The Impact of Emotionally Intelligent Academic Leadership on Faculty Members: Evidence from the Education System of India

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Abstract. This study investigates the impact of emotionally intelligent academic leadership on faculty members' organizational commitment and citizenship behaviour in selected colleges in south India. The data for the study is collected from 352 faculty members using a survey study approach and assessed through descriptive and inferential statistics. Statistical results suggest that respondents' perceptions of their academic leaders were more or less similar, and most of them rated self-awareness as the essential characteristic of emotional intelligence of their academic leaders. The findings demonstrate that most faculty members are dedicated to their organization and exhibit relatively high affective commitment compared to other aspects of organizational commitment. The relationship between emotionally intelligent leadership and faculty members' organizational commitment is partially mediated by faculty members' citizenship behaviour. This research contributes to the Indian academic system in developing strategies for academic leaders' emotional growth and increasing the level of commitment and citizenship behaviour of faculty members.

Keywords: academic leadership**,** organizational commitment, emotional intelligence, Indian higher education, faculty members

JEL Classification: I23

1. Introduction

The term "emotional intelligence" (hereafter EI) is gaining popularity and acceptance in the business sector. Salovey and Mayer (1990) were first to introduce this term. However, it was Goleman (1995) who made it famous when he described EI as a potential factor in comprehending and anticipating representatives' performance in the working environment. He also propounded the four popular dimensions of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and

relationship management. According to Goleman (1998), "leaders with high levels of emotional intelligence tend to boost performance and get results". Therefore, it is imperative for leaders to maintain control over their moods and feelings towards themselves and others.

The concept of commitment has gained organizational interest since it refers to the level of investment that people make in or the bond they share with their organization (Peretomode and Bello, 2018). Allen and Meyer (1990) define organizational commitment as a psychological condition characterized by a desire to stay and a need to provide services at an organization. Investigations into faculty members' organizational commitment revealed that while all teachers are committed, their level of commitment varies (Zafar, 2019). Academic research has found a link between organizational commitment and citizenship behaviour among the various faculties in educational institutions (Salehi, 2011). Grego-Planer (2019) states that organizational commitment is one of the antecedents of organizational citizenship behaviour.

Our study makes significant contributions to existing literature. First, it adds emotionally intelligent academic leadership to the body of knowledge as a new variable in higher education in the Indian context. Second, if higher education institutions want to succeed, they must focus on training programmes that help to build leaders' emotional intelligence, as it has great impact on organizational commitment and citizenship behaviour among colleagues. Monitoring emotional intelligence among academic leaders would lead to better leadership practices and, as a result, higher decision-making quality. Finally, our empirical research testifies the affective commitment of faculty members towards their organization, which is very different from that of Indian university professors, as studied by Bashir and Gani (2020).

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 describes the literature review, research framework, and hypothesis. Section 3 presents the methodology. Section 4 reports the baseline results and data analysis. Section 5 presents a discussion on the robustness of the tests. Section 6 concludes the paper.

2. Literature Review

Salovey and Mayer (1990) coined the term "emotional intelligence" (EI) and defined it as "an individual's capacity to regulate his or her emotions appropriately and involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's own thinking and action". The primary task of this research is to identify the emotional dimensions of academic leaders. The study identifies the emotional and leadership qualities using content analysis of four EQ techniques (Mayer and Salovey, 1997;

Goleman, 2001) and leadership approaches (Posner and Kouzes, 1993). The dimensions identified are self-awareness, emotion regulation, self-motivation, social skills, and leadership skills. According to Goleman's popular book *Working with Emotional Intelligence* (1998), emotional intelligence accounts for 67% of the qualities needed to be a successful leader. It is twice as important as technical proficiency or IQ. Many authors have emphasized the importance of academic leadership in helping higher education institutions prosper and accomplish their goals. However, till date, the term "academic leadership" is not always used consistently (Bikmoradi et al., 2010). Academic leadership is defined as "the part of the administrative functions in educational institutions assigned to top managers, university presidents, vice-chancellors, deans, department heads, and all academic professionals who have both leadership and managerial responsibilities" (Hecht et al., 1999: 634).

Sheldon (1971) describes organizational commitment as "an attitude or orientation toward the organisation that connects or attaches a person's identity to the organisation". Meyer and Allen (1991) establish a multidimensional commitment model, which includes three components: affective, continuance, and normative. The affective commitment is discussed as the employees' psychological bond, and identification with the organization is stated as affective commitment (AC). On the other hand, continuance commitment (CC) is concerned with understanding the financial and psychological implications of quitting one's employer. The third component, normative commitment (NC), is concerned with the employee's ideology or sense or feeling of responsibility to the organization and the individual's moral view that continuing within the organization is right and honourable.

The concept of "organizational citizenship behaviour" was first introduced by Organ and colleagues (Smith et al., 1983). Organizational citizenship behaviour "is employee behaviour above and beyond the call of duty and is therefore discretionary and not rewarded in the context of an organisation's formal reward structure" (Konovsky and Pugh, 1994). A default understanding is that "the behaviour or act should be outside the formal reward structure, not part of the defined job requirements and performed for the organisation's good" (Organ, 1988). Since its inception, the concept has gained significant academic attention. It is seen as intangible; OCB is not often legally recognized or rewarded. Further, terms such as "helpfulness" and "friendliness" are difficult to define. However, OCB has a significant beneficial influence at the organizational level, increasing organizational performance from 18% to 38% across multiple measurement parameters (Podsakoff et al., 2000; Ehrhart, 2004). It replicates "the flexible nature of workers' roles in the modern workplace and acknowledges that employees do get recognised and rewarded for engaging in OCB" (Van, 2000).

Few connected studies have been conducted to assess the relationship between emotional intelligence, academic leadership, and organizational commitment

among faculty members, indicating a research deficit. However, no relevant research has been conducted in the education industry to discover the mediating role of citizenship behaviour between an academic leader's emotional intelligence and the commitment aspects of faculty members in the context of the Indian higher education sector.

Research Framework

The research model used in this study is illustrated in *Figure 1*. We posit that emotionally intelligent academic leadership has a positive impact on faculty members' organizational commitment directly or indirectly through organizational citizenship behaviour. We also propose a positive effect of emotionally intelligent academic leadership on organizational citizenship behaviour. Additionally, there is also a positive impact of organizational citizenship behaviour on the organizational commitment of faculty members. Based on established relationships in the past, a research model is developed for these variables with emotionally intelligent academic leadership as an independent variable, organizational commitment as the dependent variable, and organizational citizenship behaviour as the mediating variable.
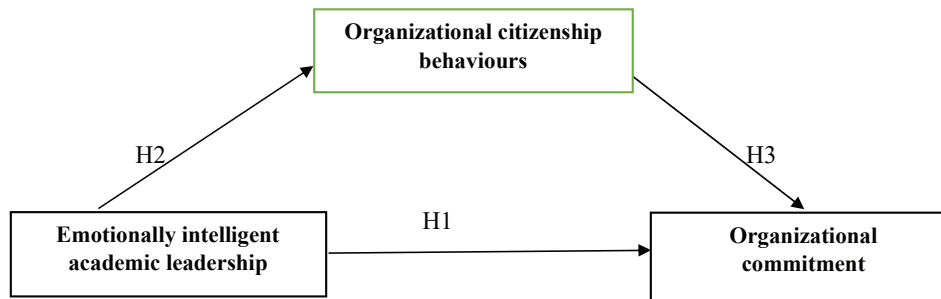

Figure 1. *Research framework*

Hypotheses

Based on the research framework and the relationship between the various variables of the study, we formulate the following hypotheses:

H1 – An emotionally intelligent academic leadership has a positive impact on the organizational commitment of faculty members.

H2 – An emotionally intelligent academic leadership has a positive impact on the organizational citizenship behaviour of faculty members.

H3 – There is a positive influence of organizational citizenship behaviour on the organizational commitment among faculty members.

H4 – Organizational citizenship behaviour partially mediates the influence of emotionally intelligent academic leadership on faculty members' organizational commitment.

3. Methodology

Data was collected from 352 respondents who were academic members working as assistant professors, associate professors, and professors at various colleges in south India. For data collection, a questionnaire survey was used. The respondents had to provide details about their gender, age, educational level, employers, jobs, and period of service. In the next stage, they were asked to answer 16 questions on the emotionally intelligent academic leadership provided by their immediate reporting academic leaders, such as a dean, head of the department, or director. Next, they had to answer 15 questions on whether and how this form of leadership affected their levels of organizational commitment. Finally, they were asked to rate ten questions related to organizational citizenship behaviour as mediating the influence of emotionally intelligent academic leadership on the organizational commitment of faculty members.

The first section of the survey dealt with the respondents' demographic details followed by the 16-item scale of emotionally intelligent academic leadership (Hyde et al., 2002; Posner, 1993), the 15-item scale of organizational commitment by Meyer and Allen (1990), and the organizational citizenship behaviour scale of 10 items by Podsakoff et al. (1997) and Lee and Allen (2002).

4. Results and Analysis

As shown in *Table 1*, the 352 respondents in this study included both females (n = 194, 55.10%) and males (n = 158, 44.90%). The majority of the respondents were 29–35 years old (n = 112, 31.8%) with a post-graduate education (n = 149, 42.3%). Most of them had 6–10 years (n = 134, 38.1%) or more than 10 years (n = 125, 35.5%) of work experience. Regarding the college, most respondents worked in private aided colleges (n = 166, 47.2%). The majority of the respondents were assistant professors (n = 299, 84.9%), followed by associate professors (n = 36, 10.2%) and professors (n = 17, 4.8%).

Table 1. *Respondents' profiles*

	Count (352)	Percentage		Count (352)	Percentage
Gender			**Educational Qualifications**		
Male	158	44.9	PhD	130	36.9
Female	194	55.1	MPhil	72	20.5
			PG	149	42.3
Age			**College**		
22–28	51	14.5	Government	106	30.1
29–35	112	31.8	Private Aided	166	47.2
36–42	106	30.1	Private Un-Aided	80	22.7
43–49	57	16.2			
50–60	26	8.8			
Work Experience			**Academic Designation**		
03-May	93	26.4	Assistant Prof.	299	84.9
06-Oct	134	38.1	Associate Prof.	36	10.2
Above 10	125	35.5	Professor	17	4.8

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2. *Descriptive statistics and correlations (N = 352)*

	EIAL	OC	OCB
EIAL	1		
OC	.442**	1	
OCB	.434**	.359**	1
Mean	3.9886	3.6449	4.2727
SD	0.76041	0.68897	0.55552
Skewness	-1.525	-0.769	-0.435
Kurtosis	4.043	0.713	1.051

Notes: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$;

EIAL – emotionally intelligent academic leadership, OC – organizational commitment, OCB – organizational citizenship behaviour.

Table 2 shows the positive relationship between the variables used in the study, i.e. emotionally intelligent academic leadership, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behaviour. The data is substantially skewed.

Reliability and Validity of the Measurement Model

The precondition to run the factor analysis (Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin) and Bartlett's test of sphericity analysis were performed. The test results indicate that the sample was appropriate for factor analysis, as given in *Table 3*.

Table 3. *Results of the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of sampling adequacy*

Test for Emotionally Intelligent Academic Leadership (EIAL)	
Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.927
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	
Approx. Chi-Square	2503.061
Sig.	0
Variance Explained	58.92
Test for organizational commitment (OC)	
Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.7
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	
Approx. Chi-Square	1038.35
Sig.	0
Variance Explained	66.28
Test for organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB)	
Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.86
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	
Approx. Chi-Square	1192.415
Sig.	0
Variance Explained	54.54

The Cronbach alpha value was tested, and it was 0.909 for EIAL, .705 for OC, and .856 for OCB. The AVEs were 0.4569 (EIAL), 0.553 (O.C.), and 0.476 (OCB), indicating convergent validity and, indirectly, content validity, with the exception of organizational commitment. The reliability of all constructs was demonstrated by CR yielding the following values: EIAL (.930), organizational commitment (.948), and OCB (.900), as given in *Table 4*.

Table 4. *Reliability and validity of the scales*

	Indicator	Factor loading	AVE	Composite reliability	Cronbach alpha
EIAL (Emotionally Intelligent Academic Leadership)	16	0.758–0.856	0.456	0.930	0.909
OC (Organizational Commitment)	15	0.664–0.795	0.553	0.948	0.705
OCB (Organizational Citizenship Behaviour)	10	0.657–0.841	0.476	0.9	0.856

Testing the Hypotheses with the Structural Equation Model

The structural model was examined using a PLM–SEM technique. *Table 5* and *Figure 2* describe the structural model. The first hypothesis suggests that an emotionally intelligent academic leadership significantly impacts faculty members' organizational commitment. Hypothesis 1 is supported ($\beta = 0.3791$; $t = 8.16$; $p < 0.001$), as seen in *Table 5* and *Figure 2*. This finding corroborates H1 of the study by demonstrating the importance of EIAL for organizational commitment. H2 is accepted since there is an important link between emotionally intelligent academic leadership and the OCB of university professors ($\beta = 0.522$; $t = 11.44$; $p < 0.001$). The next hypothesis (H3) indicates a significant association between OC and OCB among faculty members ($\beta = 0.392$; $t = 8.43$; $p < 0.001$); hence, H3 is accepted. OCB significantly mediates the relationship between EIAL and faculty members' organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.204$; $t = 6.83$; p 0.001), demonstrating that H4 is valid. High t values show that the independent variable EIAL significantly influences the mediating variable OCB and the dependent variable commitment. The moderating variable OCB also has an effect on the dependent variable OC.

Table 5. *Structural model*

Hypothesis	Coefficients	Standard Deviation	t-Statistic	p-Value	Decision
Emotionally intelligent academic leadership → organizational commitment	0.3791	0.046	8.16	***	Supported
Emotionally intelligent academic leadership → organizational citizenship behaviour	0.522	0.046	11.44	***	Supported
Organizational commitment → organizational citizenship behaviour	0.392	0.046	8.43	***	Supported
Emotionally intelligent academic leadership → organizational citizenship behaviour → organizational commitment	0.204	0.03	6.83	***	Supported

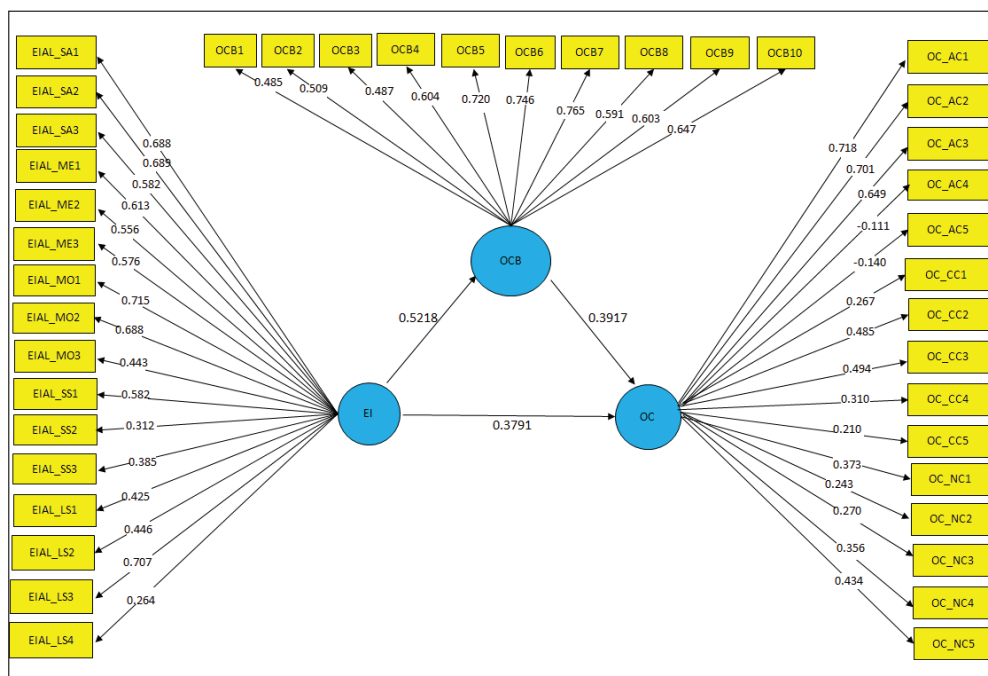Note: * $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Figure 2. *PLS–SEM model*

5. Discussion

The core interest of this academic research was to explore and identify the leadership skills and the emotional dimensions of academic leaders in the Indian education system. Thus, this study used a survey method to collect data from the faculty members to understand how they perceive their leaders and how their leadership influences their organizational commitment. The study also explored the association between organizational citizenship behaviour and organizational commitment among faculty members. The role of organizational citizenship behaviour as a mediating variable is also explored. The main findings support the first hypothesis, which states that leaders in the academic sector will strongly and significantly impact the commitment level of their co-working professors. This study was closely linked with some of the previous literature (e.g. Qureshi, 2015). These findings show that emotional, academic leadership is absolutely crucial in motivating employees to become more invested in their organizations. Emotionally intelligent leaders positively impact their followers' affective, normative, and continuous commitment (Moin, 2018). In today's competitive climate, dedicated

and professionally committed professionals are vital assets to the success of any organization. Leaders with emotional intelligence can promote employee creativity. Furthermore, leaders with emotional maturity inspire and encourage subordinates to work better (Long and Kowang, 2015).

The second finding of the research confirms hypotheses H2 and H3. Data also revealed that 63% of the respondents strongly agreed that their academic leaders are emotionally mature and intelligent. The findings suggest that, similar to prior studies, self-awareness is the most widely recognized feature of emotional intelligence with 57% of the faculties reporting it (Long and Kowang, 2015). According to the findings, 61% of the respondents stated that they were committed to their organization. Among the commitment dimensions, the highest commitment was the affective commitment, in line with Absar (2010).

Nevertheless, an experiential study considering university professors from across the nation shows that a majority of them have a long-term commitment towards their organization because of the risks and costs of leaving. In summary, we may say that faculty members who work at universities have a long-term commitment since they want to remain with the organization. Teachers in arts and science institutions, on the other hand, have an affective commitment since they are emotionally invested in the organization. The study also analysed faculty members' organizational citizenship behaviour and found that 56% of the respondents accepted their citizenship behaviour towards the organization, in line with the literature (Ehrhart and Desai, 2019).

The final finding is in the context of the fourth hypothesis of this research. The conclusion aligns with Hasani et al. (2013), as affective and continuous commitments are strongly associated with organizational citizenship behaviour. One of the significant findings of this academic research was to establish the hypothesized relation that academic leaders strongly influence the citizenship behaviour of their fellow faculty members. This study demonstrated the association that academic leaders significantly influence co-working professors in the Indian higher education sector. However, this finding was supported by Miao (2018), who testifies to a similar relationship in other industries. This finding must be examined in the context of India's higher education system in general, as leaders in this sector often get influenced by traditional administrative philosophies (Parker 2013). Previous research provides strong evidence that humble leaders will significantly impact their fellow employees' citizenship behaviour (Qian et al., 2020). Furthermore, the Indian academic system emphasizes ranking and achieving world-class educational standing (Banker and Bhal, 2020).

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study examines the impact of emotionally intelligent academic leadership on organizational citizenship behaviour and organizational commitment among faculty members in India's arts and science colleges. The research explores the association and effect of citizenship behaviour on faculty members on the commitment aspects. Organizational citizenship behaviour plays a mediator role in the relationship between emotionally intelligent academic leadership and organizational commitment. This research is novel in that it considers this relationship in the context of the higher education sector in India in particular.

Managerial Implications

Academic leaders in the Indian education system need to exhibit emotional intelligence to enhance the level of organizational commitment among their colleagues and faculty members. Human resource capital is always the foundation of any organization, especially in the education sector, and success and reputation among the parents and students cannot be achieved without committed employees. Therefore, academic leaders should not behave as traditional managers. Instead, they should be leaders with motivation, self-respect, empathy, and social skills. They should take the initiative to ensure that the entire teaching staff receives appreciation and encouragement from the top management to be committed. Our findings can be beneficial to top-level management in the education sector in that they should invest in training and soft skills programmes to enhance their academic leaders' emotional intelligence. They will then be able to motivate their faculty members and ensure their commitment to the organization.

Research Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study has its share of limitations that can be investigated in future studies. First, due to the unforeseen COVID-19 pandemic, a large number of teachers and a wider geographic area were eliminated. This omission could have had a negative impact on the research findings. Future studies could revisit the postulated association with broad geographical regions and diverse objectives. Second, the study's sample was limited to the education industry. The leadership style differs from one service industry to another such as hotels, banking, and insurance. Other service industries could be subjected to similar research. Third, university faculties might have been included in a study sample, but they were excluded due to official prohibitions. Finally, additional research is needed to determine the pattern of academic leadership, either as a leader or as a traditional manager, on the intended research.

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