



EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract: *Emotional Intelligence (EI) has gained increasing recognition as a critical component of effective leadership in higher education institutions. Academic leaders, including university administrators, deans, and department heads, must navigate complex organizational dynamics, manage diverse faculty and student bodies, and make decisions that influence institutional success. This thesis explores the role of EI in academic leadership, examining its impact on decision-making, conflict resolution, faculty satisfaction, and student outcomes.*

Key words: *Emotional Intelligence, Academic Leadership, Higher Education, Leadership Effectiveness, Institutional Performance, Faculty Satisfaction, Student Outcomes.*

Higher education institutions face growing challenges in an increasingly dynamic and competitive global environment. Academic leaders must balance administrative responsibilities, faculty development, student engagement, and institutional growth. Traditional leadership models often emphasize technical and cognitive skills; however, emotional intelligence (EI) is emerging as a key determinant of effective leadership. EI refers to the ability to recognize, understand, and manage emotions in oneself and others, enabling leaders to navigate complex interpersonal relationships and foster a positive institutional culture.

This thesis examines the role of EI in academic leadership within higher education institutions. Specifically, it explores how EI competencies—self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills—contribute to effective decision-making, conflict resolution, faculty satisfaction, and student engagement.

Scholars have widely acknowledged the importance of EI in leadership across various sectors, including education. Goleman (1998) argues that EI is more critical than IQ for leadership success, emphasizing that emotionally intelligent leaders are better at building relationships, managing stress, and driving team performance. Research by Mayer and Salovey (1997) further refines the concept, categorizing EI into four key domains: perceiving emotions, using emotions to facilitate thinking, understanding emotions, and managing emotions.

In the context of higher education, EI is linked to effective leadership styles (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2005), improved faculty-administrator relationships (Scott et al., 2010), and enhanced student learning experiences (Boyatzis et al., 2002). Leaders with





MODERN PROBLEMS IN EDUCATION AND THEIR SCIENTIFIC SOLUTIONS

high EI are more adept at handling institutional challenges, fostering collaboration, and creating an inclusive educational environment.

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. The research sample includes university administrators, deans, department chairs, and faculty members across multiple higher education institutions. The EI of academic leaders is assessed using the Emotional Intelligence Appraisal (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009), and leadership effectiveness is evaluated through faculty and student feedback surveys. Qualitative interviews provide deeper insights into how EI influences leadership decision-making and institutional performance.

Diagram 1. Main challenges to implement EI in higher education system

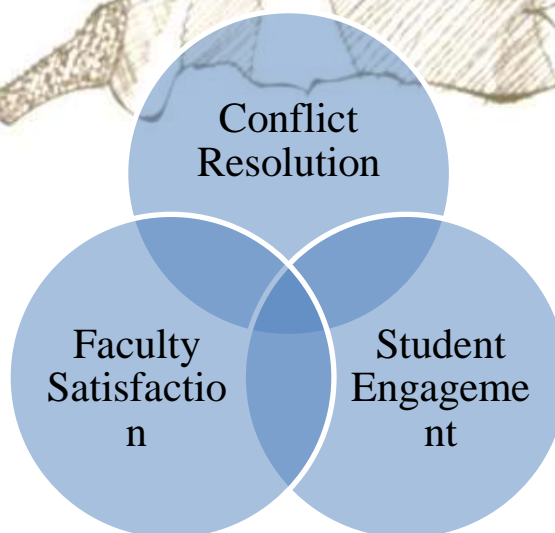


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Findings and Discussion Preliminary findings indicate a strong positive correlation between EI and leadership effectiveness in higher education. Leaders with higher EI scores demonstrate better conflict resolution skills, foster a more collaborative institutional culture, and contribute to improved faculty and student satisfaction. Specifically:

EI helps academic leaders make balanced, well-informed decisions by integrating emotional awareness with rational analysis.

Diagram 2. EI benefits for leaders on making adequate decisions



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MODERN PROBLEMS IN EDUCATION AND THEIR SCIENTIFIC SOLUTIONS

Leaders with high EI manage faculty disputes more effectively, ensuring fair resolutions that promote institutional harmony.

Faculty members report higher job satisfaction and commitment when working under emotionally intelligent leaders.

Students benefit from an emotionally intelligent leadership approach, as it promotes inclusivity, support, and a positive learning environment.

Additionally, the study finds that EI enhances adaptability in leadership roles. Academic leaders with high EI can better navigate institutional changes, address challenges proactively, and maintain team morale during periods of transition. This adaptability is crucial in times of crisis, such as financial constraints, policy reforms, or global disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Using a mixed-methods approach, this study analyzes the correlation between EI competencies and leadership effectiveness in universities. Findings suggest that higher EI among academic leaders enhances communication, fosters a positive institutional culture, and improves overall institutional performance. Recommendations for integrating EI training into leadership development programs are also discussed.

Moreover, EI contributes to ethical leadership in higher education. Leaders who exhibit emotional intelligence are more likely to demonstrate ethical decision-making, transparency, and integrity, fostering a culture of trust and accountability within academic institutions. This ethical framework supports institutional growth, enhances faculty collaboration, and strengthens student confidence in leadership.

The study underscores the significance of EI in academic leadership within higher education. Institutions should prioritize EI training and development programs for university leaders to enhance decision-making, faculty engagement, and student success. Recommendations include integrating EI assessment in leadership selection processes, offering EI-based professional development, and fostering a culture of emotional awareness within educational institutions.

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MODERN PROBLEMS IN EDUCATION AND THEIR SCIENTIFIC
SOLUTIONS

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