then imported into IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28.0 software for coding and analysis. Descriptive analysis was carried out to describe the results obtaining from the sample. Inferential analysis was then used to analyze the relationships of the variables and test the research's hypotheses. The study used Pearson 's correlation to ascertain the relationships between variables and used Linear regression to establish the statistical significance between variables as well as, predict the outcome of one variable given the other. The hypotheses were tested with the relationship of their variables said to be statistically significant when their p-values of predictability were less than 0.05. A bootstrapping method was then performed using Hayes Process Macro version 4.0 in SPSS software to test for mediation.

Ethical Consideration

The study guaranteed the confidentiality and anonymity of all participants and stakeholders through a strict shared code of ethics. All information shared was guaranteed for academic purposes only and participation was voluntary. Stakeholders and participants reserved the right to request for a copy of the report.

IV. RESULTS

Table 2 in the following describes the participants' responses in view of emotional intelligence, employee engagement and change management.

Table 2 Description of Variables

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Emotional Intelligence	31	3.81	6.06	5.00	.66
Employee Engagement	31	2.00	3.41	2.83	.40
Change Management	31	2.52	3.52	3.04	.29
Valid N (list wise)	31				

Note. Source: SPSS version 28.0, Research findings.

From Table 2, it could be noted that emotional intelligence among respondents was medium (Mean=5.00, SD=0.66). Employee engagement among the respondents was low (Mean=2.83, SD=0.40). Respondents' view on change management was medium (Mean=3.04, SD=0.29).

Table 3 Correlations of Variables

		Emotional Intelligence	Employee Engagement	Change Management
Emotional Intelligence	Pearson Correlation	1	.48**	.66**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.01	<.00
Employee Engagement	Pearson Correlation	.48**	1	.80**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.01		<.00
Change Management	Pearson Correlation	.66**	.80**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.00	<.00	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Note. Source: SPSS version 28.0, Research findings.

Table 3 highlights results when Pearson's correlation was run on all the four variables in SPSS version 28.0. It could be noted that emotional intelligence had a positive and significant correlation with employee engagement (0.48) and a positive correlation with change management (0.66). Employee engagement had a positive and significant correlation with change management (0.80).

When respondents were further asked on how emotional intelligence skills impacted their successful management of change initiatives, their common theme responses included being focused, flexible, unreactive and positive minded.

Table 4 Mediation Analysis

Variable/Effect	b	SE	t	p	95% Confidence Interval	
EI → CM	0.16	0.05	3.35	0.00	0.06	0.26
EI → EE	0.29	0.10	2.95	0.00	0.09	0.49
EI → EE → CM	0.46	0.08	5.71	0.00	0.29	0.62
<i>Effects</i>						
Direct	0.16	0.05	3.35	0.00	0.06	0.26
Indirect*	0.13	0.05			0.02	0.20
Total	0.29	0.06	4.81	0.00	0.17	0.42

Based on 5000 bootstrap samples

Note. Source: SPSS Process Macro version 4.0, Research findings.

The results of the mediation analysis derived from a bootstrapping method performed using SPSS Process Macro were as highlighted in Table 4. Firstly, the results of the regression analysis showed that emotional intelligence was a significant predictor of employee engagement ($b=.29$, $t=2.95$, $p<0.01$). And then, while controlling for employee engagement, second regression

analysis results showed that emotional intelligence was a significant predictor of change management ($b=.16$, $t=3.35$, $p<0.01$). Based on 5000 bootstrap samples, the results of the indirect effect showed a significant indirect positive relationship between emotional intelligence and change management mediated by employee engagement ($a*b=.16$, Bootstrap CI₉₅= 0.02 and 0.20). Employee engagement, as a mediator, accounted for approximately 45% of the total effect on change management, indicating partial mediation. The direct effect of emotional intelligence on change management was statistically significant ($b=.16$, $t=3.35$, $p<0.01$).

When respondents were further asked on how employee engagement affected their use of emotional intelligence skills in realizing desired change outcomes, their common identified themes from responses included giving feedback, realizing an understanding and opportunity for alternatives.

Discussion and Implications

Results of the study support Hypothesis 1 which posits that emotional intelligence is significantly related to employee engagement. Self-emotional appraisal and others' emotional appraisal significantly affected employees' vigor, while regulation of emotion significantly affected dedication. The result is consistent with the results of other researchers that emphasize emotional intelligence as a predictor of employee engagement [16], [17]. Management in the water sector could use the information obtaining to develop more focused strategies that increase employee engagement.

The results, furthermore support Hypothesis 2 which posits that employee engagement is significantly related to change management. Employees' vigor particularly indicated to have a significant influence on their readiness for change. The finding is consistent with results of other scholars that posit employee engagement as an important antecedent of successful change management [59], [64]. It provides water sector leaders with knowledge that could help them formulate more effective ways of actualizing set change goals.

Findings of the study also support Hypothesis 3 which posits that emotional intelligence is significantly related to change management. Self-emotional appraisal and others' emotional appraisal also indicated to have significant influence on intentional readiness for change. The result is consistent with the findings of other studies that emphasize the relationship of emotional intelligence with successful change management [70], [73], [74]. The implication for organizational managers with the goal of continuously delivering successful change initiatives, is to implement strategies that increase the emotional intelligence of their employees.

Furthermore, the results support Hypothesis 4 which posits that employee engagement has a mediating role in the relationship between emotional intelligence and change management and indicates that mediation to be partial. The result suggests that emotional intelligence and employee engagement are key variables in the process of successful change management.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is imperative that leaders in the water sector embrace emotional intelligence competencies and support employee engagement as they are two key drivers in the process of realizing sustainable change outcomes. Emotionally intelligent leaders not only influence employees' readiness for change but also enhance employee engagement which is vital in the attainment of sustainable change. Despite its limitations, the study lays an important foundation and adds to the body of knowledge in the sector.

The following recommendations could be made from the conclusions of the study:

1. To the water sector employees:
 - a. Acquire emotional intelligence skills. Increased emotional intelligence levels help employees to better focus and manage stress both at work and in their private lives.
 - b. Embrace employee engagement as through it an understanding of change initiatives results and leaders are able to receive the necessary feedback and possible alternatives that could effectively realize change goals.
2. To the water sector management:
 - a. Recruit emotionally intelligent personnel into leadership positions. Emotionally intelligent leaders are more likely to drive employee engagement and result in the sustainable realization of desired change outcomes.
 - b. Include emotional intelligence skills as a requirement in the recruitment of frontline staff. Emotionally intelligent staff are better handlers of their emotions and those of others and mostly effective communicators.
 - c. Budget for and conduct training in emotional intelligence skills for each employee. Increasing the emotional awareness of staff increases the likelihood of enhanced employees' readiness for change.
 - d. Provide staff with an environment that supports employee engagement by availing them with resources they need to effectively carry out their work. Increased employee engagement enhances the attainment of sustainable change initiatives.
3. To future researchers:
 - a. Further research could be conducted in similar industries and across cultures in longitudinal study designs. An examination into how educational level moderates the relationship between emotional intelligence and change management could also be considered.

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