

Emotional Intelligence and Sustainable Faculty Life Satisfaction: Implications for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Higher Education

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Abstract

The changing dynamics of higher education institutions have increased the importance of employee well-being, emotional competencies and inclusive workplace practices. Faculty are continuously exposed to academic pressure, technological adaptation, research expectations and work–family responsibilities, which may affect their overall life satisfaction. In this context, emotional intelligence has emerged as an essential psychological resource that helps individuals manage emotions, maintain interpersonal relationships and cope with occupational stress. The present study examines the relationship between emotional intelligence and sustainable faculty life satisfaction in higher educational institutions and explores its implications for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). The study is based on primary data collected from 200 married faculty employed in top 200 NIRF ranked institutions in India. Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis were used to analyze the data. The findings indicate a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and faculty life satisfaction.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Life Satisfaction, Faculty, Sustainability, Higher Education Institutes

Introduction

Higher education institutions are experiencing significant transformations driven by technological advancements, evolving pedagogical practices, globalization, and increasing diversity among faculty and student populations (Chugh et al., 2023; Fernandez et al., 2023). These developments have expanded the roles of faculty members beyond traditional teaching and research responsibilities. Academics are increasingly expected to demonstrate research

excellence, secure external funding, integrate digital technologies into teaching, participate in institutional service, and contribute to inclusive learning environments. Consequently, the complexity of academic work has increased substantially, placing greater psychological and professional demands on faculty members (**Kinman & Johnson, 2019; Watermeyer et al., 2021**).

The growing demands of academic work have intensified concerns regarding faculty well-being and long-term sustainability. Faculty members are required to balance multiple professional responsibilities while simultaneously managing personal and family commitments. Such pressures may contribute to stress, burnout, and reduced well-being, thereby affecting both individual and institutional performance. In this context, sustainable life satisfaction has emerged as an important indicator of faculty well-being. It refers to a stable and enduring sense of satisfaction derived from meaningful work, positive interpersonal relationships, work–life balance, and opportunities for personal and professional growth. Faculty members who experience higher levels of life satisfaction are more likely to demonstrate commitment, productivity, innovation, and effectiveness in their academic roles, thereby contributing to institutional success and educational quality.

Previous studies have identified several factors influencing faculty life satisfaction, including organizational support, work–life balance, job security, collegial relationships, and personal coping mechanisms (**Diener et al., 2018; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Kinman, 2016**). Among these, emotional intelligence (EI) has gained considerable attention as an important psychological resource. **Mayer and Salovey (1997)** defined emotional intelligence as the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and manage emotions effectively, while **Goleman (1995)** emphasized its role in promoting self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and social competence. Individuals with higher emotional intelligence are generally better equipped to manage workplace stress, adapt to changing environments, and maintain positive interpersonal relationships. These competencies are particularly important in higher education settings, where faculty members regularly interact with students, colleagues, administrators, and stakeholders from diverse backgrounds.

The importance of emotional intelligence becomes even more evident within the growing emphasis on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in higher education. Contemporary universities strive to create inclusive environments that value diversity, ensure equitable opportunities, and foster a sense of belonging among all members of the academic community.

Achieving these objectives requires faculty members to demonstrate empathy, cultural sensitivity, effective communication, and respect for diverse perspectives. Emotional intelligence may therefore facilitate inclusive interactions, strengthen workplace relationships, and support the successful implementation of DEI initiatives.

Despite the recognized importance of emotional intelligence and faculty well-being, limited research has specifically examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and sustainable faculty life satisfaction within the context of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Existing studies have primarily focused on job satisfaction, organizational commitment, or psychological well-being, with relatively less attention devoted to sustainable life satisfaction among faculty members. Addressing this gap is important because emotionally intelligent faculty may be better positioned to manage occupational demands, maintain positive professional relationships, and thrive in increasingly diverse academic environments. Therefore, the present study examines the relationship between emotional intelligence and sustainable faculty life satisfaction and explores its implications for fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education institutions.

Literature Review

A substantial body of research has examined the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and life satisfaction (LS), with most studies reporting a positive association between the two constructs. Emotional intelligence refers to an individual's ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and utilize emotions effectively (**Mayer & Salovey, 1997**). Theoretically, emotionally intelligent individuals are better equipped to manage stress, develop positive interpersonal relationships, and maintain psychological well-being, which in turn contributes to greater life satisfaction (**Goleman, 1995**). Empirical evidence largely supports this proposition. For instance, **Extremera and Fernandez-Berrocal (2005)** found that emotional intelligence was positively associated with life satisfaction and psychological adjustment among adults. Similarly, **Palmer et al. (2002)** reported that emotionally intelligent individuals experienced higher levels of happiness, optimism, and life satisfaction. Research by **Cazan and Nastasa (2015)** further demonstrated that emotional intelligence significantly predicted life satisfaction

through enhanced coping abilities and emotional regulation. More recently, **Kartol et al. (2024)** found that emotional intelligence positively predicted life satisfaction both directly and indirectly through resilience and reduced perceived stress. In educational settings, **Singh and Dhillon (2024)** observed that university teachers with higher emotional intelligence reported significantly greater life satisfaction, highlighting the relevance of emotional competencies in academic professions. Despite these predominantly positive findings, some researchers have suggested that the relationship between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction is not always direct or equally strong across contexts. For example, **Thingujam (2011)** found that the association between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction became non-significant after controlling for personality traits and affectivity, indicating that personality factors may explain part of the relationship. Similarly, **Olasupo et al. (2021)** reported that emotional intelligence influenced life satisfaction indirectly through variables such as optimism and social connectedness. Supporting this perspective, **Extremera et al., & Sanchez-Alvarez et al. (2013)** demonstrated that resilience, affect balance, and emotional experiences mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction. These findings suggest that emotional intelligence may contribute to life satisfaction through various psychological mechanisms rather than functioning as an independent predictor in all circumstances. Overall, the literature indicates that emotional intelligence is generally associated with higher life satisfaction; however, the magnitude and nature of this relationship may vary depending on individual characteristics, contextual factors, and intervening psychological processes. Consequently, further research is needed to examine how emotional intelligence contributes to sustainable life satisfaction among faculty members working in increasingly complex and diverse higher education environments.

Significance of the study

The increasing demands of teaching, research, administration, and community engagement have heightened the importance of faculty well-being and long-term sustainability in higher education. Sustainable life satisfaction is essential for enhancing teaching effectiveness, research productivity, institutional commitment, and overall organizational performance. Although emotional intelligence is recognized as a key psychological resource for emotion regulation, stress management, and interpersonal effectiveness, its role in promoting sustainable life satisfaction among faculty remains underexplored. Furthermore, the growing emphasis on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) necessitates understanding how emotional

competencies support inclusive interactions and positive workplace relationships, thereby contributing to more supportive and sustainable academic environments.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The present study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and sustainable life satisfaction among faculty members working in higher education institutions.

Sample size

Study comprised married faculty members employed in the top 100 (NIRF) ranked higher education institutions in India. To ensure that participants had substantial professional and family responsibilities, only faculty members aged between 25 and 55 years and having at least one child were included in the study. A total of 200 faculty members participated in the study. The respondents were selected using purposive sampling based on the predefined inclusion criteria.

Research Instruments

Emotional intelligence was measured using the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) developed by **Schutte et al. (1998)**. The scale consists of 33 items distributed across four dimensions: perception of emotions, managing one's own emotions, managing others' emotions, and utilization of emotions. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The scale has demonstrated high internal consistency, with a reliability coefficient of 0.90. Life satisfaction was assessed using the Life Satisfaction Instrument developed by **Na-Nan and Wongwiwatthanakit (2020)**. The instrument comprises 18 items categorized into four dimensions: relationships with family and others, life and society, personal life, and working life and self-development. Responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The scale reported a reliability coefficient of 0.855, indicating satisfactory internal consistency and reliability.

Results and Discussion

Table 1. Descriptive Analysis

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Emotional Intelligence	3.87	0.54	-0.41	-0.38
Perception of Emotions	3.82	0.61	-0.36	-0.44
Managing One's Own Emotions	3.91	0.58	-0.29	-0.32
Managing Others' Emotions	3.79	0.63	-0.47	-0.41
Utilization of Emotions	3.95	0.57	-0.33	-0.27
Life Satisfaction	3.84	0.52	-0.38	-0.35
Relationships with Family and Others	3.98	0.56	-0.48	-0.43
Personal Life	3.81	0.59	-0.42	-0.31
Life and Society	3.76	0.61	-0.35	-0.29
Working Life and Self-Development	3.80	0.58	-0.31	-0.26

Results from table 1 shows that all skewness and kurtosis values fall within the acceptable range of ± 1 , indicating that the data are approximately normally distributed and suitable for statistical analyses.

Table 2. Correlation Analysis

Variables	LS	Relationship with Family and Others	Personal Life	Life and Society	Working Life and Self-Development
Emotional Intelligence	.61**	.55**	.53**	.58**	.57**
Perception of Emotion	.49**	.45**	.42**	.47**	.44**
Managing Own Emotions	.65**	.59**	.57**	.61**	.60**
Managing Others' Emotions	.57**	.51**	.48**	.55**	.53**

Variables	LS	Relationship with Family and Others	Personal Life	Life and Society	Working Life and Self-Development
Utilization of Emotion	.63**	.56**	.55**	.60**	.58**

The results indicate that emotional intelligence was positively and significantly correlated with overall life satisfaction ($r = .61, p < .01$), suggesting that faculty members with higher emotional intelligence tend to experience greater satisfaction with life. Emotional intelligence was also positively associated with all dimensions of life satisfaction, including Relationship with Family and Others ($r = .55, p < .01$), Personal Life ($r = .53, p < .01$), Life and Society ($r = .58, p < .01$), and Working Life and Self-Development ($r = .57, p < .01$).

Among the dimensions of emotional intelligence, Managing Own Emotions exhibited the strongest relationship with overall life satisfaction ($r = .65, p < .01$), followed by Utilization of Emotion ($r = .63, p < .01$). Similarly, Managing Own Emotions demonstrated the highest correlations with Relationship with Family and Others ($r = .59, p < .01$), Personal Life ($r = .57, p < .01$), Life and Society ($r = .61, p < .01$), and Working Life and Self-Development ($r = .60, p < .01$). These findings suggest that faculty members who effectively regulate their emotions are more likely to maintain satisfying family relationships, experience personal well-being, engage positively with society, and achieve greater satisfaction in their professional lives and self-development activities.

Overall, the results demonstrate that all dimensions of emotional intelligence are significantly and positively related to life satisfaction and its dimensions, indicating that emotional competencies play an important role in enhancing the overall quality of life among faculty members.

Discussion

The findings reveal that emotional intelligence is an important determinant of life satisfaction among married faculty members working in top-ranked higher education institutions. Faculty members possessing higher levels of emotional intelligence reported greater satisfaction in their family relationships, personal lives, social interactions, and professional development. These findings support the theoretical propositions of **Mayer and Salovey (1997)**, who argued

that emotional intelligence facilitates adaptive emotional regulation, effective coping, and successful interpersonal functioning.

The strongest correlations were observed between Managing Own Emotions and the dimensions of life satisfaction, indicating that the ability to regulate emotional responses is particularly important for faculty members who continuously balance academic responsibilities with family and social obligations. Faculty members who can effectively manage their emotions are better positioned to maintain harmonious relationships, cope with occupational stress, and derive meaning from both personal and professional experiences.

Furthermore, the positive association between emotional intelligence and Working Life and Self-Development suggests that emotionally intelligent faculty members are more likely to perceive their careers as meaningful and experience greater satisfaction with their professional growth. Similarly, the significant relationship between emotional intelligence and Relationship with Family and Others highlights the role of emotional competencies in fostering empathy, communication, and supportive interpersonal relationships.

These findings are consistent with previous studies that reported positive relationships between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction (**Palmer et al., 2002; Extremera & Fernandez-Berrocal, 2005; Kartol et al., 2024**). The results suggest that emotional intelligence serves as a valuable psychological resource that enhances satisfaction across multiple life domains. Therefore, higher education institutions may benefit from incorporating emotional intelligence development programs into faculty training and development initiatives to promote sustainable life satisfaction, well-being, and long-term professional effectiveness.

Conclusion

The present study examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and sustainable life satisfaction among married faculty members with children working in top NIRF-ranked higher education institutions in India. The findings revealed a significant and positive relationship between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction, indicating that faculty members with higher emotional intelligence tend to experience greater satisfaction across various domains of life. Among the dimensions of emotional intelligence, managing one's own emotions and utilization of emotions exhibited the strongest associations with life satisfaction, highlighting the importance of emotional regulation and constructive use of emotions in enhancing overall well-being. The results support the theoretical proposition that emotional

intelligence serves as a valuable psychological resource that enables individuals to cope effectively with personal and professional challenges, maintain positive interpersonal relationships, and achieve long-term well-being. Furthermore, the study extends the existing literature by demonstrating the relevance of emotional intelligence in promoting sustainable life satisfaction within the context of contemporary higher education.

Implications

- The findings highlight emotional intelligence as an important psychological resource for fostering inclusive and respectful academic environments.
- Higher levels of emotional intelligence may enhance empathy, emotional awareness, and sensitivity toward individuals from diverse cultural, social, and demographic backgrounds.
- Emotionally intelligent faculty members are more likely to engage in effective communication and develop positive interpersonal relationships, thereby strengthening inclusion and a sense of belonging within academic communities.
- Emotional intelligence can support equitable teaching practices by enabling faculty to better understand and respond to the diverse needs and experiences of students.
- Enhanced emotional competencies may help faculty manage interpersonal conflicts constructively and promote collaboration among diverse stakeholders within higher education institutions.
- The positive association between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction suggests that emotionally intelligent faculty are better positioned to contribute to supportive, inclusive, and psychologically safe workplace environments.
- Higher education institutions may incorporate emotional intelligence training into faculty development and leadership programs to strengthen Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives.
- Promoting emotional intelligence among faculty can contribute to sustainable well-being, improved institutional climate, and the development of more equitable and inclusive higher education systems.

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