

Emotional Intelligence and Employee Engagement at Workplace in Nepalese Commercial Banks

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Article History: Received on: May 1, 2025, Accepted on: June 15, 2025

Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and employee engagement in Nepalese commercial banks. The primary objective was to examine how various dimensions of EI, including self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, impact employee engagement. A quantitative research design was adopted, employing a non-probability convenience sampling technique. Data were collected from 284 employees working in commercial banks in the Kathmandu Valley using a self-administered questionnaire. Descriptive and inferential statistics, including correlation and regression analysis, were conducted using SPSS version 27. The results indicate that emotional intelligence significantly predicts employee engagement ($\beta = 1.107$, $p < .001$), explaining 59% of the variance. Notably, self-awareness, motivation, and social skills were the strongest contributors to employee engagement. The findings suggest that improving emotional intelligence could enhance employee engagement, leading to better performance in organizational settings. Practical implications include the recommendation for banks to implement EI-focused training programs to boost workforce engagement. Future research should explore additional factors that may influence engagement in different contexts using longitudinal data.

Keywords: Self-awareness, Motivation, Empathy, Social skills, Self-regulation, Employee Engagement

Introduction

Employee engagement is widely seen as a critical component impacting organizational performance, reflecting workers' physical, cognitive, and emotional involvement in their professional responsibilities (Kahn, 2020). Physical involvement relates to the amount of effort individuals put into their jobs, whereas cognitive engagement entails aligning their beliefs and goals with those of the organization and its leaders. As Bhandari (2024) points out, emotional intelligence is critical in creating a positive organizational atmosphere, increasing engagement by boosting interpersonal connections and work satisfaction. Specified the mounting interest in EI and its association to engagement, the motive of this study is to look more into how various dimensions of EI influence employee engagement, specifically in Nepalese commercial banks in the Kathmandu Valley.

Mayer and Salovey (1997) describe emotional intelligence as the capacity to detect, comprehend, and regulate one's own and others' emotions. It includes abilities like emotional awareness, emotional control, and the capacity to utilize emotions to help solve problems and make decisions. In the workplace, especially in customer-facing professions, the capacity to manage social difficulties via EI has been related to higher performance and employee engagement.

Frontline banking staff face high stress due to multitasking under pressure while maintaining client relationships. Deep job involvement and emotional intelligence (EI) are seen as key performance and engagement (Turner et al., 2002; Lam & Kirby, 2002). However, research on the link between EI and employee engagement in Nepali commercial banks remains limited. This study aims to close this gap by examining the relationship between multiple characteristics of EI—self-awareness, motivation, empathy, social skills, and self-management—and employee engagement in Nepal's banking business.

This study explores how emotional intelligence (EI) related to employee engagement in Nepali commercial banks. It evaluates the current status of both, examines the relationship between specific EI components and engagement, and measures the impact of each EI factor. The goal is to offer practical insights for boosting engagement through EI.

Literature Review

Daniel Goleman's (1998) work on EI emphasizes five important constructs: self-awareness, self-management, motivation, empathy, and social skills. These abilities help individuals recognize and manage emotions, improve decision-making, adapt to change, and build strong relationships—essential for collaboration and leadership in the workplace. In the banking business, characterized by elevated stress levels and client engagement, emotional intelligence is essential for regulating emotions and sustaining productivity. Studies indicate that people with high emotional intelligence are more adept at managing the stresses associated with stringent deadlines and performance demands. Implementing emotional intelligence training may markedly improve organizational results by enhancing staff engagement and overall performance.

Employee engagement, encompassing physical, cognitive, and emotional dedication, significantly contributes to increased productivity, stronger commitment, and higher retention rates (Kahn, 1990; Saks, 2006). It also helps alleviate burnout and promotes well-being. Investigating its relationship with emotional intelligence (EI) is important for enhancing both individual and organizational outcomes.

Extant literature has demonstrated the crucial impact of emotional intelligence (EI) in various employment outcomes. Al Khoury et al. (2023) discovered EI to considerably boost consumer satisfaction in Lebanon's retail banking, whereas Lourens et al. (2022) highlighted EI's usefulness in enhancing staff engagement and emotional maturity. Johari et al. (2022) found EI as a significant intermediary between work factors and engagement among nurses. Akhter et al. (2021) revealed that EI, employee empowerment, and cultural intelligence significantly increase work satisfaction among bank employees in Bangladesh. Similarly, research by Febrina et al. (2021) and D'Amico et al. (2020) stressed EI's favorable influence on job performance and engagement, while Nadeem et al. (2019) and Milhem et al. (2019) highlighted its mediating function in leadership and commitment. In Nepal, Shrestha (2021) and Thapa et al. (2023) proved the significance of EI in educational processes and employee well-being in the digital era.

The studies in this domain had adopted varied methodologies, such as descriptive analysis by Al Khoury et al. (2023) and regression analysis by Akhter et al. (2021) and Febrina et al. (2021) to study EI's effect on work satisfaction and performance. Johari et al. (2022) and D'Amico et al. (2020) employed PLS-SEM to study EI's moderating impacts on engagement, while Nadeem et al. (2019) performed mediation analysis to understand EI's function in emotional commitment and work values.

Research model and hypothesis

Emotional Intelligence and Employee Engagement

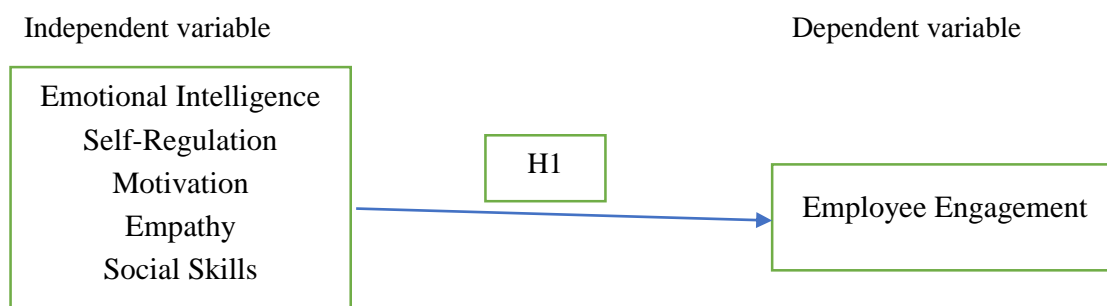
The literature review illustrates a noteworthy positive correlation between EI and the engagement of employees. Sarangi and Vats (2015) have identified that EI, specifically in terms of mood restoration, notably bolsters employee engagement by augmenting vigor, dedication, and assimilation. Similarly, Johari, Razali, Zainun, and Adnan (2022) have emphasized that EI functions as an intervening variable in the connection between job characteristics and engagement at work, indicating that higher levels of EI result in increased engagement across various job contexts. Moreover, numerous studies have probed into the impact of EI as either a mediator or a intervening in the correlation between various variables and employee engagement. Milhem, Muda, and Ahmed (2019) have uncovered that the influence of transformational leadership on employee engagement is wholly mediated by EI, proposing that leaders exhibiting high EI levels can heighten employee engagement. Additionally, D'Amico, Geraci, and Tarantino (2020) along with Sudibjo and Sutarji (2020) have found that perceived EI functions as a safeguard against adverse work experiences like fatigue and positively impacts teacher engagement, respectively. This indicates that EI not only enhances engagement but also functions as a protective barrier against potential impediments to engagement. On the whole, the literature corroborates the notion that EI shares a significant and positive association with employee engagement, whether through direct means or by mediation and moderation mechanisms. The following hypothesis is presumed based on the review of literature

H1: EI shares a significant and positive association with employee engagement

The proposed research model presented below depicts the hypothesis and assumes that the dimensions of emotional intelligence have positive impact on employee engagement.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



Source: Goleman (1998) and Kahn (1990)

The empirical review supports the conceptual framework by establishing emotional intelligence (EI) as a crucial independent variable influencing employee engagement. Studies consistently show that EI positively affects employee engagement across various contexts. Sarangi and Vats (2015) highlight that EI enhances engagement by boosting employees' vigor and dedication, while Johari, Razali, Zainun, and Adnan (2022) demonstrate that EI moderates the relationship between job characteristics and engagement. Akhter, Karim, and Islam (2021) and Febrina, Astuti, and Triatmanto (2021) further link EI to job satisfaction, which correlates with engagement. D'Amico, Geraci, and Tarantino (2020) find

that EI protects against burnout, sustaining engagement. Milhem, Muda, and Ahmed (2019) and Nadeem, Ali, Iftikhar, and Shamshad (2019) show that EI mediates and moderates various work-related factors affecting engagement. However, Deswal (2015) notes a negative association in some cases, suggesting that additional factors might impact this relationship. Overall, the evidence supports EI's significant role in enhancing employee engagement. The table 1, and table 2 provide source of variables used in the study and expected sign between the dimensions of emotional intelligence and employee engagement.

Table 1*Source of Variable*

Variable Category	Variable	Sources
Independent Variable	Dimensions of Emotional Intelligence	Goleman (1998), Al Khoury, Thrassou, Papasolomou, & Vrontis (2023), Johari, Razali, Zainun, & Adnan (2022), Akhter, Karim, & Islam (2021), Febrina, Astuti, & Triatmanto (2021), D'Amico, Geraci, & Tarantino (2020), Milhem, Muda, & Ahmed (2019), Nadeem, Ali, Iftikhar, & Shamshad (2019)
Dependent Variable	Employee Engagement	Kahn (1990), Johari, Razali, Zainun, & Adnan (2022), Akhter, Karim, & Islam (2021), Febrina, Astuti, & Triatmanto (2021), Sudibjo & Sutarji (2020), D'Amico, Geraci, & Tarantino (2020), Milhem, Muda, & Ahmed (2019).

Table 2*Expected Sign between the Variables*

Independent variables	Dependent variables	Expected Sign	Source
Self-Awareness	Employee Engagement	Positive	Al Khoury, Thrassou, Papasolomou, & Vrontis (2023)
Self-Regulation	Employee Engagement	Positive	Johari, Razali, Zainun, & Adnan (2022)
Motivation	Employee Engagement	Positive	Akhter, Karim, & Islam (2021)
Empathy	Employee Engagement	Positive	Febrina, Astuti, & Triatmanto (2021)
Social Skills	Employee Engagement	Positive	D'Amico, Geraci, & Tarantino (2020)
EI	Employee Engagement	Positive	Milhem, Muda, & Ahmed (2019), Deswal (2015), Ravichandran, Arasu, & Kumar (2011), Quang, Khuong, & Le (2015), Sudibjo & Sutarji (2020)

Methods

This study adopts a quantitative research strategy including both descriptive and causal-comparative methodologies. The descriptive design is designed to statistically assess and display the characteristics of the population being examined. The causal-comparative design is employed to study the link between the independent variables, especially aspects of emotional intelligence (EI), and the dependent variable, employee engagement. By investigating these links, the study intends to uncover how different parts of EI impact employee engagement within the context of Nepalese commercial banks.

The population for this study comprises of personnel working in commercial banks within the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal. A non-probability convenience sampling approach was employed to choose an initial sample of 355 employees for the survey. After distributing the questionnaires, a total of 284 completed responses were collected, which were then utilized as the final sample size for analysis. This strategy was adopted to guarantee that data collecting was practical and efficient, given the limits on time and resources.

Data were obtained using self-administered questionnaires, both in person and electronically. Additionally, secondary data were acquired from relevant papers, reports, and online journals to augment the original data. The data collecting technique, done over a three-week period in the Kathmandu Valley, resulted in 284 completed questionnaires that were then evaluated.

The gathered data were analyzed using SPSS version 27. Descriptive statistics, such as means and standard deviations, were produced to summarize the demographic and important factors. Inferential studies, including correlation and regression, were done to evaluate the links between emotional intelligence and employee engagement. Correlation analysis indicated the intensity and direction of correlations, while regression analysis was utilized to assess the predictive effect of the dimensions of emotional intelligence on employee engagement. This integrated approach ensured a full grasp of the data and the linkages among variables.

Measures

Self-regulation involves students' self-generated activities targeted at attaining learning goals, including keeping calm throughout hardship and managing thinking (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2003; Wolmarans & Martins, 2001; Goleman, 1998). It is measured using a 5-item, 5-point Likert scale, where 1 represents strong disagreement and 5 indicates strong agreement. Self-awareness is the recognition of one's emotions and their influence, constituting the cornerstone of emotional intelligence (Grayson, 2013; Goleman, 1998; Yeung, 2009), and is also tested with a 5-item, 5-point Likert scale. Motivation refers to the capacity to regulate emotional impulses to attain demanding goals and persist despite challenges (Goleman, 1995), assessed using a 4-item, 5-point Likert scale. Empathy comprises understanding others' feelings and reactions via self-awareness, including identifying social norms (Goleman, 1998), and is tested with a 5-item, 5-point Likert scale. Social skills entail managing relationships and influencing people via empathy and communication (Goleman, 1995; Pettry, 2006), tested using a 6-item, 5-point Likert scale. Lastly, employee engagement refers to the holistic participation of workers in their employment, connected to emotional intelligence and productivity (Ravichandran et al., 2011; Deswal, 2015), and is tested with a 10-item, 5-point Likert scale.

Regression Model Analysis

The model posits that the dimensions of emotional intelligence—self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills—positively influence employee engagement (Sarangi & Vats, 2015; Johari et al., 2022; Akhter et al., 2021; Febrina et al., 2021; D’Amico et al., 2020; Milhem et al., 2019; Nadeem et al., 2019; Deswal, 2015) and the following model has been used for regression analysis.

$$EE = \alpha + \beta EI + U_i$$

Where,

EE = Employee engagement

α = Constant term

β = Coefficient of variables

EI = Emotional intelligence

U_i = Error term

Result analysis

Table 3 outlines the demographic distribution of respondents, with 53.9% male (n = 153) and 46.1% female (n = 131). The sample was evenly split between unmarried (50.0%, n = 142) and married individuals (50.0%, n = 142). Respondents had various qualifications: 22.5% with secondary education, 24.6% holding a bachelor’s degree, 23.6% with a master’s degree, and 29.2% with qualifications above a master’s. Department representation shows 36.6% (n = 104) in credit, 34.5% (n = 98) in customer relations, 6.3% (n = 18) in operations, and 22.5% (n = 64) in IT. Most respondents were aged between 30–40 years (48.6%, n = 138).

Table 3

Demographic Variable Distribution of Respondents

	Variable	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	131	46.1
	Male	153	53.9
Marital Status	Unmarried	142	50.0
	Married	142	50.0
Qualification	Secondary	64	22.5
	Bachelor	70	24.6
	Masters	67	23.6
	Above Masters	83	29.2

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Department		
Credit	104	36.6
Customer relations	98	34.5
Operation	18	6.3
IT	64	22.5
Age Group		
20 to 30 years	46	16.2
30 to 40 years	138	48.6
40 to 50 years	100	35.2

Source: Survey 2024

The summary statistics are presented in Table 4. The mean for self-awareness ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 0.90$) and empathy ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.56$) suggests moderate to high agreement with these constructs, whereas self-regulation ($M = 2.48$, $SD = 0.70$) and motivation ($M = 2.61$, $SD = 1.00$) indicate lower agreement. Emotional intelligence showed an overall mean of 2.97 ($SD = 0.53$), reflecting moderate emotional intelligence levels. Skewness and kurtosis values indicate normal to moderately skewed distributions, with the highest skewness in motivation (0.82) and kurtosis in empathy (0.28), suggesting some concentration of responses near the mean.

Table 4
Descriptive Statistics of Responses

Variable	Min	Max	Mean	Std Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Self-awareness	1.00	5.00	3.15	0.90	0.09	-0.05
Self-regulation	1.00	4.60	2.48	0.70	0.59	0.15
Motivation	1.00	5.00	2.61	1.00	0.82	-0.14
Empathy	2.20	5.00	3.95	0.56	-0.45	0.28
Social skills	1.00	5.00	2.66	0.84	0.72	-0.04
Employee engagement	1.00	5.00	2.92	0.76	0.10	-0.43
Emotional intelligence	1.85	4.76	2.97	0.53	0.67	0.39

Reliability Analysis

As shown in Table 5, the scales demonstrated high reliability, with Cronbach's alpha for the overall emotional intelligence scale being 0.932. Subscales, such as self-awareness ($\alpha = 0.95$), self-regulation ($\alpha = 0.759$), and employee engagement ($\alpha = 0.89$), showed strong internal consistency, indicating that the items reliably measure the intended constructs.

Table 5*Reliability Analysis*

Items	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Cronbach's Alpha
SA1	12.67	13.347	0.844	0.941	0.95
SA2	12.58	12.860	0.908	0.930	
SA3	12.69	13.015	0.851	0.940	
SA4	12.45	13.238	0.863	0.938	
SA5	12.52	13.106	0.843	0.941	
SR1	10.06	8.367	0.524	0.717	0.759
SR2	10.04	8.422	0.560	0.706	
SR3	9.81	8.143	0.532	0.714	
SR4	10.02	8.586	0.500	0.725	
SR5	9.75	7.639	0.529	0.718	
E1	15.69	4.993	0.693	0.743	0.809
E2	15.65	5.317	0.616	0.768	
E3	15.80	5.066	0.583	0.777	
E4	16.01	5.237	0.547	0.788	
E5	15.91	5.250	0.554	0.786	
SS1	13.42	17.524	0.703	0.866	0.886
SS2	13.20	18.177	0.721	0.863	
SS3	13.27	18.186	0.706	0.865	
SS4	13.32	17.208	0.804	0.849	
SS5	13.46	18.009	0.759	0.857	
SS6	13.13	19.871	0.514	0.894	
EE1	26.62	49.566	0.514	0.886	0.89
EE2	26.39	48.634	0.534	0.886	
EE3	26.51	49.000	0.523	0.886	
EE4	26.75	50.066	0.544	0.884	
EE5	26.30	46.389	0.684	0.875	
EE6	26.19	47.186	0.687	0.875	
EE7	26.17	46.124	0.743	0.871	

Items	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Cronbach's Alpha
EE8	26.10	46.050	0.687	0.875	
EE9	26.09	45.720	0.698	0.874	
EE10	25.88	46.904	0.660	0.877	
Cronbach's Alpha					0.932

Correlation analysis

Emotional intelligence (EI) positively correlated with employee engagement ($r = 0.730$, $p < .001$) and social skills ($r = 0.730$, $p < .001$), reflecting the inter-connectedness of emotional competencies. Notably, motivation had a strong correlation with social skills ($r = 0.846$, $p < .001$), suggesting that motivated individuals are more likely to exhibit social competency. However, self-awareness did not significantly correlate with self-regulation ($r = 0.007$, $p = .911$), indicating potential distinctions in these emotional constructs.

Table 6

Correlational Analysis

Variable	SA	SR	M	E	SS	EE
SA	1					
SR	.007 (.911)	1				
M	-.101 (.088)	.694** (.000)	1			
E	.186** (.002)	.126* (.034)	.175** (.003)	1		
SS	-.128* (.032)	.800** (.000)	.846** (.000)	.199** (.001)	1	
EE	.237** (.000)	.648** (.000)	.628** (.000)	.197** (.001)	.730** (.000)	1

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

Regression analysis

The regression analysis in Table 7 demonstrates that emotional intelligence is a strong predictor of employee engagement ($\beta = 1.107$, $p < .001$). The model accounts for 59% of the variation in employee engagement ($R^2 = 0.59$, $F(1, 282) = 399.49$, $p < .001$), showing that higher levels of emotional intelligence are linked to greater employee engagement. This significant positive relationship

underscores the importance of emotional intelligence in enhancing engagement within organizational contexts, highlighting its potential as a key factor in improving workforce motivation and productivity.

Table 7

Regression Analysis Model Summary

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-value	P-value
(Constant)	-0.367	0.167	-2.194	.029
Emotional intelligence	1.107	0.055	19.987	.000
R	.77			
R Square	.59			
Adjusted R Square	.58			
Std. Error of the Estimate	0.49			
F-value (1,282)	399.49			
Sig.	.00			

Note. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Dependent variable: Employee Engagement

Hypothesis testing

Table 8 presents the results of hypothesis testing regarding the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and employee engagement. The p-value for Hypothesis 1 (H1) is reported as .000, indicating a statistically significant association between emotional intelligence and employee engagement. Since the p-value is less than the conventional alpha level of .05, the hypothesis is accepted, suggesting that higher levels of emotional intelligence are positively correlated with increased employee engagement. This finding reinforces the notion that emotional intelligence plays a vital role in fostering a more engaged workforce.

Table 8

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	P-value	Remarks
H1: EI shares a significant and positive association with employee engagement	.000	Accepted

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that employees in Nepalese commercial banks demonstrate high levels of emotional intelligence, motivation, self-awareness, empathy, and social skills, all of which are positively correlated with employee engagement. This alignment with existing literature suggests that these traits can significantly enhance output and performance (Amponsah et al., 2023; Levitats et al., 2022). Notably, the regression analysis revealed emotional intelligence as a strong predictor of

employee engagement, with a significant association ($\beta = 1.107$, $p < .001$), which further emphasizes its critical role in fostering engagement in organizational settings.

However, it is important to acknowledge the potential limitation posed by the reliance on self-reported data, which may introduce social desirability bias and affect the accuracy of the responses (Ghale, 2017). Despite this concern, the results suggest that targeted efforts to improve emotional intelligence, motivation, empathy, and social skills could lead to substantial increases in employee engagement and performance in these banks (Gupta, 2021; Bates, 2020; Thavaraj, 2012). This finding aligns with previous research, including studies by Pahuja (2012), Nair (2012), Beigi (2011), Ming-Ten Tsai (2011), Hummayoun (2008), and Carmeli (2003), which underscore the significance of emotional intelligence in enhancing employee engagement.

The study highlights a notable relationship between emotional intelligence and employee engagement, reinforcing the importance of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Uzma & Tajammal, 2013; Gunavathy & Ayswarya, 2011; Cherniss, 2010). To capitalize on these findings, it is recommended that commercial banks implement training programs that focus on emotional intelligence, which could include strategies such as providing frequent feedback, fostering open communication, and involving employees in decision-making processes (Adrain, 2000; Lopes et al., 2006). While self-regulation and empathy showed a less significant impact in this study, enhancing self-awareness, motivation, and social skills could markedly improve engagement and job performance.

In light of these findings, future research should investigate additional factors that may influence employee engagement within Nepalese commercial banks (Jain, 2014; Praveena, 2015). Overall, the study emphasizes that enhancing emotional intelligence, self-awareness, motivation, and social skills can significantly boost employee engagement and performance, ultimately contributing to a more productive work environment in the banking sector.

Conclusion

The present study highlights the significant role of emotional intelligence in fostering employee engagement within Nepalese commercial banks. The results demonstrate that higher levels of emotional intelligence, particularly in the areas of self-awareness, motivation, and social skills, are positively associated with increased employee engagement. Although self-regulation and empathy showed a lesser impact in this context, strengthening key emotional competencies can have a profound influence on employee engagement. Despite the limitation of potential social desirability bias due to self-reported data, the study provides valuable insights into the factors that contribute to employee engagement in the banking sector. Future research should explore additional variables and contexts to further understand the dynamics of employee engagement. Overall, this research underscores the importance of developing emotional intelligence to foster a more engaged and productive workforce.

Implications

The theoretical implications of this study expand the understanding of emotional intelligence (EI) as a critical factor influencing employee engagement in organizational settings, particularly within the banking sector. By confirming that key dimensions of EI—such as self-awareness, motivation, and social skills—are positively linked to engagement, the study contributes to the growing body of

literature that positions EI as an essential driver of workplace outcomes. This research reinforces the idea that emotional competencies are not only integral to personal well-being but also vital for enhancing organizational performance.

The study recommends that Nepali commercial banks focus on developing emotional intelligence through training, workshops, and mentoring. Enhancing emotional skills can boost employee engagement, productivity, customer service and overall success. Regular feedback and employee involvement in decisions are also advised to improve retention and performance.

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