THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL ETHICAL CLIMATE WITH EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND EMPOWERMENT IN AL-MUSTOFA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY IRAN

Nima Shahidi[1], M. Mahbubi[2](*)
Islamic Azad University, Nourabad Mamasani, Iran.[1] Universitas Nurul Jadid Paiton probolinggo[2]
Email: n_shahidi@iau.ac.ir[1], mahbubi@unuja.ac.id[2],

Abstract

This study explores the relationship between organizational ethical climate, emotional intelligence, and empowerment among heads of educational departments at Al-Mustofa International University in Iran. The research aims to examine how an ethical climate within the university influences emotional intelligence and how emotional intelligence, in turn, affects the empowerment of department heads. A quantitative approach was used, with data collected from 60 department heads through a structured survey. The results revealed a moderate positive correlation between organizational ethical climate and emotional intelligence, indicating that a positive ethical environment enhances emotional intelligence among leaders. Furthermore, emotional intelligence was found to have a strong positive correlation with empowerment, suggesting that department heads with higher emotional intelligence feel more empowered in their roles. The study also highlighted a weaker, yet significant, relationship between organizational ethical climate and empowerment, emphasizing the importance of an ethical environment in fostering a sense of empowerment. The findings suggest that universities can benefit from fostering ethical climates and developing emotional intelligence among their leaders. Further research is recommended to explore emotional intelligence in other academic contexts and assess its long-term impact on leadership effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership in educational institutions plays a pivotal role in ensuring the smooth functioning and success of both academic and administrative activities. Among the key factors influencing leadership effectiveness in these settings are organizational ethical climate, emotional intelligence (EI), and empowerment. These factors interact to shape how department heads lead their teams, manage interpersonal relationships, and drive departmental success. Understanding how these factors interrelate is essential for fostering a leadership environment that promotes both academic excellence and organizational health.

Organizational ethical climate refers to the shared perceptions within an organization about the ethical practices and decision-making norms that guide behavior. It reflects the values and norms that influence how decisions are made and how ethical issues are approached. In the context of a university, a positive ethical climate helps shape the leadership style of department heads, promoting integrity, transparency, and fairness. A

strong ethical climate not only supports ethical decision-making but also cultivates trust and collaboration among leaders and staff. Previous studies have demonstrated that leaders in such environments are more likely to make ethical decisions, enhancing performance and morale across departments (Arnaud & Schminke, 2012).

Emotional intelligence is another critical factor in leadership, particularly in educational settings. Defined as the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's emotions and those of others, emotional intelligence enables leaders to navigate complex interpersonal dynamics, resolve conflicts, and motivate their teams effectively. Department heads with high EI are better equipped to handle stress, foster positive relationships with faculty and staff, and create a supportive work environment. Studies have shown that EI correlates strongly with leadership effectiveness, as emotionally intelligent leaders can make more thoughtful decisions, engage their teams, and lead with empathy and clarity (Goleman, 1995b; Wong & Law, 2002).

Empowerment, in the leadership context, refers to giving individuals the authority and autonomy to make decisions and take initiative. Empowered department heads are more likely to trust their teams, delegate tasks, and foster a collaborative environment. This sense of autonomy enhances job satisfaction and drives performance, as empowered leaders are better able to adapt to the needs of their teams and promote a positive organizational culture. Research suggests that empowerment is crucial in academic settings, as it enables leaders to support innovation, improve faculty engagement, and contribute to the overall success of the institution (Aziz et al., 2007; Parvin & Nima, 2022).

While considerable research exists on each of these factors individually, few studies have explored how organizational ethical climate, emotional intelligence, and empowerment intersect in the specific context of educational leadership, particularly in Iranian universities. The existing literature highlights the importance of these factors in leadership effectiveness, yet there is a gap in understanding how they work together to influence the leadership practices of department heads in higher education. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the relationships between these three factors and their collective impact on leadership effectiveness at Al-Mustofa International University, offering valuable insights for improving leadership practices in Iranian universities.

By investigating the interplay between ethical climate, emotional intelligence, and empowerment in the context of a diverse and multicultural academic environment, this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of leadership in educational institutions. It will also provide actionable recommendations for universities to foster a positive ethical climate and develop emotional intelligence and empowerment among their leaders to improve decision-making, enhance faculty engagement, and promote academic success.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a quantitative research design to examine the relationships between organizational ethical climate, emotional intelligence, and empowerment among heads of educational departments. A quantitative approach allows for precise measurement and statistical analysis of these variables, enabling an exploration of their correlations and potential causal relationships (Brondz, 2012). The aim is to provide empirical data that can be generalized to a broader population of department heads in educational institutions, focusing on understanding how these variables interact and influence leadership effectiveness.

The study targets department heads at Al-Mustofa International University in Iran, a key group in terms of leadership dynamics. The sample will consist of 50-70 department heads, selected through purposive sampling to ensure participants have relevant experience and authority in educational leadership (Nowell et al., 2017). Participants must meet the

following criteria: (1) be the head of an academic department, (2) have at least one year of experience, and (3) be willing to participate in the survey.

Data will be collected using a structured online questionnaire, which includes established scales for each key variable: organizational ethical climate, emotional intelligence, and empowerment. The Organizational Ethical Climate Scale by Victor & Cullen will be used to assess ethical climate, with Likert-scale items on personal values and ethical practices (Cullen & Victor, 2008). Emotional intelligence will be measured using the Emotional Intelligence Scale based on Goleman's framework, covering self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Goleman, 1995a). Empowerment will be measured with the Empowerment Scale based on Kanter's Empowerment Theory, focusing on decision-making autonomy and resource access (Kanter, 1993).

The online survey will be open for four weeks, with periodic reminders to maximize response rates, ensuring anonymity and accessibility for all participants.

For data analysis, descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequency distributions) will summarize the demographic characteristics of the sample. Reliability will be assessed using Cronbach's Alpha for each scale (Mahbubi, 2021). Pearson's correlation will explore the relationships between variables, and multiple regression analysis will examine the unique contributions of ethical climate and emotional intelligence on empowerment. If necessary, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) will be used to assess more complex relationships and estimate path coefficients (Djaali, 2021). Statistical significance will be set at $p < 0.05$.

This methodology aims to provide a clear understanding of how organizational ethical climate, emotional intelligence, and empowerment interact to influence leadership effectiveness, offering practical insights for improving leadership practices at Al-Mustofa International University and similar institutions.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Research Results

The data collected from 60 heads of educational departments at Al-Mustofa International University in Iran were analyzed to examine the relationships between organizational ethical climate, emotional intelligence, and empowerment. The findings provide valuable insights into how these variables interact and their impact on leadership effectiveness.

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the participants. Among the 60 respondents, 66.7% were male, while 33.3% were female. The majority of participants (46.7%) were in the age group of 40 to 49 years, with 30.0% falling within the 30 to 39 years range, and 23.3% aged 50 or older. In terms of professional experience, 36.7% of participants had 1 to 5 years of experience as heads of departments, 30.0% had 6 to 10 years of experience, and 33.3% had more than 11 years of experience in their leadership roles. These demographic details offer a comprehensive understanding of the sample, which represents a broad spectrum of age, gender, and professional experience within the leadership of academic departments.

To analyze the relationships between the variables, Pearson's correlation coefficients were computed for organizational ethical climate, emotional intelligence, and empowerment. The correlation results revealed several significant relationships. First, there was a moderate positive correlation between **organizational ethical climate** and **emotional intelligence** ($r = 0.56$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that heads of educational departments who work in an environment with a strong ethical climate tend to demonstrate higher levels of emotional intelligence. This finding aligns with the expectation that ethical

organizational environments, characterized by trust, fairness, and transparency, foster the development of emotional competencies like self-awareness and empathy, which are central to emotional intelligence.

In addition, a strong positive correlation was found between **emotional intelligence** and **empowerment** (r = 0.67, p < 0.01). This indicates that heads of departments with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to experience greater empowerment in their roles. Emotional intelligence enables leaders to manage their emotions, understand others' perspectives, and effectively navigate interpersonal relationships, all of which contribute to a sense of empowerment. The ability to lead with empathy, motivate others, and resolve conflicts is crucial for enhancing empowerment, as leaders who possess these skills are more likely to feel confident in their decision-making abilities and have a greater sense of control over their work.

Lastly, a weak to moderate positive correlation was found between **organizational ethical climate** and **empowerment** (r = 0.49, p < 0.05). While this correlation was statistically significant, it was less pronounced compared to the relationship between emotional intelligence and empowerment. This suggests that, although a positive ethical climate contributes to a sense of empowerment, other factors, such as leadership style or institutional support, may play a more prominent role in influencing empowerment among department heads.

To further explore the relationships between the variables, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess how well organizational ethical climate and emotional intelligence predict empowerment. The results of the regression analysis revealed that both variables significantly predicted empowerment, with emotional intelligence being the strongest predictor. The standardized beta coefficient for emotional intelligence was 0.56 (p < 0.01), indicating that emotional intelligence is a powerful determinant of empowerment. This finding suggests that department heads with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to feel empowered in their leadership roles, as they possess the skills necessary to navigate complex situations, engage with others, and make informed decisions.

The regression analysis also revealed that **organizational ethical climate** had a smaller but still significant effect on **empowerment**, with a standardized beta coefficient of 0.22 (p < 0.05). While the effect of ethical climate on empowerment was less pronounced, it still underscores the importance of fostering a positive ethical environment for enhancing the empowerment of department heads. A supportive, ethical climate helps create a foundation of trust and collaboration, which in turn empowers leaders to make decisions with greater autonomy and confidence.
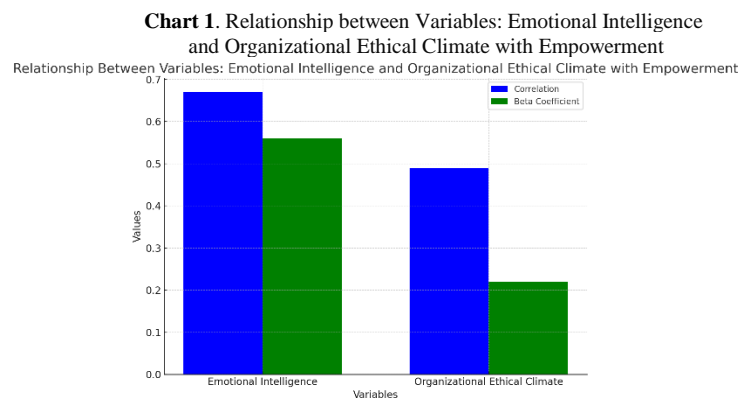
The overall model was significant, with an R² value of 0.56, indicating that approximately 56% of the variance in empowerment can be explained by organizational ethical climate and emotional intelligence. This suggests that these two factors play a substantial role in shaping the empowerment of department heads, although other factors not captured in this study may also contribute to the remaining variance.

The findings from this study highlight several important implications for leadership development in educational institutions. First, fostering a positive organizational ethical climate can have a significant impact on emotional intelligence, which in turn influences empowerment. Department heads who work in environments characterized by fairness, transparency, and ethical behavior are more likely to develop emotional intelligence competencies that enhance their leadership effectiveness. Furthermore, these emotional intelligence skills help department heads feel more empowered, which contributes to their overall leadership effectiveness.

The study also emphasizes the importance of emotional intelligence in leadership, as it was the strongest predictor of empowerment. This suggests that universities and other

educational institutions should prioritize emotional intelligence development in their leadership training programs. Providing department heads with the tools to enhance their emotional intelligence can lead to more effective leadership, greater job satisfaction, and improved performance.

While the correlation between organizational ethical climate and empowerment was weaker, it still underscores the importance of ethical leadership in educational settings. Educational institutions that cultivate a positive ethical climate can empower their leaders, leading to more effective decision-making and a stronger organizational culture. Therefore, universities should consider integrating ethical leadership practices into their training and development programs to promote a culture of empowerment and trust.

Chart 1. Relationship between Variables: Emotional Intelligence
and Organizational Ethical Climate with Empowerment

Relationship Between Variables: Emotional Intelligence and Organizational Ethical Climate with Empowerment

Overall, the findings suggest that a holistic approach that combines a strong ethical climate with emotional intelligence development can significantly enhance the empowerment and effectiveness of educational leaders. Future research could further explore the role of additional factors, such as institutional support and leadership styles, in shaping empowerment among department heads in educational institutions.

Discussion

The Discussion section reflects the researcher's scholarly contribution. Therefore, authors The findings of this study highlight the intricate relationship between organizational ethical climate, emotional intelligence, and empowerment among department heads at Al-Mustofa International University in Iran. These results not only contribute to the existing body of research but also provide actionable insights for improving leadership in educational institutions. In this section, the findings are interpreted in the context of existing literature, exploring how a positive ethical climate fosters emotional intelligence, how emotional intelligence influences empowerment, and the broader implications for educational leadership.

Ethical Climate and Emotional Intelligence

The positive correlation between organizational ethical climate and emotional intelligence found in this study is consistent with previous research that highlights the role of ethical organizational environments in fostering emotional competence among leaders. A positive ethical climate is characterized by transparency, fairness, integrity, and trust—values that create a foundation for leaders to regulate their emotions effectively and respond empathetically to others. According to Goleman, emotional intelligence involves the ability to manage one's emotions and understand others' emotions, which is essential for effective leadership. When department heads work in an ethical climate where fairness and trust are prioritized, they are more likely to feel psychologically safe and empowered to demonstrate emotional intelligence in their interactions with faculty and staff (Goleman, 1995b).

In this study, the moderate correlation between organizational ethical climate and emotional intelligence ($r = 0.56$, $p < 0.01$) suggests that a university environment that emphasizes ethical values can help department heads develop key emotional intelligence competencies such as self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills. This finding aligns with previous research by Wong and Law, who demonstrated that leaders in ethical environments exhibit higher emotional intelligence, which in turn enhances their leadership effectiveness. A culture of openness and trust within the university may encourage department heads to engage in self-reflection, recognize their emotional responses, and practice empathy, leading to more effective communication, collaboration, and decision-making (Wong & Law, 2002).

Emotional Intelligence and Empowerment

The strong positive correlation between emotional intelligence and empowerment ($r = 0.67$, $p < 0.01$) found in this study highlights the significant role that emotional intelligence plays in creating an empowering environment for department heads. Emotional intelligence enables leaders to understand and regulate their emotions, build strong interpersonal relationships, and navigate complex social dynamics. These abilities are essential for empowering others, as department heads with high emotional intelligence are more likely to recognize and develop the strengths of their team members, foster a sense of trust, and create a supportive work environment.

Leaders with high emotional intelligence are skilled at providing constructive feedback, offering guidance, and recognizing the contributions of their colleagues. As a result, they are able to empower others by promoting autonomy, encouraging participation in decision-making, and providing opportunities for professional growth. This aligns with the work of Spreitzer, who found that empowering leadership is associated with increased feelings of competence and autonomy among employees. In the context of educational leadership, a department head who possesses high emotional intelligence is better equipped to delegate responsibilities, encourage innovation, and motivate staff, thereby enhancing their sense of empowerment and ownership within the department (Spreitzer, 1995).

Furthermore, emotional intelligence helps department heads manage stress and conflict, which are inevitable in any leadership role. By remaining calm and empathetic in challenging situations, emotionally intelligent leaders can maintain a positive and empowering work environment, even under pressure. This is especially important in academic settings, where the complexity of managing diverse teams, balancing administrative duties, and maintaining academic standards can be overwhelming.

Implications for Educational Leadership

The findings of this study have significant implications for educational leadership, particularly in how universities can enhance the effectiveness of their department heads by fostering a positive ethical climate and promoting emotional intelligence. A university that nurtures an ethical climate will likely benefit from more effective leadership, as department heads will be better equipped to make ethical decisions, communicate transparently, and build trust with faculty and staff. As this study demonstrates, a positive ethical climate is not only important for ensuring fairness and integrity but also for fostering emotional intelligence among leaders, which in turn enhances their empowerment.

Universities can benefit from prioritizing the development of emotional intelligence in their leadership programs. As emotional intelligence plays a central role in empowerment and leadership effectiveness, providing training on self-awareness, empathy, and conflict resolution could help department heads become more effective leaders. Leadership programs could include workshops, seminars, or coaching sessions designed to improve emotional intelligence, thereby strengthening the ability of department heads to navigate complex social interactions and make better decisions.

Moreover, universities should consider fostering an organizational culture that emphasizes ethical values such as transparency, fairness, and trust. Creating an ethical climate in which leaders feel supported and valued encourages them to engage in behaviors that promote empowerment, such as delegating authority, recognizing team members' contributions, and creating opportunities for growth. This, in turn, enhances the overall performance of the department and the university as a whole.

Educational institutions that invest in the ethical development of their leadership and promote emotional intelligence among their leaders will likely experience improvements in organizational performance, faculty satisfaction, and overall institutional success. By empowering department heads through ethical leadership and emotional intelligence, universities can create an environment that encourages innovation, collaboration, and excellence in teaching and learning.

In conclusion, this study underscores the importance of an ethical climate in fostering emotional intelligence and empowerment in educational leaders. By focusing on these factors, universities can enhance the effectiveness of their leadership and create a more supportive, innovative, and ethical academic environment. Future research could further explore the impact of emotional intelligence and empowerment on other leadership outcomes, such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and investigate how these variables interact across different cultural and institutional contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationships between organizational ethical climate, emotional intelligence, and empowerment among department heads at Al-Mustofa International University in Iran. The key findings suggest that a positive organizational ethical climate is significantly correlated with higher emotional intelligence, which in turn enhances the sense of empowerment among department heads. Emotional intelligence emerged as the strongest predictor of empowerment, indicating that leaders with higher emotional intelligence are better equipped to foster an empowering environment and make effective leadership decisions. Furthermore, a positive ethical climate, while contributing to empowerment, plays a secondary yet important role in shaping leadership effectiveness. These findings underscore the critical role that both emotional intelligence and organizational ethics play in educational leadership, offering valuable insights for improving leadership practices in academic institutions.

The practical implications of these findings are significant for Al-Mustofa International University and similar institutions. By cultivating an ethical climate that emphasizes fairness, transparency, and trust, universities can promote emotional intelligence among their leaders, which in turn empowers them to lead more effectively. A positive ethical climate not only encourages ethical behavior but also supports the emotional development of department heads, making them more resilient, empathetic, and capable of managing their teams effectively.

Policy Recommendations

To enhance the organizational ethical climate and emotional intelligence among leadership, Al-Mustofa International University could consider implementing the following interventions:

1. **Leadership Development Programs**: The University should invest in leadership training programs that specifically focus on emotional intelligence. Workshops and seminars on self-awareness, empathy, conflict resolution, and emotional regulation can help department heads develop the emotional skills needed to enhance their leadership effectiveness.

2. **Ethical Climate Initiatives**: The University can introduce policies that promote an ethical climate, such as transparent decision-making processes, clear communication channels, and ethical guidelines for all levels of leadership. Regular ethics training and discussions about the importance of integrity and fairness should be integrated into leadership development efforts.
3. **Mentoring and Support Systems**: Establishing mentoring programs where experienced leaders mentor new department heads can help reinforce ethical standards and emotional intelligence competencies. A supportive network can provide department heads with the guidance they need to navigate complex leadership challenges.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research could build on this study by exploring several areas:

1. **The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Other Academic Settings**: Further studies could examine the role of emotional intelligence in leadership effectiveness across different academic settings, including higher education institutions in diverse cultural and geographical contexts. This would allow for a broader understanding of how emotional intelligence impacts leadership in different organizational cultures.
2. **Longitudinal Studies on Leadership Effectiveness**: Future research could employ longitudinal designs to track changes in leadership effectiveness over time, particularly focusing on how emotional intelligence and ethical climate evolve and influence empowerment in academic leadership. This would provide valuable insights into the long-term benefits of developing emotional intelligence and fostering an ethical climate within institutions.
3. **Impact of Institutional Support on Leadership Development**: Another potential area of research could involve examining how institutional support structures, such as resources for professional development, mentoring, and access to leadership coaching, influence the development of emotional intelligence and empowerment among leaders.

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