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Emotional Intelligence and Employee Outcomes among Special School Teachers in Kerala: An Integrated CFA and Structural Equation Modelling Approach

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ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence has become an essential psychological asset impacting job results in emotionally taxing fields, including special education. This study investigates the structural links between emotional intelligence and employee outcomes among special school teachers in Kerala, employing a CFA–SEM integrated analytical approach. Data were gathered from 606 special school teachers using a structured questionnaire and evaluated using confirmatory factor analysis to validate the measurement model, subsequently employing covariance-based structural equation modeling to assess the proposed correlations. The findings demonstrate that emotional intelligence exerts a substantial and favorable influence on job satisfaction, job commitment, job performance, and organizational citizenship behavior. Mediation research indicates that emotional intelligence has a substantial direct impact on job commitment, although job satisfaction does not significantly mediate this link. These results indicate that emotional intelligence serves as an inherent attribute that directly improves professional efficacy, rather than functioning through intermediary processes. The study emphasizes the significance of enhancing emotional intelligence to elevate employee outcomes and maintain efficacy in special education settings.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Employee Outcomes, Confirmatory Factor Analysis, Structural Equation Modelling, Special School Teachers

INTRODUCTION

It is commonly known that teaching in special education settings is a job that takes a lot of emotional commitment, mental toughness, and good social skills. Teachers at special schools often work with kids who have mental, physical, and emotional difficulties. This means they have to be able to control their emotions, be patient, and be dedicated to their jobs all the time. Such emotionally demanding work conditions frequently result in stress, emotional fatigue, and role overload, thus undermining teachers' job performance and long-term professional retention (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Consequently, comprehending the psychological resources that empower special school instructors to maintain efficacy in adverse settings has emerged as a significant domain of educational and organizational research.

Emotional intelligence (EI) has garnered significant academic focus as an essential skill that facilitates effective performance in emotionally challenging professional environments. Emotional intelligence is the capacity to recognize, comprehend, manage, and use emotions in oneself and others to influence cognition and conduct (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1995). Teachers that are more emotionally intelligent are better able to handle stress in the classroom, get along with students and coworkers, and deal with emotionally charged situations in a positive way (Goleman, 1998; Brackett & Katulak, 2006). Emotional intelligence is especially important for teachers in special schools since their jobs demand them to be emotionally involved with their kids all the time and give each one of them emotional assistance (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

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Prior empirical research has associated emotional intelligence with several favorable employee outcomes, such as job satisfaction, job commitment, job performance, and organizational citizenship behavior (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Organ, 1988; Podsakoff et al., 2000). Educators possessing elevated emotional intelligence often indicate enhanced job satisfaction, a deeper emotional commitment to their vocation, superior task performance, and increased participation in discretionary behaviors that foster institutional efficacy (Meyer et al., 2002). Nonetheless, a significant portion of the current literature has analyzed these linkages either in isolation or within the framework of general education or non-educational organizational environments. Research concentrating solely on special school instructors is still scarce, notwithstanding the unique emotional challenges inherent in special education

(Brackett & Katulak, 2006).

Additionally, several prior research have predominantly utilized simplistic correlational or regression-based analytical methods, which fail to adequately represent the intricate and interconnected characteristics of psychological categories like emotional intelligence and employee outcomes. Emotional intelligence is fundamentally complex, and employee results frequently manifest concurrently rather than in isolation. Consequently, there is an increasing demand for model-based analytical methodologies, including confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM), which facilitate the concurrent evaluation of measurement validity and structural interrelations among latent variables (Hair et al., 1998; Hair et al., 2010).

Structural equation modeling offers an extensive framework for analyzing both direct and indirect interactions among constructs, while considering measurement error. The combination of CFA and SEM lets researchers check the underlying factor structure of emotional intelligence and employee outcome variables and see how emotional intelligence affects many outcomes in one clear model (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hu & Bentler, 1999). Moreover, SEM enables the investigation of mediation mechanisms, providing enhanced understanding of whether emotional intelligence affects employee outcomes directly or indirectly via factors such as job satisfaction.

In the Indian setting, especially in Kerala, there is a lack of empirical research utilizing CFA–SEM to investigate emotional intelligence and employee outcomes among special school instructors. Kerala's strong focus on inclusive education and social development makes it a good place to look into how emotional intelligence might help people do their jobs better in special education settings (NCTE, 2014; Government of Kerala, 2020). It is crucial to address this gap not only to enhance academic comprehension but also to guide teacher development programs and institutional support systems.

In this context, the current study formulates and evaluates an integrated CFA–SEM model to investigate the structural relationships between emotional intelligence and essential employee outcomes—specifically job satisfaction, job commitment, job performance, and organizational citizenship behavior—among special school teachers in Kerala. By utilizing a model-based analytical framework, the study aims to clarify the function of emotional intelligence as an inherent skill that improves professional efficacy in emotionally demanding educational settings.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a quantitative, explanatory research methodology to examine the structural links between emotional intelligence and employee outcomes among special school teachers in Kerala. A model-based analytical methodology that combines Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and covariance-based Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) is utilized to authenticate the measurement framework and evaluate the suggested correlations among latent constructs (Hair et al., 1998; Hair et al., 2010).

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

The study paradigm defines emotional intelligence as a higher-order latent construct that includes both personal and social competence elements, in line with recognized emotional intelligence models (Goleman, 1998; Mayer

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et al., 2004). Job happiness, job dedication, job performance, and organizational citizenship behavior are examples of several latent variables that show how employees do their jobs. The paradigm posits that emotional intelligence significantly impacts employee outcomes in emotionally taxing professional environments, such as special education. Furthermore, job satisfaction is analyzed as a mediating variable in the correlation between emotional intelligence and job commitment, illustrating theoretical postulations about the influence of work attitudes on professional dedication (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Utilizing this framework, the study develops hypotheses to investigate the direct impacts of emotional intelligence on job satisfaction, job commitment, job performance, and organizational citizenship behavior, alongside the mediating influence of job satisfaction on the emotional intelligence–job commitment relationship. This section describes the conceptual framework. The Results and Discussion section has structural and measurement model representations.

Research Design and Data Collection

The study employs an explanatory research approach suitable for hypothesis testing through structural modeling techniques (Kothari, 2004). Primary data were gathered from 606 special school instructors working at special education facilities throughout Kerala. The data were collected through a standardized questionnaire aimed at assessing emotional intelligence and employee outcome characteristics. Emotional intelligence was evaluated through items representing personal and social competence dimensions, whereas job satisfaction, job commitment, job performance, and organizational citizenship behavior were measured using recognized indicators pertinent to educational and organizational settings (Organ, 1988; Podsakoff et al., 2000). A Likert-type scale was used to measure all of the items. People who took part in the study did so of their own free will, and their answers were kept private. The sample size was deemed sufficient for CFA–SEM analysis, adhering to established criteria for structural model estimate (Hair et al., 2010).

Analytical Strategy (CFA-SEM)

Data analysis was conducted using a two-stage CFA–SEM approach. In the first stage, Confirmatory Factor Analysis was performed to assess the adequacy of the measurement model and to establish construct reliability and validity. Measurement reliability and convergent validity were evaluated using Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

The following equations were used:

$$CR = \frac{(\sum \lambda)^2}{(\sum \lambda)^2 + \sum \theta}$$

$$AVE = \frac{\sum \lambda^2}{\sum \lambda^2 + \sum \theta}$$

where λ denotes standardized factor loadings and θ denotes error variances.

In the second stage, Structural Equation Modeling was utilized to evaluate the proposed correlations among latent variables. Standard goodness-of-fit indicators were used to check the model's adequacy. These included chi-square per degree of freedom (χ^2/df), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR).

The bootstrapping method was used to look at how job satisfaction acted as a middleman between emotional intelligence and job commitment. We used the product-of-coefficients method to figure out the indirect effect, which is shown as:

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Indirect Effect = a × b

where a signifies the impact of emotional intelligence on job satisfaction and b denotes the influence of job satisfaction on job commitment. Bias-corrected confidence intervals were used to figure out if mediation was statistically significant.
We used covariance-based structural modeling software to do all of the CFA and SEM studies. The outcomes and Discussion section shows the real-world outcomes of the measurement and structural models.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Measurement Model Assessment (Confirmatory Factor Analysis)

Confirmatory Factor Analysis was conducted to assess the adequacy of the measurement model comprising emotional intelligence and employee outcome constructs. The CFA results indicate that the observed indicators load significantly on their respective latent constructs, supporting the proposed factor structure. Reliability and convergent validity of the constructs were established through Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with values meeting recommended thresholds. Discriminant validity was also confirmed, indicating that the constructs are empirically distinct.

The overall measurement model demonstrated satisfactory goodness-of-fit based on standard fit indices, suggesting that the measurement model provides an acceptable representation of the underlying data structure. These results confirm that the measurement instruments used in the study are reliable and valid for subsequent structural analysis.

Model Fit Indices of The CFA Model for Personal Competence Factors

ATTRIBUTES	**CMIN/DF**	**P-Value**	**GFI**	**AGFI**	**CFI**	**RMSEA**
Study model	4.081	0.000	0.966	0.949	0.981	0.063
Recommended value	Acceptable fit [1-5]	Greater than 0.05	Greater than 0.9	Greater than 0.9	Greater than 0.9	Less than 0.08
Literature support	Hair et al., (1998)	Barrett (2007)	Hair et al. (2006)	Hair et al. (2006)	Hu and Bentler (1999)	Hair et al. (2006)

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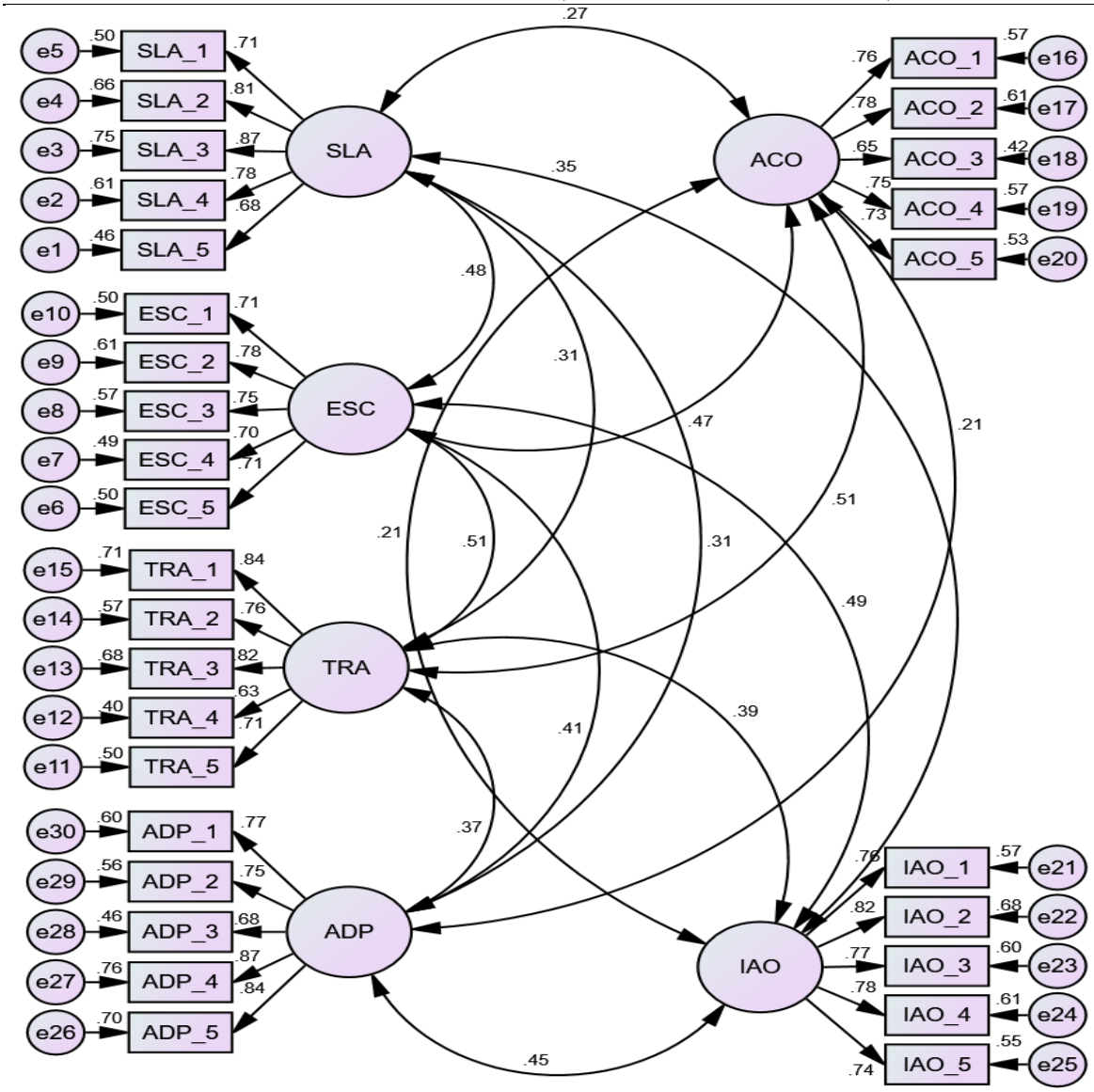

Fig 1: Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Measurement Model for Personal Competence

The CFA findings in Table 1 show that the measurement model fits the data well, since all of the fit indices are above the suggested threshold levels. The standardized factor loadings depicted in Figure 1 demonstrate that all observed indicators significantly load onto their corresponding latent constructs, hence indicating convergent validity. These results validate the measurement model and endorse its applicability for future structural equation modeling.

Structural Model Results

After validating the measurement model, Structural Equation Modelling was utilized to examine the proposed correlations among latent variables. The structural model demonstrated satisfactory goodness-of-fit, suggesting that the suggested framework sufficiently elucidates the links between emotional intelligence and employee outcomes.

The findings indicate that emotional intelligence exerts a significant and favorable influence on job satisfaction, job commitment, job performance, and organizational citizenship behavior among special school instructors. These results indicate that instructors with high emotional intelligence are more likely to have favorable attitudes toward work, be more committed to their jobs, do their jobs well, and do things on their own that help the institution run smoothly.

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Model Fit Indices of the Structural Equation Model

Model	**CMIN/DF**	**P-Value**	**GFI**	**AGFI**	**CFI**	**RMSEA**
Study model	4.851	0.000	0.919	0.905	0.973	0.070
Recommended value	Acceptable fit [1-5]	Greater than 0.05	Greater than 0.9	Greater than 0.9	Greater than 0.9	Less than 0.08

Standardized Path Coefficients and Explained Variance (R^2)

Path	**β**	**R^2 (Endogenous)**	**CR**	**p-value**
EI → Job Satisfaction	0.41	0.17	8.46	<0.001**
EI → Work Engagement	0.56	0.32	10.21	<0.001**
EI → Job Commitment	0.80	0.63	16.74	<0.001**
EI → Job Performance	0.13	0.58	3.07	<0.001**
Work Engagement → Job Performance	0.57	—	10.74	<0.001**
Job Commitment → Job Performance	0.16	—	3.47	<0.001**
Job Satisfaction → Job Performance	0.03	—	1.35	0.297 (NS)

Note: EI = Emotional Intelligence; β = standardized coefficient; CR = Critical Ratio; $p < 0.01$.

Mediation Analysis

The mediating function of job satisfaction in the correlation between emotional intelligence and job commitment was analyzed utilizing the bootstrapping technique. The findings demonstrate that emotional intelligence has a large direct impact on job commitment, although the indirect effect via job satisfaction is not statistically significant. This indicates that job happiness does not serve as a mediator in the association between emotional intelligence and job commitment.

The lack of mediation signifies that emotional intelligence directly bolsters teachers' commitment to their career, irrespective of their job satisfaction level. Emotional intelligence seems to be an inherent psychological trait that enhances professional attachment and responsibility, rather than indirectly affecting commitment through attitudinal processes.

Bootstrapping Results for the Mediating Effect of Job Satisfaction

Independent Construct	**Mediation construct**	**Dependent construct**	**Direct effect**	**Indirect effect (Mediation effect)**	**Result of hypothesis testing**
Emotional Intelligence	Job Satisfaction	Job Commitment	0.75**	0.08^{NS}	**No Mediation**

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DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study's results show that emotional intelligence is really important for how well employees do in jobs that need a lot of emotional work, like special education. The substantial direct impacts of emotional intelligence on job satisfaction, job commitment, job performance, and organizational citizenship behavior underscore its significance as a fundamental psychological resource for special school instructors.

The considerable direct effect of emotional intelligence on job commitment, along with the insignificant mediating effect of job satisfaction, indicates that the commitment of special school instructors is primarily influenced by emotional competencies rather than merely situational job attitudes. This research illustrates the value-driven essence of special education teaching, wherein emotional engagement, empathy, and resilience are crucial in maintaining professional commitment throughout occupational hurdles.

Overall, the results show that emotional intelligence is a key personal skill that directly improves the effectiveness of special school teachers and their contributions to the organization. These results have significant ramifications for teacher training and institutional support, underscoring the necessity to enhance emotional intelligence within professional development programs in special education environments.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the structural links between emotional intelligence and employee outcomes among special school teachers in Kerala utilizing a CFA–SEM methodology. The results show that emotional intelligence has a big and favorable effect on job satisfaction, job commitment, job performance, and organizational citizenship behavior. The biggest direct effect was on job commitment. The findings indicate that work engagement and job commitment considerably enhance job performance, however job happiness does not have a direct impact on performance. Mediation analysis reveals that job satisfaction does not mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and job commitment, underscoring emotional intelligence as an inherent psychological attribute that directly enhances professional attachment and efficacy in special education settings.

The study has significant ramifications for teacher training and institutional policy, indicating that the cultivation of emotional intelligence should be methodically incorporated into professional development programs for special school educators. Subsequent research could expand upon this study by investigating the long-term impacts of emotional intelligence on employee outcomes, analyzing more mediating or moderating variables such as organizational support or burnout, and evaluating the suggested model in various educational contexts or geographies. Comparative research employing mixed-method or experimental methods may further elucidate the impact of emotional intelligence therapies on sustained professional well-being and organizational effectiveness.

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