

Emotional Intelligence as a Mediating Mechanism between Lecturer Competence and Innovation

*Mediating Effect of
Emotional
Intelligence*

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Submitted:
December 1, 2025

Revised:
January 23, 2026

Accepted:
January 28, 2026

Published Online:
January 31, 2026

ABSTRACT

Improving the quality of higher education requires strengthening lecturers' competence and innovative behavior in response to digital transformation and the demands of Industry 4.0. This study examined the mediating effect of emotional intelligence in the relationship between lecturer competence and lecturer innovation at private universities under the coordination of LLDIKTI Region IV. A quantitative approach was employed using structured questionnaires distributed to lecturers in private universities across Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi. A total of 354 responses were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0. The results indicate that lecturer competence has a positive and significant effect on lecturer innovation, both directly and indirectly through emotional intelligence. The mediation analysis confirms that emotional intelligence strengthens the relationship between competence and innovation, serving as a key psychological mechanism that translates professional competence into innovative behavior. These findings suggest that universities should incorporate emotional intelligence development into lecturer capacity-building programs to promote sustainable innovation and academic excellence.

Keywords: *Emotional Intelligence, Higher Education, Lecturer Competence, Lecturer Innovation.*

INTRODUCTION

One of the current directions of higher education development is to enhance the quality of teaching and learning skills. The implementation of learning plays a crucial role in the continuous effort to improve the essence of education (Damayanti et al., 2023). Skills must be demonstrated in a measurable and applicable manner across various contexts to be considered meaningful (Cao et al., 2022). The role of lecturers is particularly vital in facing the Industrial Revolution 4.0's difficulties, which requires them to adapt quickly to changes in learning technologies and research methodologies (Halim et al., 2025; Kurniawan et al., 2025). Innovative lecturers serve as a key factor in enhancing the standard of instruction, research productivity, and the relevance of community engagement (Trisnaningsih, 2023). As educators, lecturers are expected to cultivate creative thinking among students and develop innovation capabilities (Le & Loang, 2024). However, amid globalization and digital transformation, many lecturers still face

JIMKES

Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen
Kesatuan
Vol. 14 No. 1, 2026
pp. 1623-1634
IBI Kesatuan
ISSN 2337 - 7860
E-ISSN 2721 - 169X
DOI: 10.37641/jimkes.v14i1.4781

challenges in fostering innovative behavior, particularly within private higher education institutions.

This phenomenon can be observed from the condition of lecturers in the working area of the Higher Education Service Institution (*Lembaga Layanan Pendidikan Tinggi/LLDIKTI*) Region IV, which covers West Java and Banten. According to data from Lembaga Layanan Pendidikan Tinggi Wilayah IV (2023), the highest number of lecturers is found in the Bodetabek area, with a total of 10,461 lecturers. However, only 26% of them have obtained lecturer certification. In contrast, the Bandung Raya region, which has 10,135 lecturers, shows a higher level of certification, reaching 49%. Although the Bodetabek area has the largest number of lecturers, their level of professionalism remains relatively low. This disparity indicates a difference in lecturer competence between regions, which potentially affects the level of innovative capability among lecturers. Such a condition reinforces the notion that a high quantity of lecturers does not necessarily correspond to the quality of academic performance.

On the other hand, the results of a preliminary survey conducted among several instructors at private universities within the LLDIKTI Region IV area indicate that the level of lecturer innovation is still at a moderate category. The ability of lecturers to seek support for their ideas obtained an average score of 3.20, while their ability to implement those ideas scored only 3.00. This condition suggests that most lecturers have not yet been able to transform creative ideas into concrete actions in academic activities. These findings strengthen the assumption that factors beyond technical competence also influence the innovative capabilities of lecturers (Le & Loang, 2024).

Emotional Intelligence (EI) also plays an essential role in shaping lecturers' innovative behavior. Lecturers with high levels of emotional intelligence, the capacity to identify, understand, control, and utilize emotions, are recognized as possessing a key competence in the field of education (Wu & Vadudeva, 2025). For lecturers who frequently face challenges in adapting to academic responsibilities and handling students' varied requirements, EI skills are particularly crucial for enhancing their performance and professional growth. This demonstrates that higher performance can be achieved when individuals possess emotional intelligence that enables them to manage stress and adapt to tough conditions (Almeneessier & Azer, 2023). Furthermore, Jiang and Tong (2025) emphasize that emotional intelligence stimulates both innovative thinking and innovative behavior.

The results of a preliminary survey conducted among several private universities within the LLDIKTI Region IV area further support these findings, revealing that lecturers' innovative abilities remain at a moderate level (dimension of seeking idea support = 3.20; implementing ideas = 3.00). This indicates that emotional intelligence may also play an important role in enhancing lecturers' innovative behavior. In addition, Riza et al. (2024) emphasize that lecturers need to possess adequate competence and expertise to optimize their roles in the learning process. The study Prapantja (2023) has demonstrated that lecturer competence has a positive influence on innovation, however, this influence is not always direct. Therefore, it is important to conduct research that examines the relationship among lecturer competence, emotional intelligence, and lecturer innovation to better understand how these factors interact in promoting academic quality improvement within private higher education institutions.

Based on the above discussion, this study offers a novelty by positioning emotional intelligence as a mediator variable in the relationship between lecturer competence and lecturer innovation, an approach that has rarely been explored in the context of private higher education institutions in Indonesia, particularly within the LLDIKTI Region IV area. In addition, the use of empirical preliminary survey data and region-based contextual analysis (LLDIKTI 2023 data) provides an added value by presenting a factual depiction of lecturers' competence and innovation conditions in the field. Therefore, this research not only contributes theoretically to the development of a model of lecturers' innovative behavior but also provides practical implications for higher education institutions in designing strategies to enhance lecturer competence and strengthen

emotional intelligence in order to foster an innovative culture within academic environments.

LITERATURE REVIEW & HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Lecturer Competence and Lecturer Innovation

Competence refers to the underlying characteristics of behavior that explain motivation, individual traits, self-perception, values, and the knowledge or skills applied in new and diverse situations (Suherman et al., 2022). According to Busro (2022), lecturer competence encompasses all aspects possessed by an individual, including knowledge, skills, and other internal factors that enable one to perform tasks based on the knowledge and skills acquired. Good lecturer competence can significantly influence students' academic achievement; therefore, educational institutions should encourage lecturers to develop pedagogical, personal, professional, and social competencies (Hariroh & Soleha, 2022). Furthermore, a broad and in-depth mastery of subject matter enables an individual to be regarded as a professional lecturer (Riza et al., 2024). The competencies of the 21st century, as defined by Rubeba (2025) are known as the 4Cs: Collaboration, Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, Creativity and Communication. These competencies can be achieved when higher education institutions possess reliable and competent human resources, particularly lecturers (Di Battista et al., 2022). However, many lecturers are still facing challenges in developing adequate professional competence and skills.

Therefore, lecturer competence is expected to positively influence lecturer innovation. This observation is consistent with the study by Hajiali et al. (2022), which shows that lecturer competence has a major impact on innovation capability. Strong professional competence enables lecturers to design suitable learning settings and promote the growth of skills necessary to promote innovation. Additionally, they help students comprehend how concepts are transformed in real-world situations and in fostering critical thinking in them when facing practical, real-life situations. Furthermore, when lecturers are given strategic duties to improve the quality of education, they embrace creative behavior, which is a continual process (Cao et al., 2022).

H1: Lecturer competence has a positive effect on lecturer innovation.

Lecturer Competence and Emotional Intelligence

Regarding higher education, lecturer competence plays a vital part in determining the quality of learning and the achievement of the *Tri Dharma of Higher Education* (Sadewa et al., 2025). A lecturer is considered competent when they understand the approaches and procedures related to the learning process and are capable of conducting evaluations that produce outcomes useful for improving the quality of instruction (Halik & Nurlia, 2022). Regarding personal competence, lecturers as educators, whose primary task is teaching, possess personality traits that significantly influence the success of human resource development. In this regard, lecturers are expected to develop adequate values, attitudes, abilities, and knowledge that should be acquired and mastered by university students to be applied in various careers and professional contexts (Rubeba, 2025). Thus, lecturer competence can be regarded as a key capital in promoting creativity in both teaching and research activities. Emotional intelligence refers to an individual's ability to recognize, regulate, assess, and communicate feelings. It also focuses on identifying emotions, assessing others' feelings, managing one's own emotions, empathizing with others, and engaging in effective social communication and interaction (Tj et al., 2021; Tobias et al., 2025).

Therefore, emotional intelligence serves as a vital system for preserving equilibrium between emotional and cognitive characteristics of both professional and personal life (Kurniawan et al., 2025). Emotional intelligence demonstrates that emotions function effectively when the information they convey can be properly identified, accurately interpreted, and efficiently managed (Jurado et al., 2021). This capacity enables individuals to cultivate constructive relationships and fortify their professional identity

(Andrabi et al., 2020). Furthermore, the capacity to recognize absolute reality clearly, which enables people to comprehend and regulate their emotions when reacting to and receiving the reactions of others, is known as emotional intelligence (Alzoubi & Aziz, 2021).

Lecturer competence reflects a combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and professional abilities that enable lecturers to perform their academic duties effectively. Competent lecturers are not only required to master subject matter and pedagogy but also to demonstrate emotional awareness and self regulation in academic interactions. Emotional intelligence plays an essential role in supporting lecturer competence, particularly in managing emotions, maintaining motivation, and building constructive relationships with students and colleagues (Puerta et al., 2021). This finding is supported by the study of Gunarto et al. (2022), which indicates that higher levels of emotional intelligence and competence lead to higher performance outcomes.

H2: Lecturer competence has a positive effect on emotional intelligence.

Lecturer Competence, Emotional Intelligence, and Lecturer Innovation

Educators with high emotional intelligence communicate more effectively, cope better with stress, and demonstrate greater understanding of learners' needs (Wu & Vadudeva, 2025). The concept of need is used to describe the gap between the current skills possessed and the desired skills required for lecturers to function effectively in a demanding academic environment (Igbafe, 2020). Moreover, lecturers are often required to address critical problems or make important decisions within a limited time frame (Dewi & Crefioza, 2022). Therefore, emotional intelligence functions as a bridge between competence and innovation. Competent lecturers with strong emotional intelligence are better able to manage their emotions and build positive social relationships, which ultimately enhances their tendency to innovate in both teaching and research processes.

This is supported by the study of Hariyanti et al. (2023), which discovered that the capacity for innovation is significantly influenced by emotional intelligence. Individuals with a high level of emotional intelligence tend to demonstrate more innovative behavior, as they are better able to manage emotions, think adaptively, and respond constructively to change. Conversely, lower levels of emotional intelligence are associated with reduced innovative behavior. Emotional intelligence is therefore considered a crucial factor in preventing the loss of innovation potential and competitive advantage within an organization, as emphasized by (Goleman, 2020).

Furthermore, emotional intelligence plays a crucial mediating role in the relationship between lecturer competence and lecturer innovation. Competent lecturers are not only equipped with technical and pedagogical expertise but also develop stronger emotional intelligence, which enables them to manage emotions effectively, adapt to dynamic academic demands, and maintain constructive social interactions (Jurado et al., 2021). These emotional capabilities subsequently encourage innovative behavior in teaching and research activities (Fiernaningsih et al., 2022). Thus, emotional intelligence functions as a psychological mechanism through which lecturer competence is transformed into innovative outcomes (Le & Loang, 2024). This mediating role supports the assumption that higher lecturer competence indirectly enhances lecturer innovation through increased emotional intelligence.

H3: Emotional intelligence has a positive effect on lecturer innovation

H4: Emotional intelligence mediates the effect of lecturer competence on lecturer innovation.

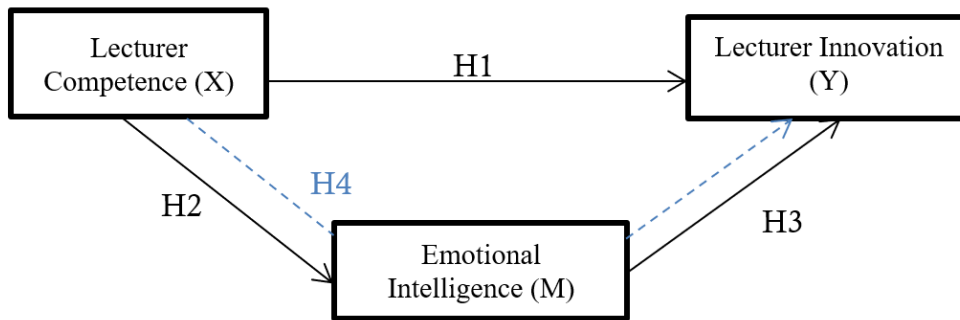


Figure 1. Conceptual Research Model

Thus, the conceptual framework of this study positions emotional intelligence as a mediating variable linking the effect of lecturer competence (X) on lecturer innovation (Y). The proposed research model is presented in Figure 1. This model illustrates that lecturer innovation is not solely determined by professional capability but also by emotional stability and affective intelligence in managing academic dynamics.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the relationships among lecturer competence, emotional intelligence, and lecturer innovation. The population of this study consisted of university lecturers, with a total of 354 respondents selected through purposive sampling. The sampling criteria were determined to ensure that respondents had relevant experience and were actively engaged in teaching activities, thereby enabling them to provide accurate and contextual responses. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed online to facilitate broader reach and efficient data gathering.

All research variables were measured using a Likert scale, allowing respondents to indicate their level of agreement with each statement. The study involved three main variables: lecturer competence as the independent variable, lecturer innovation as the dependent variable, and emotional intelligence as the mediating variable. The measurement indicators for each construct were adapted from validated instruments used in previous empirical studies to ensure content validity and construct reliability.

The analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Squares (PLS) with SmartPLS 4.0 as the analytical tool. The SEM-PLS approach was selected because it is suitable for predictive research models, capable of handling complex relationships among variables, and effective for mediation analysis. The data analysis process consisted of several stages. First, the outer model was evaluated to assess the validity and reliability of the measurement model. Convergent validity was examined through outer loading values, while reliability was assessed using composite reliability and Cronbach’s alpha. Second, the inner model was tested to evaluate the structural relationships among variables, including the examination of path coefficients and the coefficient of determination (R^2) to determine the model’s explanatory power. Mediation analysis was conducted to investigate the indirect effect of lecturer competence on lecturer innovation through emotional intelligence, thereby determining whether emotional intelligence functions as a mediating variable within the proposed research model.

RESULTS

Before presenting the findings, the collected data were analyzed systematically using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0 to ensure the robustness of the measurement and structural models. The analysis began with an evaluation of the outer model to assess the validity and reliability of the constructs, followed by inner model testing to examine the structural relationships, as well as mediation analysis to investigate

the role of emotional intelligence in the relationship between lecturer competence and lecturer innovation.

Table 1. Convergent Validity

Variable	Item	Factor Loading
Lecturer Competence	LC3	0.788
	LC2	0.771
	LC8	0.751
	LC4	0.743
	LC5	0.681
	LC6	0.680
	LC10	0.667
	LC7	0.647
	LC9	0.636
	LC1	0.630
Emotional Intelligence	EI2	0.819
	EI7	0.800
	EI6	0.795
	EI3	0.758
	EI8	0.744
	EI10	0.740
	EI9	0.736
	EI1	0.729
	EI4	0.729
	EI5	0.708
Lecturer Innovation	LI1	0.592
	LI10	0.632
	LI3	0.647
	LI2	0.665
	LI9	0.698
	LI8	0.725
	LI4	0.732
	LI6	0.744
LI7	0.758	
LI5	0.789	

The measuring model (outer model) was evaluated in order to determine the reliability and validity of the study constructs. Convergent validity was assessed by examining the outer loading values of each construct indicator. As presented in Table 1, most indicators exceed the recommended threshold of 0.60, indicating acceptable convergent validity.

Although one indicator shows a slightly lower loading value, it was retained because the composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha values for all constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70. Therefore, Internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Reliability Test

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Description
Emotional Intelligence	0.917	0.921	Reliable
Lecturer Innovation	0.883	0.885	Reliable
Lecturer Competence	0.884	0.887	Reliable

To test the construct reliability, a construct is deemed trustworthy if the Composite Reliability (CR) value exceeds 0.7. According to Hair (2018), if the composite reliability score is higher than 0.7, it means that the construct has good internal consistency and can be considered reliable in measuring the intended latent variable. Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity (Fornell – Larcker)

Variable	Emotional Intelligence	Lecturer Innovation	Lecturer Competence
Emotional Intelligence	0.756		
Lecturer Innovation	0.679	0.701	
Lecturer Competence	0.628	0.69	0.702

As presented in Table 3, the square root of the AVE for each construct is greater than the correlations with other constructs. Specifically, Emotional Intelligence (0.756), Lecturer Innovation (0.701), and Lecturer Competence (0.702) all exceed their respective inter construct correlations. These results confirm that discriminant validity has been established, indicating that each construct is empirically distinct from the others. Therefore, all constructs in this study demonstrate adequate reliability and validity.

The structural model connects the exogenous latent variable to the endogenous latent variable. This test aims to demonstrate the strength of the connection between the independent and dependent constructs as hypothesized. The model evaluation is conducted through R-squared, path coefficients, and t-statistics. The R Square value ranges from 0 to 1, where higher contributions are indicated by values nearer 1 for exogenous variables to endogenous variables. According to Hair (2018), the R Square values are categorized as strong (≥ 0.75), moderate (≥ 0.50), and weak (≥ 0.25). The R Square results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. R Square

Variable	R Square	R Square Adjusted	Category
Lecturer Innovation	0.576	0.573	Moderate
Emotional Intelligence	0.394	0.393	Weak

Considering the outcomes, the R Square value for the lecturer innovation variable is 0.576, indicating that lecturer competence and emotional intelligence explain 57.6% of the variance in lecturer innovation. Thus, the model is considered moderate. Meanwhile, the R square value for emotional intelligence is 0.394, indicating that lecturer competence explains 39.4% of the variance in emotional intelligence. Based on the classification criteria, this value indicates a relatively weak level of explanatory power.

To assess the proposed hypotheses, the structural model was analyzed using bootstrapping procedures in SmartPLS 4.0. The results of the path coefficients and their corresponding t values are illustrated in Figure 2.

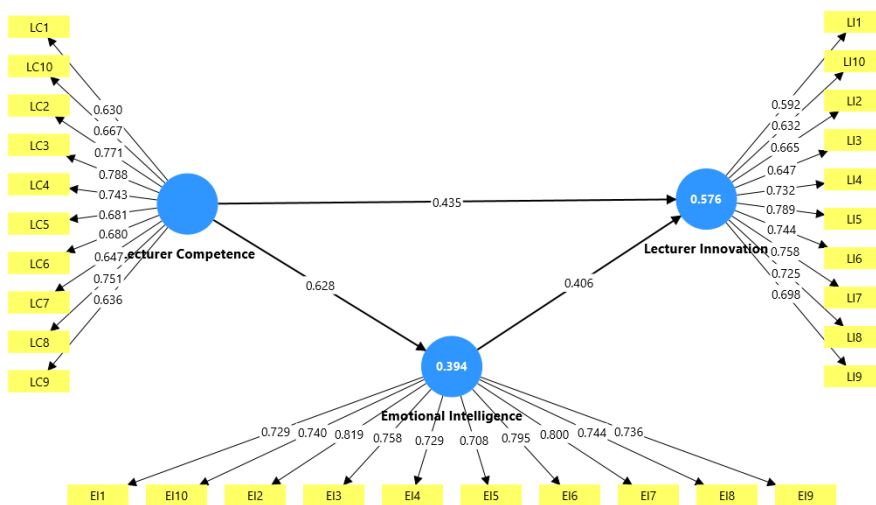


Figure 2. Path Model Results

Table 5. Path Coefficient

Variable	Path Coefficient	t-statistics	p-values
Lecturer Competence > Lecturer Innovation	0.435	8.830	P < 0.001
Lecturer Competence > Emotional Intelligence	0.628	18.866	P < 0.001
Emotional Intelligence > Lecturer Innovation	0.406	7.828	P < 0.001
Lecturer Competence > Emotional Intelligence > Lecturer Innovation	0.254	7.794	P < 0.001

As presented in Table 5, the hypothesis testing results demonstrate consistent and significant relationships among the examined variables. First, lecturer competence has a positive and significant effect on lecturer innovation ($\beta = 0.435$, $t = 8.830$, $p < 0.001$), supporting Hypothesis 1. Second, lecturer competence also significantly influences emotional intelligence ($\beta = 0.628$, $t = 18.866$, $p < 0.001$), confirming Hypothesis 2. Furthermore, emotional intelligence shows a positive and significant effect on lecturer innovation ($\beta = 0.406$, $t = 7.828$, $p < 0.001$), thereby supporting Hypothesis 3. Finally, the indirect effect of lecturer competence on lecturer innovation through emotional intelligence is significant ($\beta = 0.254$, $t = 7.794$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that emotional intelligence partially mediates this relationship. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 is also supported.

DISCUSSION

The study's findings demonstrate that lecturer competence has a positive and significant effect on lecturer innovation. This finding indicates that the higher the competence possessed by lecturers from Private Universitas in LLDIKTI IV, the greater their ability to produce creative and innovative ideas, methods, and learning strategies. According to Battista et al. (2022) and Lengkong et al. (2023) since lecturers are considered knowledgeable and serious individuals, the necessity for creative teaching and learning models necessitates the use of suitable techniques, while the idea of instruction and learning strategies must be in line with the demands of the market and the practical requirements of lecturer competency.

Competence, which includes pedagogical, professional, social, and personal aspects, serves as an important foundation for lecturers in developing creativity and adapting to the dynamics of higher education (Hariroh & Soleha, 2022). Therefore, it is important to improve the quality of educators as a strategy to raise educational standards (Halik & Nurlia, 2022). Each instructor has a unique technique of providing knowledge or preferred teaching methods (Suherman et al., 2022). In other words, competent lecturers not only understand the substance of their scientific field but are also able to implement that knowledge into more adaptive and creative teaching practices. This finding is consistent with the explanation proposed by Isa and Muafi (2022) that lecturer competence serves as the main foundation for creating innovation within higher education institutions. This is supported by the study of Sung et al. (2020) and Rianti and Salsabilah (2024), which states that in higher education, lecturer competency has a big impact on how well students learn. Thus, improving lecturer competence becomes a strategic step in building an innovative culture in universities.

The mediating role of emotional intelligence explains that the competencies possessed by lecturers can be manifested in innovative behavior when supported by the ability to properly control the emotions. Lecturers with high emotional intelligence are able to recognize, control, and utilize emotions constructively in the learning process, while also enhancing positive affective experiences such as the enjoyment of teaching through effective emotional regulation. The improvement of lecturers' emotional intelligence has an impact on their performance, particularly in the quality of education and teaching (et al., 2023). This stable emotional condition contributes to the enhancement of intrinsic motivation and creative thinking abilities in addressing learning related problems (Tj et

al., 2021). In the study by Hadi et al. (2024), it is shown that lecturers' innovative work behavior is influenced by emotional intelligence derived from the breadth of knowledge and educational level. Therefore, emotional intelligence has a vital function in performing innovative behavior. It is stated that educators' self confidence is a competence under emotional intelligence (Ngui & Lay, 2020).

Furthermore, the results of this study reinforce the view that innovation is determined not only by cognitive and technical abilities but also by affective intelligence. Emotional intelligence acts as a psychological resource that bridges the knowledge possessed by lecturers and the innovative application of that knowledge. This finding is consistent with Wu and Vadudeva (2025), who stated that emotional regulation can create a conducive work environment for the emergence of creativity and change within academic settings. In the context of private universities under the LLKDIKTI region IV, these data show the crucial role of emotional intelligence in supporting lecturer innovation amidst dynamic challenges. This study emphasizes the importance of developing emotional intelligence in lecturer training and competency improvement programs. Enhancing emotional awareness is believed to optimize the potential of competent lecturers to innovate sustainably, thereby contributing to the overall improvement of higher education quality.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study conclude that lecturer competence significantly affects lecturer innovation, both directly and indirectly through emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence acts as a key mediating variable that translates competence into innovative behavior. This finding implies that innovation among lecturers is not solely driven by technical expertise, but also by emotional stability, adaptability, and interpersonal understanding. This study enriches the literature by highlighting the mediating role of emotional intelligence in the relationship between competence and innovation, particularly in the context of higher education. The findings suggest that universities should not only focus on enhancing lecturers' professional skills but also prioritize the development of emotional intelligence through training programs related to self-awareness, emotional regulation, and collaborative communication.

This study has several limitations. The use of purposive sampling and self-reported questionnaire data may limit the generalizability of the findings and increase the potential for response bias. The cross-sectional design restricts the ability to infer causal relationships among lecturer competence, emotional intelligence, and lecturer innovation over time. Future research is recommended to include additional psychological or contextual variables, such as organizational support, leadership style, or work engagement, to further explain the relationship between competence and innovation. Moreover, employing a mixed method approach may provide a deeper understanding of how emotional intelligence operates in real life teaching environments.

FUNDING STATEMENT: This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not - for - profit sectors.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: The author declares no conflict of interest.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI STATEMENT: During the preparation of this work the author(s) used ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Turnitin in order to support academic language editing, grammar improvement, and plagiarism detection without replacing the author's intellectual contribution. After using this tool/service, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and take(s) full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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