Emotional Intelligence, Interrole Conflict and Work–Life Balance as Determinants of Faculty Performance in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is a critical personal resource that assists an individual in managing emotions, navigating social complexities and making sound decisions under pressure. In parallel, Work-Life Balance (WLB) has emerged as a vital construct in occupational well-being, especially in professions characterized by overlapping personal and professional roles. For faculty members in higher education, the simultaneous demands of academic workloads, institutional expectations and familial responsibilities often lead to emotional strain, stress and role conflict. This research examines the dynamic interplay between EI and professional functioning among academicians in Kerala's higher education institutions. The correlation of EI with job satisfaction, life satisfaction and occupational stress is analysed; mediating the association between inter-role conflicts, specifically work-family conflict, family-work conflict and WLB; influences on psychological well-being and organizational commitment and ultimately, performance and productivity. Data was collected from 254 full-time faculty members and analysed using various statistical tools, including Pearson correlation, mediation analysis via Hayes' PROCESS macro and structural equation modelling. Findings reveal that EI significantly enhances occupational well-being, mitigates the adverse effects of WFC and FWC on WLB and indirectly contributes to academic performance by fostering psychological resilience and commitment. The findings highlight the importance of cultivating EI as a strategic human capital resource in HEIs, promoting not only individual well-being but also institutional effectiveness. The study creates a valuable perspective for administrators and policymakers aiming to design emotionally intelligent work environments that support sustainable faculty engagement and productivity.

Keywords: *Emotional Intelligence, Work-Life Balance, Higher Education Faculty, Occupational Stress, Psychological Well-being, Mediation Analysis, Structural Equation Modeling*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of constantly shifting dynamic professional landscape, EI is considered an essential psychological resource underpinning individual well-being, interpersonal efficacy and organizational adaptability. Characterised as the ability to perceive, comprehend and regulate as well as express emotions both intra-personally and interpersonally, EI encompasses core elements such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills [1]. The essential elements are functional competences rather than just affective characteristics, which help people deal with stress, resolve disputes, and continue to be actively involved in their work even in high-pressure situations. [2]. In the context of service-intensive domains like education, where human interactions and emotional labor are paramount, EI assumes critical relevance in determining occupational outcomes and psychological resilience. Figure 1 illustrates core components of EI.

Fig.1. Core components of Emotional Intelligence

Faculty members in higher education institutions (HEIs) constitute a distinct professional group often subjected to multifaceted demands that transcend academic instruction. In addition to research commitments, administrative obligations and mentoring responsibilities, they are frequently burdened by shifting institutional policies, performance appraisal systems and competitive funding environments. The increasingly hazy lines between work and home life exacerbate these structural tensions [3]. The lack of temporal and spatial demarcation, especially post-pandemic has intensified work-family conflicts and family-work conflicts, posing significant threats to faculty well-being and sustainable work-life integration. Unresolved inter-

role conflicts contribute to elevated occupational stress, emotional exhaustion and a decline in job satisfaction and productivity.

Work-life balance (WLB) has gained considerable traction as a construct central to institutional functioning and human capital sustainability. Beyond personal well-being, WLB is now seen as a strategic imperative, directly impacting organizational commitment, morale and talent retention [4]. Yet, despite institutional interventions, many faculty members struggle to maintain equilibrium due to psychological, cultural and structural barriers. The rigidities in academic timetables, expectations for after-hours responsiveness and emotional demands from both students and peers often leave educators with insufficient emotional bandwidth for personal recovery and relational engagement. Figure 2 represents the different dimensions of work-life balance.

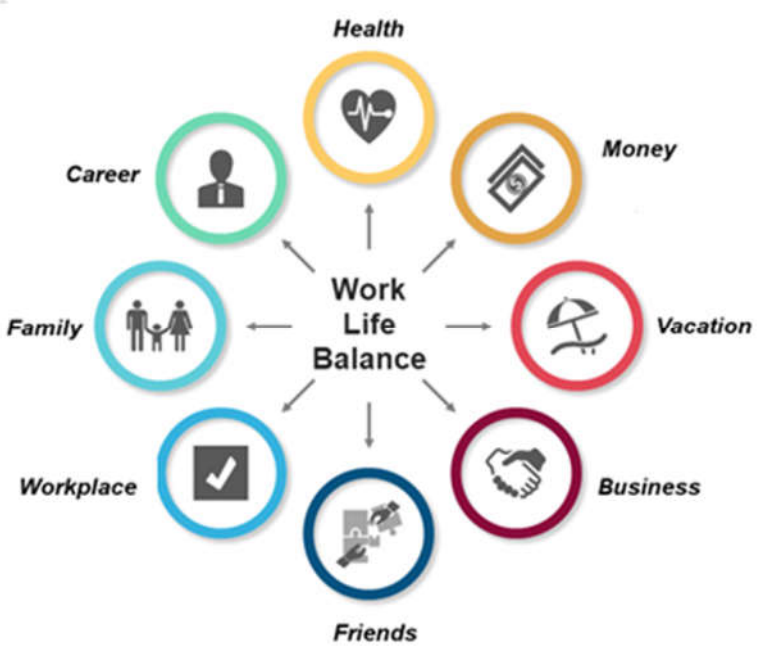

Fig.2. Dimensions of Work-Life Balance

Against this backdrop, emotional intelligence offers a transformative lens through which to understand and mitigate these challenges. As a malleable and learnable capacity, EI equips faculty with cognitive-affective tools to manage stress, resolve interpersonal frictions and reframe adversities in adaptive ways. High-EI individuals are better positioned to perceive early signs of strain, negotiate boundary conflicts assertively and cultivate emotionally rich yet

professionally sustainable relationships [5]. Moreover, EI fosters psychological capital resilience, optimism and self-efficacy, which buffers against burnout and fosters meaningful engagement. Its influence extends beyond individual coping, shaping organizational climates that promote collaboration, inclusivity and shared purpose.

This study adopts an integrative approach to investigate how EI influences occupational well-being organizational commitment and performance outcomes among academicians in Kerala's higher education sector. By examining both direct and mediating relationships, particularly in the case of inter-role conflict and WLB, the research advances a more detailed comprehension of EI's functional role in academic workplaces. In doing so, it offers empirical insights that inform institutional strategies, faculty development programs and psychological interventions aimed at fostering emotionally intelligent educational ecosystems.

2. RELATED WORKS

Sudiro et al. [6] analysed the correlation between EI and Quality of Work Life (QWL) focusing on the attribute of key jobs across various sectors in Indonesia. With 400 distributed questionnaires and an 81% response rate, the data was collected across employees from various industries. Smarts 3.0 was employed for the path analysis, and was observed that employee satisfaction, involvement and perceived organizational support significantly mediated the EI–QWL relationship, while organizational commitment and employee engagement did not demonstrate mediating effects. Of the five job attributes examined, employee involvement had the strongest mediating effect, and EI was found to indirectly enhance QWL most effectively through perceived organizational support. The study was, however, limited by geographical and sectoral scope, being confined to selected Indonesian regions.

Garini & Muafi [7] investigated the correlation between digital competence, WLB, work stress and EI in determining service performance among employees. The data collected from 190 participants across two locations of PT. X, Indonesia, was analyzed utilizing Partial Least Squares (PLS) analysis. The study observed that the digital competence did not directly impact service performance but positively influenced both WLB and stress. While EI dramatically reduced the impact of job stress on service performance, it had no influenc e on the relationship between digital competency, WLB and performance. EI appeared to buffer

the negative effects of stress, aiding employees in preserving functional effectiveness despite personal or workplace pressures. A limitation of the study was the industry-specific context, restricting generalizability beyond PT. X's operational environment.

Geraci et al. [8] studied the role of EI on psychological wellbeing, burnout, work engagement and self-efficacy among teachers due to the COVID-19 pandemic induced remote teaching. The study involved 65 teachers across various educational levels in Sicily, under strict lockdown conditions. The study employed a comprehensive set of validated instruments, including the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI) to assess burnout, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) for work engagement and the Norwegian Teacher's Self Efficacy Scale (NTSES) to measure teaching efficacy. EI was evaluated using both the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) and the Mayer Salovey Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT). Results indicated elevated burnout levels and diminished work engagement and self-efficacy, largely attributed to the abrupt transition to online teaching and heightened health related insecurities. Teachers with higher levels of EI experienced less burnout and retained stronger work engagement and confidence in their teaching efficacy, suggesting EI as a protective buffer under crisis conditions. As a small, predominantly female sample was employed, the generalizability of the study was limited.

Nawaz et al. [9] examined the association between EI, workplace spirituality and occupational stress among faculty members in Chennai based financially autonomous institutions. The study employed the Emotional Competency Inventory (ECI), the Occupational Stress Index (OSI) and the Workplace Spirituality Scale to analyze the data obtained from the faculty members via questionnaires. Results indicated that both EI and workplace spirituality individually predicted occupational stress, with higher spirituality and moderate EI associated with reduced stress levels. It became apparent that there was minimal connection between workplace spirituality, EI and occupational stress. Furthermore, workplace spirituality constructs such as compassion, meaningful work and mindfulness emerged as coping mechanisms, although they did not significantly moderate stress in the academic setting. The study was, however, limited by institutional scope, focusing only on self-financing colleges in a single city.

Iacolino et al. [10] studied the role of EI and metacognition as protective factors against stress and burnout among teachers adapting to remote teaching during COVID-19 pandemic. Involving

604 Sicilian teachers, the study utilized multiple scales and tests, and the data analysis included the Shutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SREIT). Results indicated that EI significantly mediated the link between remote work-related risk factors and stress induced burnout symptoms. Additionally, metacognition moderated the link between risk exposure and EI, reinforcing that both cognitive and emotional regulation are vital in high stress teaching contexts. The absence of longitudinal tracking and certain crucial contextual workplace factors limited the interpretive depth regarding causality and institutional influences, hampering the generalizability of the study.

Afolashade et al. [11] explored the significance of EI, job satisfaction and reward systems on organizational commitment among employees in Ogun State, Nigeria. Data was collected from 250 employees across ten organizations using tools such as Emotional Intelligence Scale, the Job Satisfaction Survey, the Reward System Inventory and the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire. Descriptive statistics such as Pearson correlation and multiple regression techniques were utilized for data analysis to gauge the magnitude and relevance of each predictor. Results revealed that EI had the most significant predictive effect on job commitment, followed by job satisfaction and the reward system. All three factors were observed to have a strong positive association with employees' organizational commitment, indicating that emotional regulation, fulfillment at work and fair compensation are key determinants of workplace loyalty. Adopting a retrospective comparative research approach restricted the study's capacity to infer causality between variables.

Deb et al. [12] examined the mediating role of EI in the relationship between job satisfaction factors and organizational productivity in the small business's domain in Bangladesh. The qualitative insights from focus group discussions with employees and experts and quantitative analysis of survey data from 355 employees were collected for the study. The main factors considered involved working hours, salary, leadership and management, infrastructure and workplace environment and were evaluated using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS SEM). The results highlighted that EI significantly mediated the association of job satisfaction components and overall firm performance. The use of cross-sectional data and a common questionnaire for both predictors and outcomes introduced common method bias, affecting the scalability of the study.

Dias & Rebecca [13] investigated the influence of EI on WLB and employee behavior among production employees in an industrial unit in Colombo District, Sri Lanka. Data collected from 248 participants via questionnaire was subjected to correlation and simple regression analysis in order to investigate the direct and indirect relationships among the variables. The findings revealed EI's positive effect on employees' WLB. The employee behavior was conceptually modeled as both a mediator and moderator; it was found to have an insignificant mediating effect. The use of a single organization and non-random sampling limited the generalizability of the study, and the exclusive reliance on self-report questionnaires introduced response and selection bias.

Begum [14] examined the WLB and the mental wellness of Indian professionals in managerial roles, centering on the moderating role of EI and gender. The data was gathered from 202 managers via elaborate questionnaires modelled using the Work Life Balance Scale (WLB scale), the Mental Health Inventory and the Emotional Intelligence Scale. Descriptive statistics such as correlation and moderation analysis were performed for the deep analysis of the data, revealing a positive association of WLB with psychological wellbeing and a negative association with psychological distress. EI significantly moderated this relationship, enhancing mental health outcomes, while gender showed no moderating effect. Reliance on cross-sectional and self-reported measures constrained the ability to draw causal conclusions and was affected by social desirability tendencies among respondents.

Padilla et al. [15] explored the role of EI, work motivation and QWL on the performance of healthcare employees in Peru, particularly in the framework of COVID-19 pandemic. A descriptive cross-sectional design was developed, incorporating the EI Scale, the Work Motivation Scale, the Quality-of-Life Scale and the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire to collect data from 110 hospital professionals**.** Correlation analysis and multiple linear regression modeling were employed in the statistical analysis, revealing positive correlations between EI ($r = 0.398$) and quality of work life ($r = 0.484$) with work performance, while work motivation showed no significant association. Gender and job role also influenced performance, with female employees and clinical staff performing better. As the key workplace factors like stress and organizational support were not included in the study, the contextual depth and generalizability were hampered.

Abdul Jalil et al. [16] examined the mediational impact of WLB in the relationship between job insecurity and psychological wellbeing among Malaysian precarious workers. Using purposive and snowball sampling, the study surveyed 442 participants who completed the Job Insecurity Scale (JIS), the WLB Scale and the WHO 5 wellbeing Index. Pearson correlation and mediation analysis were conducted with gender and age as covariates. Results indicated that job insecurity negatively correlated with both WLB and psychological wellbeing, while WLB positively influenced psychological wellbeing. Furthermore, WLB significantly mediated the effect of job insecurity on wellbeing, highlighting its role as a psychological buffer for precarious workers. Adaptability of the study was constrained due to the heavy reliance on self-reported data that was affected by social desirability bias.

Lubis et al. [17] investigated the effects of EI, WLB, leadership, work ethics and motivation on employee productivity in a public sector office in Central Tapanuli, North Sumatra. Structured questionnaires were used to extract data from 88 participants, followed by analysis utilizing SEM PLS. The evaluation involved both measurement model validation (via Cronbach's alpha, AVE and Fornell Larcker criterion) and structural model testing. Results revealed that EI, WLB, leadership and motivation significantly enhanced employee performance, while work ethic had no direct effect. Motivation served as a significant moderator for most predictor variables except work ethic. As the study was limited to a single public sector setting and relied on cross sectional, self-reported data, bias was introduced, hampering generalizability. By omitting variables of organizational ethos and professional satisfaction, the study's capability to contextualize employee performance outcomes was limited.

Nair et al. [18] evaluated the role of EI, WLB, job satisfaction and job involvement on professional performance among Malaysian employees. 150 employees across various organizational sectors were surveyed, and PLS-SEM was employed in the data analysis. Results demonstrated that EI, job involvement and job satisfaction positively influenced job performance, with EI and WLB also significantly predicting job satisfaction. No statistically significant direct effect of WLB on job performance was observed, and job satisfaction failed to mediate the link between job involvement and performance. The small and industry limited sample hampered the generalizability of the study.

2.1 Research gap

Despite the growing body of literature linking EI, WLB and occupational outcomes, significant research gaps remain, particularly in understanding these dynamics within specific occupational, cultural and institutional contexts. Many prior studies have focused predominantly on corporate or clinical settings in Western countries, limiting the applicability of findings to diverse workforces such as those in HEIs in Asian regions [15]. Furthermore, existing research often treats EI and WLB as isolated predictors, without adequately exploring their interaction with intermediate psychosocial variables like job stress, wellbeing or organizational commitment [7] [8] [14]. Most studies rely on cross sectional designs and self-reported data, which hinder causal inference and are susceptible to biases such as social desirability [16] [17]. There is also limited integration of moderating and mediating factors such as emotional resilience, institutional support systems and demographic variables that could shape how EI and WLB translate into workplace effectiveness and job-related gratification. Additionally, the mitigating effect of EI on occupational stress and enhancing psychological wellbeing has been underexplored in academic environments, where role overload and emotional labor are prevalent. Addressing these gaps through context specific, multi variable models and longitudinal approaches is essential for designing targeted interventions to foster employee wellbeing and institutional productivity.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

i. How is emotional intelligence associated with key occupational outcome variables specifically job satisfaction, life satisfaction and occupational stress among academicians in HEIs in Kerala?

ii. To what extent do faculty members in Kerala's HEIs perceive emotional intelligence as a valuable resource in managing stressors arising from work life imbalance?

iii. In what ways do academicians practically apply emotional intelligence skills to mitigate work life conflict and maintain personal and professional equilibrium?

iv. How does emotional intelligence influence the psychological wellbeing and organizational commitment of faculty members in HEIs?

v. Do psychological wellbeing and organizational commitment, influenced by emotional intelligence, significantly contribute to faculty performance and productivity?

4. OBJECTIVES

- To identify the correlation between EI and key occupational outcome variables, specifically job satisfaction, life satisfaction and occupational stress, among academicians within Kerala's HEIs.
- To examine the role of EI as a psychological resource in mediating the impact of inter role conflicts specifically, work family and family work conflict on WLB among faculty members in higher education.
- To assess the influence of EI on psychological wellbeing and organizational commitment, and to determine how these factors subsequently affect the performance and productivity of academicians across diverse HEIs in Kerala.

5. PROPOSED HYPOTHESIS

$H_{01:}$ There exists no meaningful association between EI and the occupational outcome variables job satisfaction, life satisfaction and occupational stress among academicians in Kerala.

$H_{11:}$ There exists a significant meaningful association between EI and the occupational outcome variables job satisfaction, life satisfaction and occupational stress among academicians in Kerala.

$H_{02:}$ EI does not significantly mediate the relationship between inter role conflicts and WLB.

$H_{12:}$ EI significantly mediates the relationship between inter role conflicts and WLB.

$H_{03:}$ Emotional intelligence does not significantly influence psychological wellbeing or organizational commitment and these variables do not significantly affect performance and productivity among higher education faculty.

$H_{13:}$ Emotional intelligence significantly influences psychological wellbeing and organizational commitment and these variables, in turn, significantly affect performance and productivity among higher education faculty.

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1 Conceptual framework

The role of EI functions both as an independent and mediating variable in shaping key occupational and organizational outcomes among higher education faculty is illustrated in Figure

3, the conceptual framework of the proposed research. EI, encompassing self-regulation, motivation, empathy and related traits, directly influences job satisfaction and life satisfaction, and reduces occupational stress. It also mediates the impact of inter role conflicts, specifically work-family and family-work conflict, on overall WLB, acting as a psychological resource that helps individuals navigate competing demands. Furthermore, EI contributes to psychological wellbeing and organizational commitment, which in turn enhance faculty performance and productivity. Psychological wellbeing includes resilience, autonomy and environmental mastery, while organizational commitment reflects emotional and institutional attachment. Together, these interlinked pathways highlight the central role of emotional competencies in promoting faculty effectiveness, satisfaction and sustainable work engagement within the academic environment.

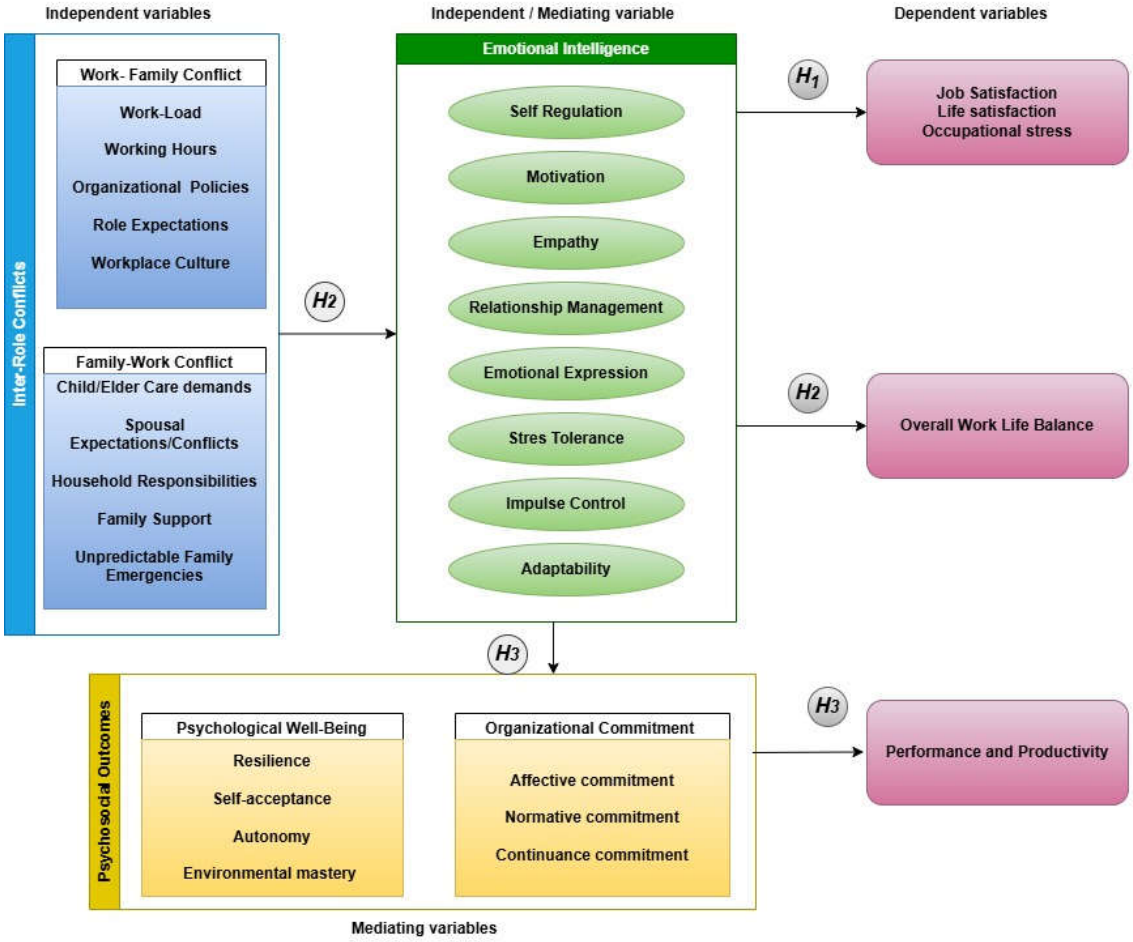

Fig.3. Conceptual framework of the proposed research

6.2 Research Design

The research is based on a quantitative methodology with a cross-sectional design to systematically examine the role of EI in shaping various occupational outcomes among faculty in HEIs across Kerala. The research design is anchored in a positivist paradigm, facilitating objective measurement and statistical interpretation of the relationships among latent and observed variables. Given the multidimensional nature of EI and its interplay with constructs such as job satisfaction, psychological wellbeing organizational commitment and WLB, the study relies on a structured survey method to collect empirical data from a demographically varied faculty sample. The design also integrates a combination of correlational analysis, mediation modelling and structural equation modelling (SEM), ensuring a holistic and context-sensitive grasp of direct and indirect effects. The research design provides the methodological rigor and flexibility required to address the study's multifaceted objectives and contribute substantively to the growing discourse on EI in professional academic contexts.

6.3 Population and Sample

The target population for the research includes HEI faculty members employed across Kerala. The professionals selected occupy various academic roles within government, aided and private colleges. To ensure relevance to the research objectives, only individuals with at least one year of teaching experience were included, allowing for sufficient exposure to the professional and personal demands associated with academic life. The sample represented diversity across key demographic variables, including gender, age group, marital status, parental responsibilities, teaching experience and academic designation. This demographic stratification enabled a nuanced understanding of how EI dimensions operate within varied WLB contexts. The purposive sampling method was employed to capture faculty perspectives from different institutional types and experience levels, thus ensuring analytical depth while preserving the specificity of the Kerala higher education environment. The sample population was determined through Cochran's formula for an ideal sample from a large population, assuming a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, as given in Eq. (1).

$$n_0 = \frac{Z^2.p.(1-p)}{e^2}$$

(1)

$$n_0 = \frac{(1.96)^2.0.5.0.5}{(0.05)^2}$$

$$= 384.16$$

Even though the proposed sample size is 384, owing to the practical considerations, availability and willingness to take part in the study, the sample size was chosen as 254, which suited well considering the response availability, non-response attrition and institutional access.

6.4 Data collection

A well-structured, self-administered questionnaire was designed for the data collection to assess faculty members' EI dimensions and their strategies for managing WLB challenges. The instrument consisted of closed ended items measured using a five-point Likert scale and was divided into five sections covering EI, WLB, perceived stress, emotional resilience and institutional support. Demographic information, including gender, age, marital status, parental responsibilities, academic designation, teaching experience and institution type, was also collected. To ensure reliability and content clarity, a pilot test was done with a small group of faculty members outside the main sample. The finalized questionnaire was distributed both digitally (Google Form) and in print, and ethical protocols such as informed consent, voluntary participation and anonymity of responses were strictly followed. The structured nature of the instrument enabled systematic coding and quantifiable statistical analysis. Figure 4 represents the snippet of the Google Forms questionnaire used in the data collection.

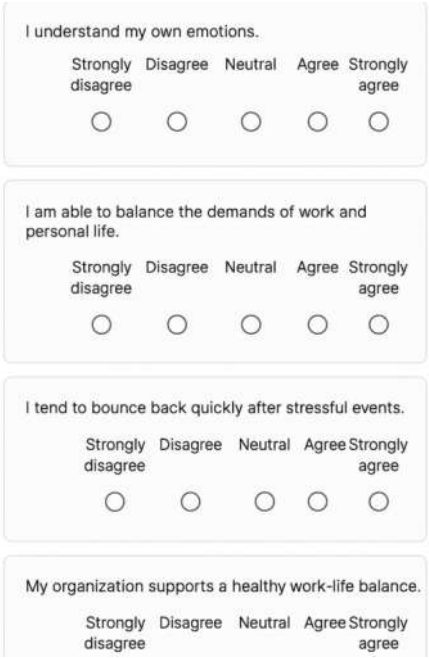

Fig.4. Snippet of Google form questionnaire

The Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSREI) [19] was utilised to analyse the core EI dimensions. To assess faculty members' perceptions of WLB, the WLB Scale by Hayman (2005) [20] was employed, covering time balance, involvement balance and satisfaction balance. The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS 10) [21] was included to capture general psychological stress levels experienced by respondents over the past month. To evaluate emotional resilience, the study utilized the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) [22], a 6-item tool designed to assess the ability to bounce back from stress and emotional setbacks. Finally, a set of custom Likert scale items was included to capture faculty perceptions of institutional practices, support systems and personal strategies for work life integration, aligning with the study's third objective.

6.5 Data Analysis

The study utilized IBM SPSS Statistics Version 26, a dependable and popular research tool,to analyze the data. Initial data screening procedures involved checking for completeness, outliers and assumptions of normality using descriptive statistics. Pearson's correlation coefficients were computed to examine the strength and direction of associations between EI and key occupational outcomes: job satisfaction, life satisfaction and occupational stress. Mediation analysis via Hayes' PROCESS Macro (Model 4), employing bootstrapping, was utilized to analyze the

indirect effects of EI on the link between inter role conflicts and WLB. SEM was employed to estimate the direct and indirect paths among EI, psychological wellbeing organizational commitment and faculty performance.

7. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

7.1 Analysis of demographic profile

Table 1 and Figure 5 represent the demographic distribution of 254 faculty members from various HEIs in Kerala that participated in the research. The gender distribution revealed a slight predominance of female faculty (55.51%) compared to male faculty (44.49%). Since gender plays a significant role in EI and WLB dynamics, this diversity was intentionally maintained to capture nuanced perspectives. A significant proportion of respondents (36.61%) were within the 36–45 age group, followed by those in the 46–55 range, while 22.83% were below 35 and 10.63% were aged 55 and above. This age composition reflects the maturity and varied career stages of faculty members, relevant for analysing emotional and professional coping mechanisms.

Table.1. Demographic distribution of the sample

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	113	44.48819
	Female	141	55.51181
Age Group	Below 35	58	22.83465
	36 45	93	36.61417
	46 55	76	29.92126
	55+	27	10.62992
Marital Status	Single	56	22.04724
	Married	166	65.35433
	Other	32	12.59843
Parental Responsibility	Yes	163	64.17323
	No	91	35.82677
Designation	Assistant Professor	156	61.41732
	Associate Professor	58	22.83465
	Professor	40	15.74803
Years of Teaching Experience	1 5 years	46	18.11024
	5 12 years	103	40.55118
	13 20 years	72	28.34646

	20+ years	33	12.99213
Institution Type	Government	42	16.53543
	Aided	76	29.92126
	Private	136	53.54331

The majority of participants were married (65.35%), with 22.05% single and 12.60% reporting other marital statuses. Since marital and familial roles often intersect with professional demands, this diversity allowed exploration of real-world WLB complexities. Regarding family responsibilities, 64.17% of respondents indicated they had parental responsibilities, suggesting that a significant portion of faculty members were balancing professional and familial roles, further validating the relevance of our chosen study population. Designation wise, Assistant Professors constituted the largest group (61.42%), followed by Associate Professors (22.83%) and Professors (15.75%). This indicates a relatively younger and mid-career sample composition, ideal for capturing emotional adaptability and evolving workplace expectations. The teaching experience profile showed that 40.55% of participants had 5–12 years of experience, while 28.35% had 13–20 years. A smaller proportion reported over 20 years of experience and 18.11% with 1–5 years of experience. This range ensured representation from both early career and veteran educators. Finally, faculty from private institutions formed the majority (53.54%), followed by aided institutions (29.92%) and government institutions (16.54%), reflecting the wider faculty base in Kerala's self-financing higher education sector. This distribution helped ensure ecological validity and relevance across diverse institutional settings, aligning well with the study's aim to explore interplay between EI and WLB in real academic environments.

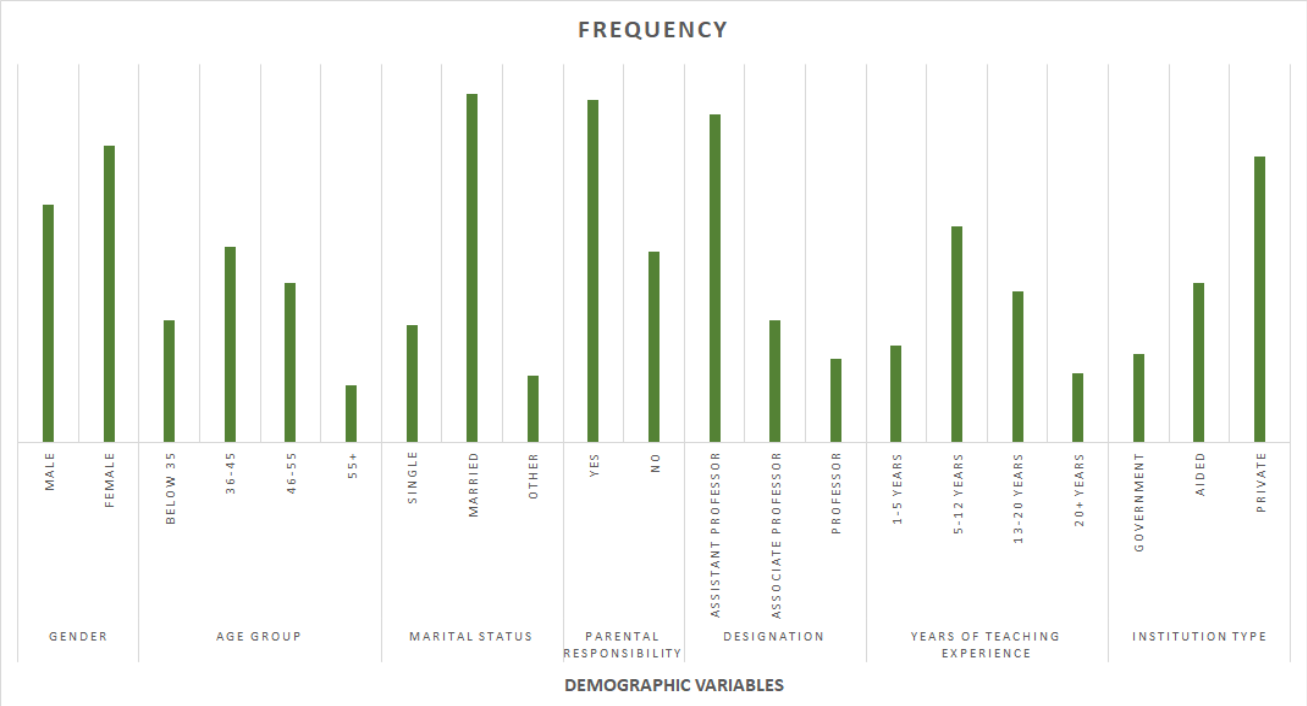

Fig.5. Demographic distribution of the sample

7.2 Emotional Intelligence and Occupational Outcome Variables Among Faculty in Kerala's Higher Education Sector

Understanding how EI correlates with critical occupational outcomes such as job satisfaction, life satisfaction and occupational stress is vital to the development of supportive and high-performing academic environments. A statistical examination of the associations between faculty members' levels of EI and their experiences with professional satisfaction and stress was conducted. Using Pearson's correlation analysis, the study investigates whether higher EI is linked to favorable occupational conditions among academicians in Kerala. Complementary descriptive statistics are included to contextualize the data distribution and provide foundational insights into the general trends across the measured variables.

Table 2 and Figure 6 represent the descriptive statistics which collectively capture the emotional and professional wellbeing of faculty members. These statistics serve as a preliminary diagnostic to assess the overall distribution, central tendencies and variability of the data prior to conducting inferential tests. The mean scores across all variables indicate moderately positive perceptions,

with EI averaging 3.80 and life satisfaction at 3.67, while occupational stress, with a standard deviation of 0.68, shows more variability in how stress is experienced among respondents.

Table.2. Descriptive statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Emotional Intelligence	3.803386	0.390276	2.75	4.78
Job Satisfaction	3.601417	0.495688	1.98	4.4
Life Satisfaction	3.670315	0.446992	1.43	4.88
Occupational Stress	3.624915	0.6759055	2.49	4.9

The relatively narrow standard deviations for EI, job satisfaction and life satisfaction suggest a consistent response pattern among participants, with no indication of extreme skewness or dispersion. This indicates that the scales used were appropriately calibrated and well understood by the respondents. Moreover, the observed minimum and maximum values across each construct fall within theoretically expected ranges, reinforcing the assumption of approximate normality required for the analysis.

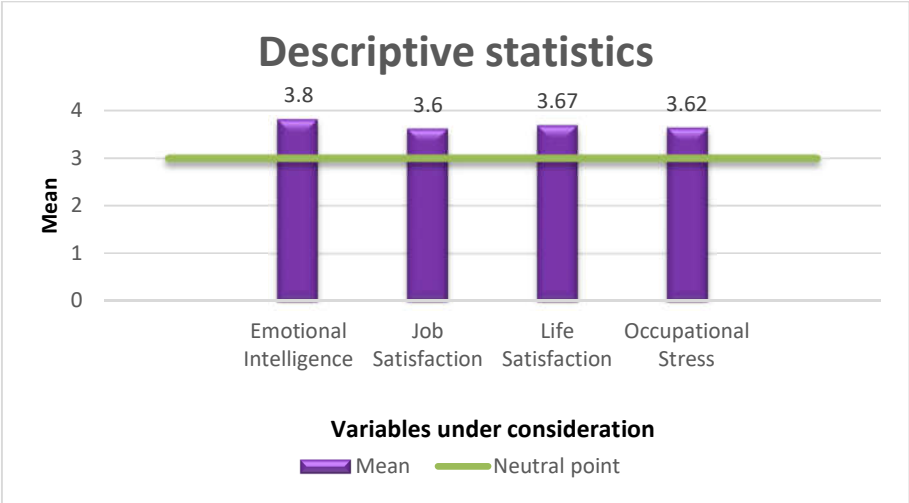

Fig.6. Descriptive statistics

Figure 7 illustrates the Pearson Correlation Matrix among four key variables: Emotional Intelligence (EI), Job Satisfaction (JS), Life Satisfaction (LS) and Occupational Stress (OS). EI displays a moderate positive correlation with both Job Satisfaction (0.48) and Life Satisfaction (0.54), indicating that higher EI faculties tend to experience greater job and life satisfaction. On

the other hand, EI is negatively correlated with Occupational Stress (-0.41), suggesting that higher EI and lower stress levels in the workplace are aligned. Job Satisfaction and Life Satisfaction also exhibit a positive, though slightly weaker, correlation (0.35), with both being negatively correlated with Occupational Stress. These negative correlations suggest that as job and life satisfaction increase, occupational stress tends to decrease. Overall, the figure provides insight into the interconnectedness of EI, job satisfaction, life satisfaction and occupational stress, confirming that EI serves a pivotal function in enhancing professional as well as personal life satisfaction while mitigating stress in the workplace.

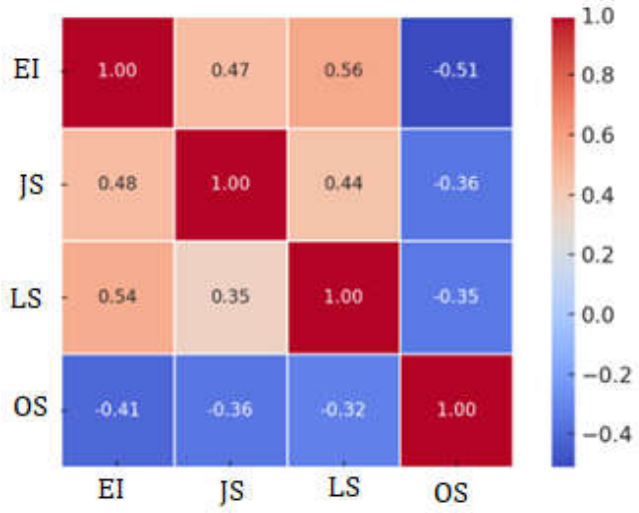

Fig.7. Heatmap of Pearson Correlation Matrix

The results strongly support the hypothesis H_{11}, confirming that EI significantly influences the occupational variables, rejecting the hypothesis H_{01}, which suggested no significant relationship, showcasing the importance of EI in enhancing the work-life experience of faculty members. The findings imply that fostering EI could serve as an effective strategy for universities and academic institutions to improve faculty wellbeing. By investing in EI training and development programs, institutions can potentially reduce occupational stress, elevate job satisfaction and increase overall life satisfaction among faculty members.

7.3 Emotional Intelligence as a Mediator Between Inter-Role Conflict and Work-Life Balance Among Higher Education Faculty

Balancing the competing demands of professional and personal responsibilities remains a major challenge for faculty members in HEIs. Inter role conflicts, such as work-family conflict (WFC) when work interferes with family obligations and family-work conflict (FWC) when family responsibilities encroach upon work, have been shown to significantly disrupt one's sense of equilibrium and wellbeing. Drawing from the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, the study investigates whether EI serves as a mediating resource that mitigates the adverse effects of WFC and FWC on WLB. Using a mediation model, tested through Hayes' PROCESS Macro (Model 4), the analysis aims to clarify the indirect role of EI in facilitating sustainable work life integration.

Table.3. Model Summary Statistics

Summary Statistics	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	SEE
Value	0.648	0.420	0.412	0.518

Table 3 illustrates the model summary statistics for the mediation analysis exploring EI as a mediator between WFC/FWC and WLB. An R^2 value of 0.420 is observed, indicating approximately 42% of the variance in WLB. The adjusted R^2 squared value of 0.412 confirms the model's robustness, considering the number of predictors. The standard error of the estimate (SEE) reflects an acceptable level of prediction accuracy, suggesting that the model fits the observed data well.

Table.4. The direct and total effects

Path	Effect	Estimate	Standard Error	t value	p value
Work Family Conflict → EI	Direct	-0.392	0.048	8.17	0.00028
Family Work Conflict → EI	Direct	-0.265	0.055	4.82	0.00014
EI → Work Life Balance	Direct	0.486	0.061	7.97	0.00046
Work Family Conflict → WLB	Total	-0.191	0.049	3.90	0.00042
Family Work Conflict → WLB	Total	-0.127	0.043	2.95	0.0003

Table 4 presents the direct and total effects estimated in the mediation model investigating the role of EI in the correlation between WFC, FWC and WLB. The results reveal that both WFC

and FWC exert significant negative direct effects on EI. Additionally, EI demonstrates a strong positive influence on WLB (β = 0.486), confirming its mediating role. The total effect of WFC on WLB remains significantly negative (β = -0.191), as does the total effect of FWC on WLB (β = -0.127). It can be concluded that EI not only buffers the adverse effects of inter role conflicts but also serves as a key psychological resource in promoting work life harmony among faculty members. Figure 8 illustrates the standardized path estimates of the mediation model.

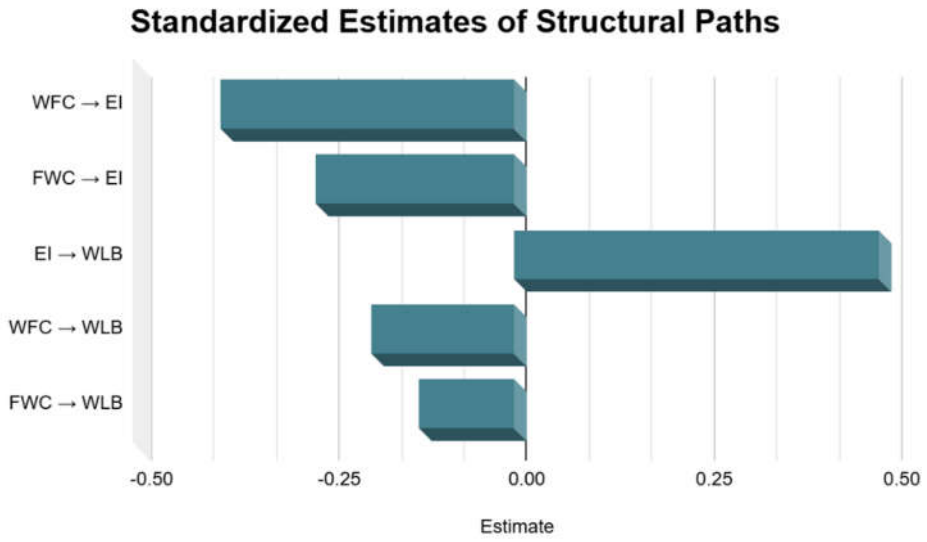

Fig.8. Standardized Estimates of Structural paths

Table 5 and Figure 9 display the bootstrapped indirect effects derived using Hayes' PROCESS Macro with 5,000 bootstrap samples. Both mediation pathways, WFC → EI → WLB and FWC → EI → WLB, produce statistically relevant indirect effects, as their 95% confidence intervals do not include zero. These results confirm that EI significantly mediates the association between inter-role conflicts (WFC and FWC) and WLB, reinforcing the theoretical proposition that enhancing EI can mitigate the adverse effects of inter-role conflicts for personal professional balance.

Table.5. Bootstrapped indirect effects

Indirect Path	Effect Estimate	Standard Error	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	p value
WFC → EI → WLB	0.190	0.036	0.121	0.263	0.001
FWC → EI → WLB	0.129	0.031	0.071	0.195	0.003

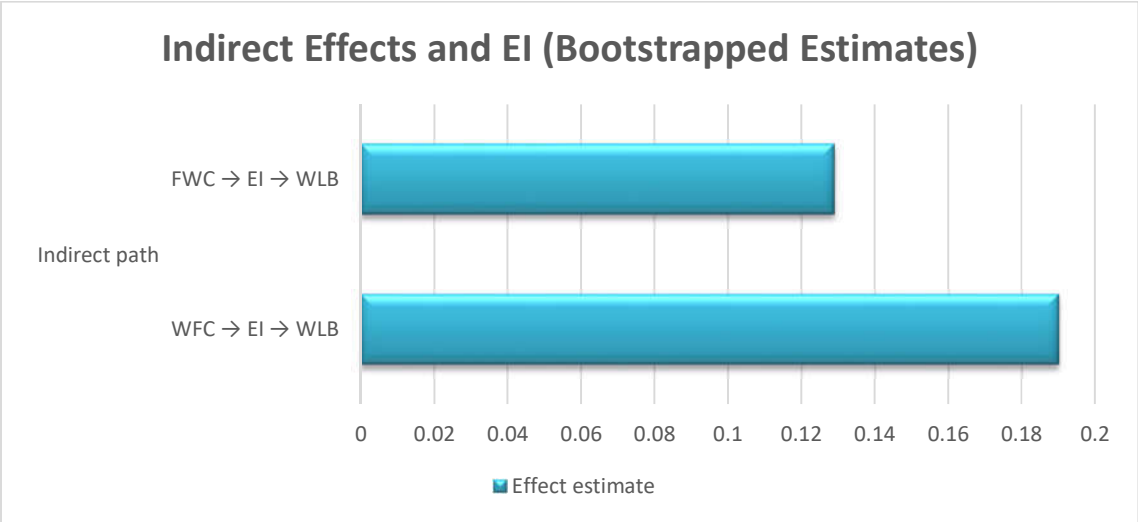

Fig.9. Indirect Effects and EI (Bootstrapped Estimates)

The findings from the mediation analysis offer strong empirical support for EI's mediating role in the association between inter role conflicts, specifically WFC and FWC and WLB among higher education faculty. The standardized path estimates and bootstrapped indirect effects clearly indicate that both WFC and FWC negatively influence EI, which in turn positively predicts a higher degree of WLB. Notably, the indirect effect was more pronounced in the WFC → EI → WLB path, underscoring the heightened emotional toll when professional responsibilities intrude upon family life. These findings emphasize the value of EI as a psychological resource that helps buffer the emotional strain of role based conflicts and enhances balance and wellbeing in academic work settings. Considering the results, the hypothesis H_{02}, which stated that EI does not function as an effective mediator between inter role conflicts and WLB, is rejected. Conversely, the hypothesis H_{12} that states that EI significantly mediates this relationship is accepted.

7.4 Linking Emotional Intelligence with Psychological Health, Organizational Loyalty, and Academic Productivity in Kerala's HEIs

EI plays a pivotal role in shaping key occupational outcomes in academic environments, particularly psychological wellbeing organizational commitment and individual performance. In the context of higher education, understanding how EI contributes to these interrelated dimensions is essential for fostering a supportive and productive institutional culture. To investigate these relationships holistically, SEM has been adopted. As a robust multivariate analytical approach, SEM enables simultaneous examination of both direct and mediated effects among multiple constructs, while controlling for measurement error. This method is especially suitable for testing complex conceptual models involving psychological and organizational factors. The current analysis leverages SEM to explore how EI influences faculty outcomes, directly and through intermediary variables, thereby offering an integrated perspective on the emotional and organizational mechanisms underpinning academic productivity.

Table.6. Measurement Model Table

Construct	CR	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha
Emotional Intelligence	0.91	0.66	0.88
Psychological Well Being	0.89	0.63	0.86
Org. Commitment	0.87	0.61	0.84
Performance/Productivity	0.9	0.68	0.87

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was utilized in the evaluation of the measurement model to ensure the reliability and validity of the latent constructs employed in the research. As shown in Table 6, all constructs demonstrate strong internal consistency, with Composite Reliability (CR) values exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70. EI, psychological wellbeing, organizational commitment and performance/productivity reflect high levels of construct reliability. Additionally, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for all constructs ranges from 0.61 to 0.68, surpassing the minimum recommended value of 0.50, indicating adequate convergent validity. Cronbach's Alpha values for all variables (>0.80), further confirms internal consistency reliability. These results collectively suggest that the measurement model is both statistically sound and conceptually robust, providing a valid foundation for further structural analysis. Figure 10 illustrates the reliability and validity metrics of the measurement model.

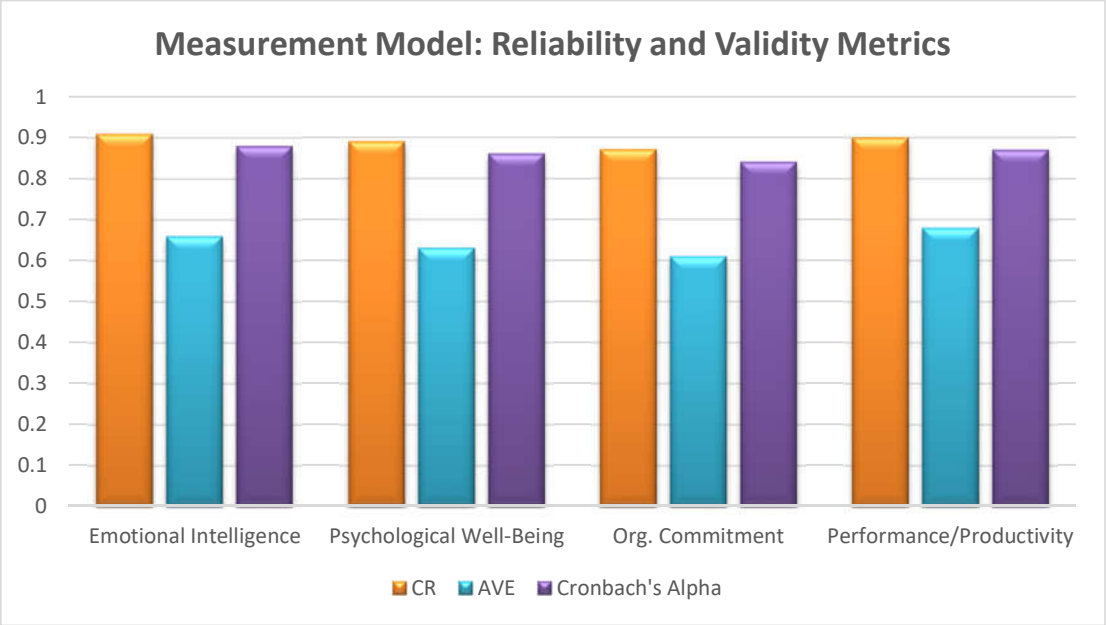

Fig.10. Reliability and Validity Metrics

Table 7 illustrates the model fit indices, indicating that the model is statistically sound and aligns well with the data, supporting the objective of assessing how EI influences psychological wellbeing and organizational commitment and ultimately the performance of faculty members in HEIs. The Chi square/df ratio of 2.31 suggests an adequate fit, while the RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) value of 0.057 confirms a close approximation between the model and the actual responses of the academicians. Furthermore, high values of CFI (Comparative Fit Index) (0.948) and TLI (Tucker–Lewis Index) (0.933) indicate that the model significantly improves over a null model, reinforcing the relevance of emotional and organizational factors in academic work environments. The low SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual) value (0.046) supports the model's ability to replicate the observed correlation patterns.

Table.7. Model Fit Indices

Fit Index	Chi square/df	RMSEA	CFI	TLI	SRMR
Value	2.31	0.057	0.948	0.933	0.046
Threshold	< 3	< 0.08	> 0.90	> 0.90	< 0.08

The results from the structural path analysis illustrated in Table 8 offer compelling insights into EI dynamics that influences faculty performance and productivity. The direct path from EI to Psychological Wellbeing (PWB) yielded a strong standardized coefficient (β = 0.58), indicating that faculty members with higher EI experience significantly better PWB. Similarly, EI significantly predicted Organizational Commitment (OC) (β = 0.49), reinforcing the idea that emotionally intelligent academicians tend to be more committed to their institutions. In turn, both PWB (β = 0.35) and OC (β = 0.40) showed significant positive effects on Performance and Productivity (PP), suggesting that faculty wellbeing and institutional commitment are crucial mediators in translating emotional competencies into actual performance outcomes. The direct effect of EI on PP was statistically insignificant (β = 0.11), underscoring the mediated nature of the relationship. This finding confirms that the impact of EI on faculty productivity is not direct but channelled through psychological and organizational factors. Figure 11 illustrates the graphical representation of the findings.

Table.8. Structural Path Coefficients Table

Path	EI → PWB	EI → OC	PWB → PP	OC → PP	EI → PP (direct)
Standardized β	0.58	0.49	0.35	0.4	0.11
t value	7.91	6.62	4.73	5.08	1.61
p value	0.00018	0.00026	0.00015	0.00018	0.108

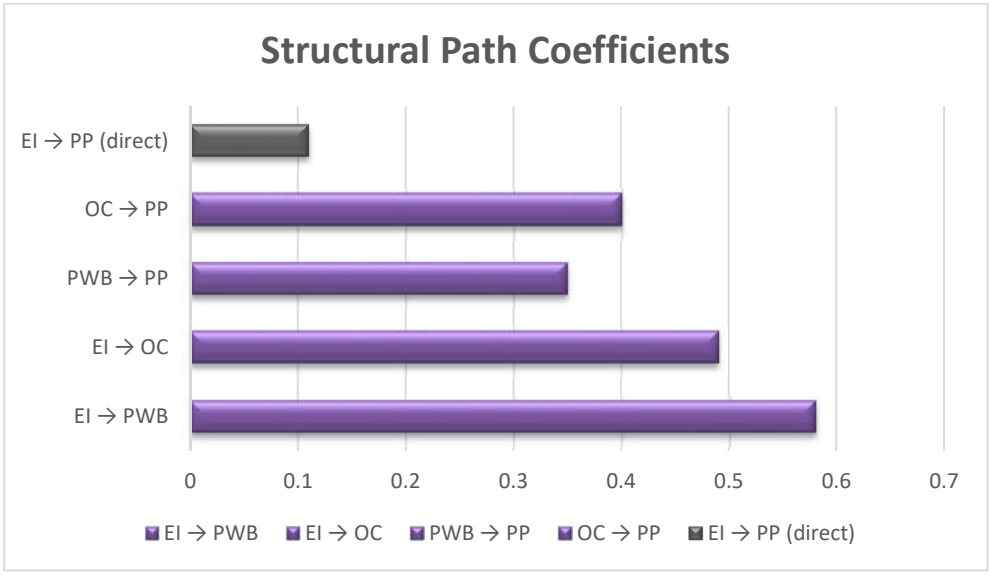

Fig.11. Structural Path Coefficients

The mediation analysis using the bootstrapping technique illustrated in Table 9 reveals that EI exerts a significant indirect influence on faculty performance through two primary psychological mechanisms: PWB and OC. The path EI → PWB → PP shows the strongest indirect effect (β = 0.203), suggesting that emotionally intelligent faculty experience enhanced wellbeing, which in turn contributes meaningfully to their overall performance and productivity. Similarly, the path EI → OC → PP demonstrates a notable indirect effect (β = 0.196), highlighting that emotionally intelligent individuals are more committed to their institutions, which boosts performance outcomes. Additionally, a sequential mediation effect is observed in the path EI → PWB → OC → PP (β = 0.065), indicating that improved wellbeing fosters greater commitment, further strengthening the link to performance. All confidence intervals exclude zero, confirming the statistical significance of these mediating relationships. These findings reinforce the central role of EI in promoting not only individual wellness but also organizational loyalty and efficiency, thereby supporting the broader objective of identifying key psychological drivers of academic excellence. Figure 12 represents the bootstrapped indirect effects with 95% confidence intervals.

Table.9. Mediation Analysis Table (Bootstrapping)

Indirect Path	**EI → PWB → PP**	**EI → OC → PP**	**EI → PWB → OC → PP**
Indirect effect	0.203	0.196	0.065
95% CI (LL, UL)	(0.126, 0.305)	(0.122, 0.284)	(0.032, 0.114)

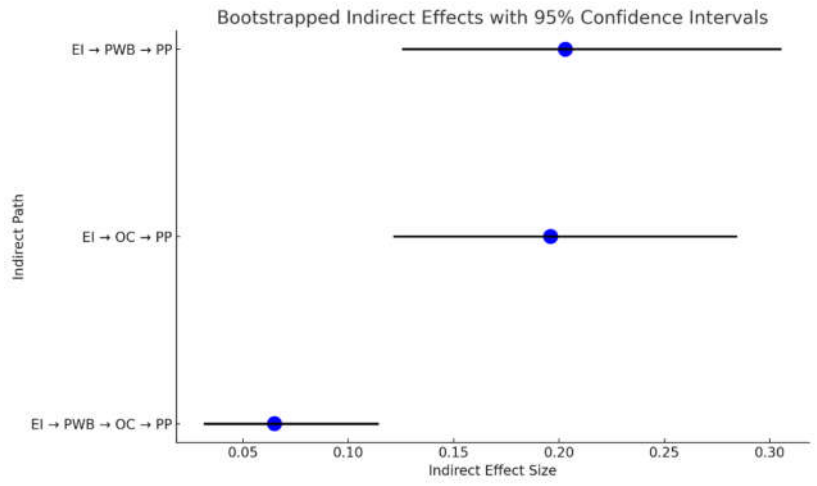

Fig.12. Bootstrapped Indirect Effects

The findings from the SEM analysis provide strong statistical substantiation for the influence of EI on both PWB and OC among higher education faculty. These two constructs, in turn, significantly enhance faculty performance and productivity. Notably, the direct path from EI to performance was found to be statistically insignificant, underscoring the mediating roles of PWB and OC in translating EI into tangible work outcomes. The bootstrapped mediation analysis further confirms that EI exerts its influence on performance primarily through these indirect pathways, with both single level (EI → PWB/OC → PP) and sequential (EI → PWB → OC → PP) mediations being statistically significant within the 95% confidence intervals.

Based on the results, the hypothesis H_{03}, which posited that EI does not significantly influence psychological wellbeing or organizational commitment and that these variables do not significantly affect performance and productivity is rejected. Correspondingly, the hypothesis H_{13} stating that EI significantly influences psychological wellbeing and organizational commitment, which in turn significantly impacts faculty performance is accepted.

8. DISCUSSIONS

The proposed study provides an in-depth exploration of the multifaceted role of EI in shaping the occupational experience and professional outcomes of faculty members in HEIs. Across all three analytical strands: correlation analysis, mediation modelling, and SEM, a consistent narrative emerges: EI acts as a pivotal psychological resource that fosters well-being, enhances organizational commitment and mitigates the deleterious impact of occupational stress and inter-role conflict. The positive correlations identified between EI and job satisfaction and life satisfaction and the inverse correlation with occupational stress affirm that emotionally intelligent faculty are better equipped to navigate professional demands while maintaining personal well-being. The results highlight the impact of EI in improving emotional regulation, interpersonal dynamics and job-related coping mechanisms. The mediation analysis further elucidates the buffering capacity of EI in the context of inter-role conflicts. Faculty experiencing high levels of WFC or FWC were found to suffer less in terms of WLB when they possessed higher levels of EI. This supports the theoretical framework that EI enables individuals to cognitively appraise and emotionally manage role-related stressors, thus preventing spillover into personal domains. SEM provided a more holistic perspective by highlighting how EI contributes

to psychological well-being and organizational commitment: two antecedents of performance and productivity. The indirect effects through these mediators suggest that EI alone may not directly enhance performance, but its influence is transmitted through psychological and organizational pathways. Collectively, these findings highlight the critical need for institutional mechanisms such as EI training, mentorship, and supportive policies that nurture emotional competencies among faculty. The approach can function as a strategic lever to promote sustainable work–life integration, enhance academic productivity, and foster healthier educational environments.

9. CONCLUSION

The study offers a comprehensive examination of EI as a pivotal construct shaping both the professional efficacy and personal well-being of faculty members in HEIs across Kerala. Drawing on a sample of 254 academicians from diverse institutional types, the study employed a multi-objective analytical design to explore EI's correlations with key occupational outcomes, its mediating role in buffering inter-role conflicts, and its structural influence on performance via psychological and organizational pathways. Using a combination of statistical tools, including Pearson correlation analysis, mediation modelling through Hayes' PROCESS Macro, and SEM, the study uncovered compelling evidence of EI's integrative capacity. Faculty members with higher levels of EI demonstrated significantly greater job satisfaction and life satisfaction, coupled with reduced occupational stress. Mediation analysis confirmed that EI effectively dampens the negative effects of WFC and FWC conflicts on perceived WLB. Furthermore, SEM revealed that while EI's direct link to faculty performance was not statistically significant, its indirect effects via enhanced psychological well-being and organizational commitment were both significant and impactful, underscoring the nuanced channels through which EI fosters academic productivity. Overall, the findings advance both theoretical and practical understanding of EI's multidimensional role in higher education. They underscore the value of institutional investment in EI-enhancing programs such as professional development workshops, emotional resilience training, and leadership coaching as strategies to foster faculty engagement, stress adaptation, and long-term institutional vitality. Future research could adopt a longitudinal design to examine how EI evolves and continues to influence occupational outcomes across various stages of academic careers. Additionally, incorporating qualitative approaches like narrative inquiry or in-

depth interviews can offer richer insights into faculty members' emotional experiences, while intervention-based studies could assess the effectiveness of EI training programs within institutional settings.

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