Does Emotional Intelligence Prompt Knowledge Sharing Behavior among Academic Staff

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Abstract

The presented paper aims to reveal the direct and indirect relationship between emotional intelligence and knowledge sharing behavior among academic staff in Jordanian universities. Furthermore, it aims to examine the mediation effect of knowledge sharing intention on the relationship between emotional intelligence and knowledge sharing behavior. Convenience sampling was used to collect data from 191 academic staff from private universities in the northern region of Jordan. First, data were tested for validity and reliability. Second, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was applied to analyze the model and hypothesis testing. The results indicated that emotional intelligence has a direct and indirect relationship with academic staff knowledge sharing behavior. Furthermore, the results indicated that knowledge sharing intention partially mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic staff knowledge sharing behavior. The limitations of this study include the sampling and cross-sectional design. Hence, future studies can be conducted using a longitudinal design covering other public universities to increase the generalizability of findings. The findings suggest that top management in universities should develop appropriate strategies for improving the emotional intelligence level of academic staff because academic staffs with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to engage themselves in knowledge sharing activities. Furthermore, universities should conduct various training and education programs to improve the level of emotional intelligence among academic staff, thereby fostering knowledge sharing in universities. Furthermore, there is limited literature on the role of emotional intelligence in knowledge sharing behavior among academic staff. The study adds to the extant literature on emotional intelligence and both knowledge sharing intention and knowledge sharing behavior in the context of universities. Besides, the study attempted to investigate the direct and indirect effect of emotional intelligence on knowledge sharing behavior that has not been studied so far.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Knowledge Sharing, Academic Staff Behavior, universities
Paper Type: Research Paper

Introduction

With the world shifting towards the knowledge era, the concept of knowledge has been widely recognized as a critical asset to individuals as well as organizations. To date, studies still report that successful knowledge sharing leads to improve both organizational creativity and innovation (Goh and Lim, 2014; Ali and Rajesh, 2020). While many employees are happy to share knowledge with others, other researchers have indicated that many employees are not interested in sharing knowledge with others because they feel that this threatens their power and influence in their organizations. (Hislop, 2009; Hau et al., 2013; Sajeva, 2014). Consequently, still, the biggest challenge for many organizations is how to manage and share knowledge between employees to obtain more benefits.

Universities such as other organizations are tied to develop and disseminate new knowledge (Kim and Ju, 2008; Fullwood & Rowley, 2017; Sohail and Daud, 2009). Universities as intensive environments of knowledge play a key role in generating and disseminating new knowledge through research and publication. More specifically, academic staff play a critical role in knowledge sharing by partnering with corporations and organizations to encourage creativity, social and cultural enterprise, and through their teaching and training programs to encourage learning. Moreover, they acknowledge as intellectual leaders for society development (Goh & Sandhu, 2013; Fullwood et al., 2013; Jolaee et al., 2014). Thus, managing and sharing academic staff knowledge is a crucial issue.

Factors affecting successful knowledge sharing among academic staff have become a common debate among researchers (Fullwood et al., 2013; Al-Kurdi et al., 2018). The majority of researchers categorized the main factors that influence academic staff knowledge sharing behavior into three major categories, namely: individual; organizational and technological factors (Riege, 2005; Nonaka et al., 2006; Wang & Noe, 2010; Shanshan, 2014; Norulkamar and Hatamleh, 2014; Al-Kurdi et al., 2018). Recently, organizational climate and culture, trust, and leadership were also reported that they have a positive influence on the knowledge sharing intentions of academics (Al-Kurdi et al., 2020). More precisely, most of the previous studies have focused their discussions more closely tied to individuals' factors (Kidwell et al., 1997; Calantone et al., 2002; Walsham, 2002; Liao et al., 2004; Bock et al., 2005; Yi, 2009; Teh et al., 2010; Lin et al., 2012; Goh and Lim, 2014; Al-Kurdi et al., 2020). Thus, it can be concluded that the success of knowledge sharing was found to be more related to individual behavioral factors. Consequently, more investigations of individual factors and associated behavioral elements are required to achieve successful knowledge sharing among academic staff.

Emotional intelligence has been identified as one of the major individual factors forming human thinking, personality, and predicting behavior and actions. Results from previous studies have reported that emotional intelligence is linked to different organizational and behavioral outcomes, namely: organizational citizenship, behavior, well-being, mental employees' attitude towards organizational change, and performance. Thus, it can be assumed that one behavior that may result from emotional intelligence is knowledge sharing (Wong and Law, 2002; Vakola et al., 2004; Sharma, 2011; Maini et al., 2012).

Previous studies that examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and knowledge sharing behavior have reported that emotional intelligence can increase human ability to share their knowledge and through knowledge sharing it helps to increase creativity in the workplace (Obermayer-Kovács et al., 2015; Amirul and Malik, 2017; Tamta 2017; Malik and Ansari 2018; Shariq et al., 2018). The above-mentioned studies were conducted with various groups of employees; among service industries; IT organizations, the pharmaceutical industry, and banking sectors. According to the previous studies, limited research has been conducted in academic institutions (Parsayan et al., 2016; Arabshahi et al., 2017; Ansari and Malik, 2017). Among these studies, few were carried out among students and others were among university employees. Interestingly, no study examines the consequences of emotional intelligence on knowledge sharing behavior among academic staff. Furthermore, to the best of the author's knowledge, there has been no study revealing the relationship between emotional intelligence and knowledge sharing behavior in the Jordanian context. This indicates that there is still limited empirical studies conducted in this aspect and required more attention. Therefore, undertaking a study that focuses on enhancing scientific science is considered a crucial step. Consequently, this study aims to fill the gap in the literature if emotional intelligence can affect knowledge sharing behavior among academic staff.

Research Model and Hypotheses Development

Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) developed the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) to predict and understand human behavior. TRA assumes that individuals have to be a rationale and suggest that their behavior is being influenced by three elements, namely, attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and behavioral intention. Moreover, the theory of Reasoned Action was found very suitable to predict a wide range of human behaviors, which explain the intention and actual behavior of an individual (Chang, 1998). Based on the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), human behavior is determined by behavioral intention. Behavioral intention is an indicator of how people are willing to involve and how much their effort to perform the behavior.

Knowledge is currently considered an essential component of competitiveness and a key part of value-added production. The value of knowledge will increase through knowledge sharing activities between employees (Sawhney & Prandelli, 2001). Lin (2007) defined knowledge sharing as "a social interaction culture, involving the exchange of employee knowledge, experiences, and skills through the whole department or organization". The sharing of knowledge can thus be realized as a process in which the mutual exchange of knowledge between individuals leads to the development of new knowledge. According to Taylor (2006), successful knowledge sharing is concerned more with the behavior of the source and the recipient of knowledge exchange, and the theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) is the most useful to explain the individual behaviors of knowledge sharing. Moreover, the vast majority of previous studies on knowledge sharing have looked to determine the factors that influence academic staff's intention towards knowledge sharing behavior since knowledge sharing intentions were reported as one of the strong predictors of actual knowledge sharing behavior (e.g. Iqbal et al., 2011; Fullwood et al., 2013; Ramayah et al., 2013; Al-Kurdi et al.,2018). Therefore, the first hypothesis is proposed:

H1: There is a relationship between knowledge sharing intention and knowledge sharing behavior.

Emotional Intelligence and Knowledge Sharing

Up to date, scholars have shown an increased interest in emotional intelligence and their influence on organizational behavior studies. According to Salovey and Mayer (1990), who first introduced the term emotional intelligence, emotional intelligence was defined as "the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and other feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions". Currently, emotional intelligence has three models (trait, emotional, mental ability, and mixed model), and it is important to realize that they are still treated as separate constructs and are measured or conceptualized using different scales (Pe´rez et al., 2005). The definition of emotional intelligence by Salovey and Mayer (1990) is perhaps the best among the mental ability model approaches. The model of mental ability focuses on the cognition-emotion linkage and defines emotional intelligence as the ability to perceive emotions, integrate emotion, to facilitate thought, understand emotions, and to regulate emotions to promote personal growth" (Mayer and Salovey, 1997).

Since knowledge sharing consists of social interactions between employees, and these interactions are influenced by individual relationships, if the owners of knowledge have a high level of emotional intelligence, they can control their own emotions and understand the emotions of others, and change the owner's tendency to share knowledge. Therefore, it is also more likely that emotionally intelligent people will participate in social interactions and therefore share their experiences with others within the organization (Nahapiet et al., 1998; Chow et al., 2008; Gurbuz, et al., 2012). Besides, Chang et al. (2011) stated that emotional intelligence plays a major role in forming employee's intentions for knowledge sharing. Therefore, the second hypothesis is proposed:

H2: There is a relationship between emotional intelligence and knowledge sharing intention.

A growing body of literature has investigated the direct relationship between emotional intelligence and knowledge sharing behavior. For example, studies conducted by Goh& Lim (2014); Obermayer-Kovács et al.,(2015); Amirul & Ansari (2017); Malik & Ansari (2018); Vandana & Rao (2017), revealed that emotional intelligence has a direct and positive impact on knowledge sharing behavior among employees in different service sector organizations such as banking, construction, information technology, and multinationals companies. Besides, these studies identify specific emotional intelligence traits that enable knowledge sharing behaviors such as well-being, emotionality, self-control, and sociability as emotional intelligence factors that influence knowledge sharing behaviors. However, these studies have been conducted in countries such as India and Hungary; this means that their generalization to countries and different national cultures may be questionable. Moreover, these studies have ignored the

role of knowledge sharing intention on the relationship between emotional intelligence and knowledge sharing behavior. Consequently, this suggests a need to study if knowledge sharing intention mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and knowledge sharing behavior among different countries. Therefore, the third hypothesis is proposed:

H3: knowledge sharing intentions mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and knowledge sharing behavior.

The hypothesized research model is presented in Figure 1.

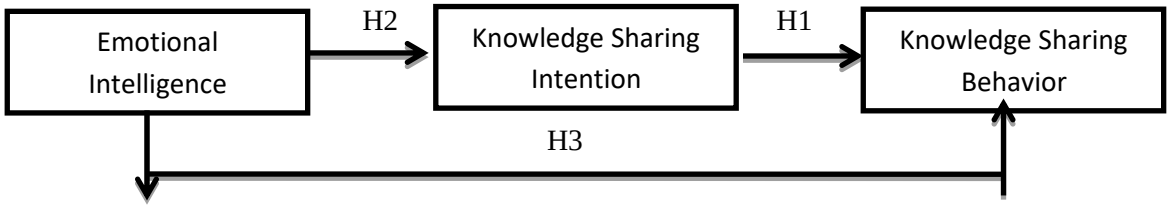


Figure 1: Research Model

METHODOLOGY

Only private universities in the northern region of Jordan were selected as the target population. The questionnaire was the main instrument for data collection in this study. The researcher handled the printed questionnaire with cover letters that contain an introduction about the research purpose and aim of the study along with an instruction paper that describes to whom the academic staff should return the filled questionnaire. They were also assured that they would retain complete confidentiality and anonymity. The researcher selected a contact person in each private university to collect the filled questionnaire to ease the collection. Follow calls were made by the researcher to contact person in each private university. A total of 340 questionnaires were sent, out of which 191 completed and usable questionnaires were returned. The outline of the respondents is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents (n= 191)

Measure	Item	Frequency	Percentage
Academic rank	Lecturer	11	05.8
	Assistant Professor	90	47.0
	Associate Professor	66	34.6
	Professor	24	12.6
Experience Years	Below 5 Years	30	15.6
	5 - 9 Years	45	23.6
	10-14 Years	39	20.4
	15 - 19 Years	45	23.6
	20 Years Or More	32	16.8
Gender	Male	124	64.9
	Female	67	35.1
Age	Less Than 25	1	0.5
	25-34	41	21.5
	35-44	42	22.0
	45-54	64	33.5
	55 Years And More	43	22.5

Measures

Items used to operationalize the constructs of emotional intelligence, knowledge sharing intention, and knowledge sharing behavior are based on prior empirical studies and mainly adapted from previous studies that have been previously tested for reliability and validity. All constructs were measured by using a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Table 2 lists all items used to measure each construct.

Emotional intelligence

The researchers used a 19 item Self-reported Emotional Intelligence Scale (SREIS) developed by Brackett et al., (2006) to measure emotional intelligence. The scale comprises five factors: (1) perceiving emotions (4 items), (2) use of emotions (3 items), (3) understanding emotions (4 items), (4) managing emotions (4 items) and (5) social management (4 items).

Knowledge Sharing Intention

To measure knowledge sharing intention, the researchers used five items to assess the academic staff's intention for sharing their own experience and any official documents between each other, and they were adapted from Lin's (2007) study.

Knowledge Sharing Behavior

To measure knowledge sharing behavior, the researchers used five items to assess the degree of academic staff participation and their real behavior for sharing their experience, official documents that contain any new knowledge which can help and increase their knowledge, and they were adapted from Chennamaneni (2006) study.

Results

The researchers applied a two-stage procedure (confirmatory factor analysis [CFA] and structural equation modeling [SEM]) provided by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) to empirically validate the connections between the research model constructs**.** The confirmatory measurement model's goodness-of-fit indices are a definite precursor to the structural equation model, which is based on the calculation of maximum likelihood. To perform the data analysis, IBM SPSS and AMOS 18 were used as statistical tools.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Measurement Model

A preliminary confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) suggested that all items loaded reasonably well on their latent factors. According to Hair et al. (2012), a value of 0.50 is considered as an acceptable value for factor loading in the CFA test. The results revealed, as indicated in Table 2, that the standard loading for the items ranged from 0.67 to 0.82. Moreover, the composite reliability (CR) was examined to have good construct reliability. According to Bagozzi and Yi (1998), a CR value of 0.6 is the acceptable value to meet the requirement of construct reliability in SEM analysis. The results revealed as indicated in Table 2 show that the composite reliability ranged from 0.767 to 0.878. Furthermore, the measurement model was tested for construct validity. The convergent validity was checked by the average variance extracted (AVE). An AVE value of 0.5 or more were used to indicate adequate convergent validity (Hair et al., 2006). The average variance extracted values for the study constructs as indicated in Table 2 ranged from 0.512 to 0.591, which indicated adequate convergent validity. Additionally, discriminant validity was assessed by comparing the squared correlation between each pair of constructs to the average of the AVEs for these two constructs. Table 3 indicates the measure has adequate discriminant validity, as the

square root of the average variance extracted for each construct is greater than the level of correlation involving the construct.

Table 2. Items for the variables

Research Construct /Measured Item	**Items loading**	**AVE**	**CR**	***α***
Perceiving Emotion (PE)		0.529	0.817	0.815
By looking at people's facial expressions, I recognize the emotions they are experiencing	0.80			
I am aware of the nonverbal messages other people send	0.67			
I can tell when a person is lying to me by looking at his or her facial expression.	0.76			
My quick impressions of what people are feeling are usually wrong (r)	0.67			
Use Of Emotion (UOE)		0.524	0.767	0.765
I am a rational person and I rarely, if ever, consult my feelings to make a decision(r)	0.74			
When making decisions, I listen to my feelings to see if the decision feels right	0.74			
I am a rational person and don't like to rely on my feelings to make decisions	0.69			
Understanding Emotion (UE)		0.512	0.807	0.807
I have a rich vocabulary to describe my emotions.	0.75			
I could easily write a lot of synonyms for emotion words like happiness or sadness.	0.71			
I have the vocabulary to describe how most emotions progress from simple to complex feelings.	0.68			
My "feelings" vocabulary is probably better than most other persons' "feelings" vocabularies.	0.72			
Managing Emotion (ME)		0.584	0.848	0.846
I have problems dealing with my feelings of anger. (r)	0.82			
I can handle stressful situations without getting too nervous.	0.77			
I am able to handle most upsetting problems.	0.77			
I know how to keep calm in difficult or stressful situations	0.69			
Social Management (SM)		0.530	0.818	0.815
When someone I know is in a bad mood, I can help the person calm down and feel better quickly	0.78			
I know the strategies to make or improve other people's moods	0.70			
I am not very good at helping others to feel better when they are feeling down or angry. (r)	0.71			
I am the type of person to whom others go when they need help with a difficult situation	0.72			
Knowledge Sharing Intention (KSI)		0.591	0.878	0.877
I intend to share knowledge with my colleagues more frequently in the future	0.81			
I plan to share knowledge with my colleagues	0.75			
I would share internal reports and other official documents with my colleagues.	0.73			

I will always make an effort to share knowledge with my colleagues	0.76			
I intend to share knowledge with colleagues who ask me	0.79			
Knowledge Sharing behavior (KSB)		0.561	0.864	0.862
I shared factual knowledge from work with my colleagues	0.76			
I shared internal reports and other official documents with my colleagues	0.69			
I shared my work experiences with my colleagues	0.77			
I shared my education expertise with my colleagues	0.74			
I shared my knowledge from work with my colleagues	0.78			

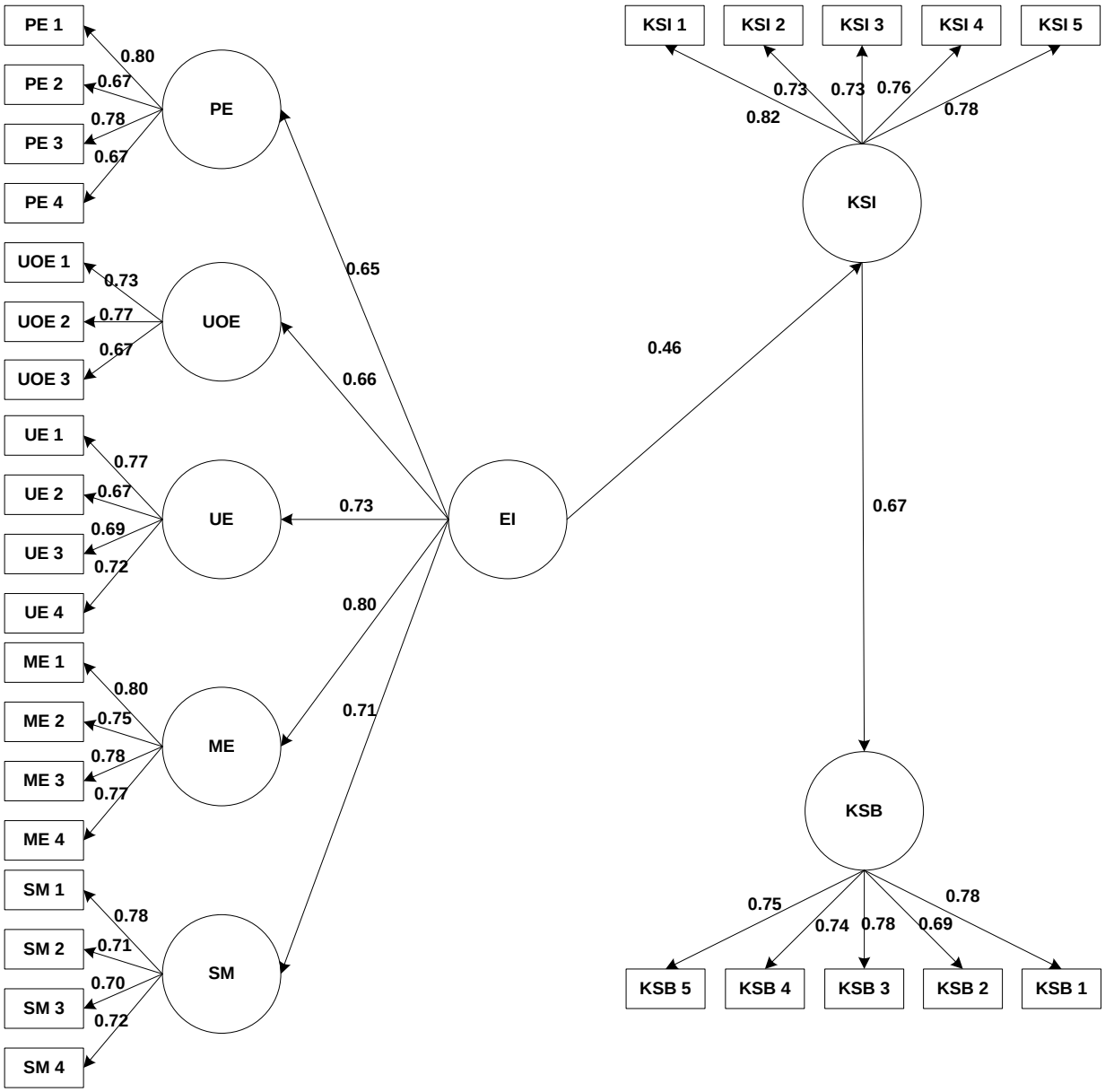
Table 3 Discriminant validity for The Research Construct

	KSI	**PE**	**SM**	**ME**	**UE**	**UOE**	**KSB**
KSI	**0.767**						
PE		**0.727**					
SM			**0.726**				
ME				**0.762**			
UE					**0.715**		
UOE						**0.723**	
KSB							**0.748**

Structure Model

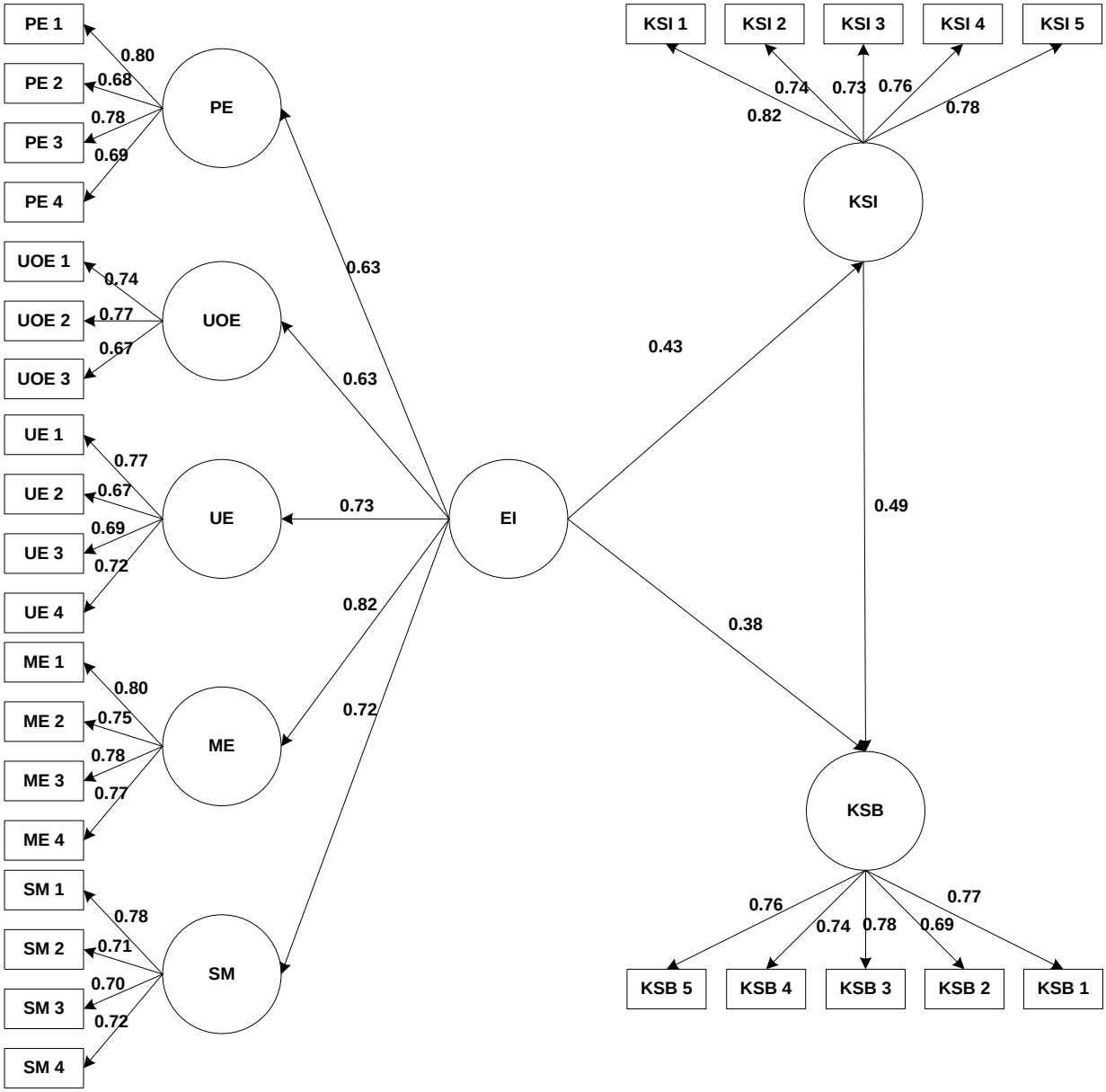
Structural equation modeling (SEM) was adopted to test the path coefficient for the first hypothesis, the relationship between knowledge sharing intention and knowledge sharing behavior. Second, the path coefficients for the relationship between emotional intelligence and knowledge sharing intention were all tested for the path coefficient. Third, the path coefficients were applied to test the mediating effects of knowledge sharing intention on the relationship between emotional intelligence and knowledge sharing behavior. The researchers tested the structural model using information obtained from the collection of 191 academic staff. Figure 1 shows the research model with the path values for the first and second hypotheses. The structural (hypothesis) model provides a good model fit to the collected data. The Chi-square = 518.642, DF = 370, X2/DF =1.402, NFI = 0.821, GFI = 0.844, AGFI = 0.816, CFI = 0.941, RMSEA = .046.

Figure 1 Research (hypotheses 1 & 2) Model



To test the mediating role of knowledge sharing intention between emotional intelligence and knowledge sharing behavior, the direct path and indirect path were tested. Figure 2 shows the research model with the path values for hypothesis three. The structural (hypothesis) model provides a good model fit to the collected data. The Chi-square = 496.405, DF = 369, X^2/DF =1.343, NFI = 0.829, GFI = 0.850, AGFI = 0.823, CFI = 0.949, RMSEA = .043.

Figure 2 Research (hypothesis 3) Model



DISCUSSION

This study was set out with the aim of assessing the importance of emotional intelligence on both the intention and behavior of knowledge sharing among academic staff in Jordanian universities. Consistent with expectations, the results indicated that emotional intelligence has a positive, direct, and indirect effect on both intention and behavior of knowledge sharing among academic staff. Therefore, universities should be more concerned with emotional intelligence to achieve successful knowledge sharing behavior among academic staff.

First, the current study found that there is a positive relationship between knowledge sharing intention and knowledge sharing behavior among academic staff in Jordanian universities. The results in

Table 4 revealed that there is a positive relationship between knowledge sharing intention and knowledge sharing behavior among academic staff. The path value β = 0.615, CR = 7.982, P-value = .000, which is statistically significant at level 0.001. Thus, H1 was supported. This finding is consistent with the previous findings of Bock et al., (2005), Iqbal et al., (2011), Goh & Sandhu, (2013).

Second, the current study found that there is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and knowledge sharing intention among academic staff in Jordanian universities. The results in Table 4 revealed that there is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and knowledge sharing intention among academic staff. The path value β = 0. 911, CR = 4.489, P-value = .000, which is statistically significant at level 0.001. Thus, H2 was supported. This finding is consistent with the previous findings of Chang et al. (2011).

Table 4. Path analysis for the first and second hypotheses

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
KSI	<---	EI	.911	.203	4.489	***
KSB	<---	KSI	.615	.077	7.982	***

Third, the current study found that knowledge sharing intention is partially mediated the relationship between emotional intelligence and knowledge sharing behavior. The results in Table 5 revealed that there is a positive relationship between knowledge sharing intention and knowledge sharing behavior among academic staff. The path value β = 0. 445, CR = 5.921, P-value = .000, which is statistically significant at level 0.001. Besides, the results in Table 5 revealed that there is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and knowledge sharing intention among academic staff. The path value β = 0. 886, CR = 4.221, P-value = .000, which is statistically significant at level 0.001. Moreover, the results in Table 5 revealed that there is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and knowledge sharing behavior among academic staff. The path value β = 0. 706, CR = 3.967, P-value = .000, which is statistically significant at level 0.001.

Table 5. Path analysis for the third hypothesis

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
KSI	<---	EI	.886	.210	4.221	***
KSB	<---	KSI	.445	.075	5.921	***
KSB	<---	EI	.706	.178	3.967	***

Implications

The study has both theoretical and practical implications. This study contributes theoretically in several ways. As mentioned previously, few studies have investigated the role of emotional intelligence in universities. Furthermore, the extant literature reveals that little is known about the effects of emotional intelligence on the knowledge sharing behavior of academic staff, and even less is known about the underlying mechanism that links emotional intelligence with both the intention and behavior of knowledge sharing. Hence, the current research contributes to the existing body of knowledge and theory on the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic staff outcomes, particularly sharing behavior and the role that knowledge sharing intentions plays in the relationship between emotional intelligence and knowledge sharing behavior.

This research also has significant practical implications for universities. Since the quest to create "world-class" universities has become a global demand over the past decade as governments across the

world have invested in the development of competitive higher education and research systems as part of their national economic strategies, hence, universities need to gain a sustainable competitive advantage and they need to leverage this vital resource, that is, knowledge. To leverage this resource, sharing knowledge among academic staff should be encouraged. Results from this study depict that emotional intelligence is an important predictor of knowledge sharing behavior. Based on the study results, it can be generalized that the human resource department needs to monitor the emotional intelligence levels of their academic staff from time to time. Moreover, to enhance the emotional intelligence levels of academic staff, universities could conduct various training and education programs to improve the emotional intelligence of the academic staff. Furthermore, the universities could conduct various tests to examine the emotional intelligence levels of job candidates at the time of recruitment and select those candidates who are emotionally sound. This practice of identifying capable candidates would give several benefits to the university in the future.

Conclusion, Limitations and Future Research Avenues

As with any other research, this study is not without limitations. Due to time and monetary constraints, this study focuses only on academic staff in Jordanian private universities. Thus, the generalizability of the findings to other countries may be questionable. Nevertheless, since the issue of knowledge sharing behavior in general, the researchers believed that the general insights gained from this study are still relevant to other countries. Therefore, it is suggested that similar research is conducted among employees in different countries. Furthermore, this study is limited to private universities in Jordan. Future research should examine these factors at public universities in Jordan. Hence, a comparative study between the private and public universities can be carried out. In addition, this study did not focus on the type of knowledge (tacit or explicit) that academic staff may share it with their colleagues. Thus, future studies should more focus on if there are any different influences of emotional intelligence on both tacit and explicit knowledge that academic staff may share.

In terms of research design, this study is correlational. Moreover, this study is a cross-sectional study whereby it was conducted at one point in time. However, this study adopts the survey method for data collection; thus, another method of data collection such as interview and observation may provide more in-depth information about the relationship between emotional intelligence and knowledge sharing behavior among academic staff. Furthermore, future studies may focus on the longitudinal period. Although a longitudinal study consumes much time and cost, it allows future researchers to track and recognize the relationship between emotional intelligence and knowledge sharing behavior in detail. Additionally, emotional intelligence has three models; this study used only one model (mental ability), future studies should use other models of emotional intelligence to determine if they have a different influence on knowledge sharing behavior among academic staff.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the extant literature of emotional intelligence and knowledge sharing behavior in the Jordanian context. Moreover, despite the abundant literature to the author's best knowledge, no studies have examined the linkages between emotional intelligence, knowledge sharing intention, and knowledge sharing behavior in a single study. This study, therefore, is the first of its kind to be commenced in the Jordanian context. Furthermore, this study spurs other scholars to continue this investigation into emotional intelligence and knowledge sharing behavior.

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