

The Impact of Resilient Academic Leadership on Faculty Job Performance and Well-Being: The Mediating Role of Social-Emotional Competence

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ABSTRACT The study aimed to identify the impact of resilient academic leadership on faculty job performance and well-being, and to examine the mediating role of social-emotional competence among Pakistani university employees. A quantitative, ex-post facto research design was employed. Data were collected from 432 faculty members working in six universities using structured questionnaires designed to measure resilient academic leadership, job performance, well-being, and social-emotional competence. The measurement model was validated through confirmatory factor analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to measure central tendency, normality and reliability, followed by Pearson correlation and multiple regression to identify the relationship among variables. The findings demonstrate that resilient academic leadership enhances faculty job performance and well-being by fostering social-emotional competencies. This research highlights the importance of resilient leadership in strengthening faculty performance and well-being while enhancing their social-emotional skills in higher education institutions.

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary era, the sustainability and mission to deliver quality education and research in higher education institutions (HEIs) are threatened by multifaceted challenges worldwide. The reduction in government funding and growing costs have built financial pressure, resulting in universities reducing their budgets and mainly relying on tuition fees (Jongbloed and Vossensteyn 2016; Marginson 2018; Ehteshamnejad 2023). Simultaneously, teaching and administration have undergone significant changes with digital transformation, encompassing the integration of online platforms and artificial intelligence (AI) which has reshaped pedagogical practices and its management in universities (Zawacki-Richter et al. 2024). However, often teachers were not prepared for such changes (Selwyn 2020).

HEIs confront several challenges intensified by the rapid amalgamation of generative AI, concerning academic integrity, adaptations in the current pedagogy, and increasing workload on faculty (UNESCO 2023).

The socio-cultural factors of Pakistan make these problems much more serious. Several factors hinder the individualised monitoring of students' progress, along with the adaptation of current trends into contemporary teaching practices, such as restricted access to the AI detection tools, training access (Shahzad 2024), and of course, professional development (Zahra et al. 2022). Similarly, the intensified stress and mental health issues become common in staff, as the majority of them report that after COVID-19 their stress level increased because of a higher workload and isolation (Morrish and Priaulx 2020; Kinman and Johnson 2024). The application of innovative strategies would help to cope with the challenges of maintaining institutional effectiveness and provide a supportive foundation to faculty for actual academic success.

Faculty job performance (JP) is traditionally considered to be the combination of teaching, research, and the execution of other institutional services. Currently, these performances are evaluated based on how commendably they adapt to technological advancement. Consideration of eth-

ical aspects, while integrating AI tools into curriculum implementation, raises their performance to the next level (Afzal et al. 2026). Therefore, the main challenge is to find ways to improve employees' JP while maintaining their well-being and mental health. Sabagh et al. (2021) reported that more than half of faculty members constantly suffer from stress, while a few face severe burnout (Shah et al. 2021; Zahra et al. 2022). Communication (COM), work engagement (WE), and job satisfaction (JB) are three critical psychological states exhibiting the contributions of employees towards universities' success.

Effective COM reflects university employees' better performance, allowing better coordination and reducing errors. Conversely, poor COM from leaders provokes frustration, leading to poor JP (Darics and Koller 2022). An effective COM permits clarity in knowledge delivery, improves students' learning, and sustains healthy relationships between colleagues and administration (Alshare et al. 2020; Charlier et al. 2021). Another indicator of performance is WE, which reveals the employee's state of fulfilment through their passion, dedication and concentration in assigned tasks. Bakker and Albrecht (2018) pointed out that faculty members who are more engaged show more innovation in their teaching, produce quality research, and work towards the achievement of the institutional vision. The better WE ensures improvement in employees' performance and well-being by staying persistent even when facing challenges (Merino-Tejedor et al. 2018; Karatepe and Aga 2020). There are multiple reasons behind JS, it might be due to acknowledgement of their efforts, autonomy or support from leadership, but when an employee is satisfied this contentment is reflected in his quality of teaching and research, and most importantly loyalty for institution (Han and Yin 2016; Zahra et al. 2022). Higher levels of JS also predict the employees' retention (Hunt 2022).

Well-being (WB) is a state where one has to maintain a balance between feelings of stress, institutional work, and a sense of fulfilment towards the profession. It is a multidimensional construct full of positivity for oneself, job, and a balance between work and life (Kinman and Johnson 2024). A survey conducted by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2023 highlighted that the education profession is among the top three professions that showed high burnout (WHO 2023). The struc-

tural and cultural factors cumulatively affect the WB of employees.

In Pakistani culture, many employees struggled to maintain a balance between their family and work, due to the heavy workload and cultural pressure, resulting in their emotional exhaustion (Urooj et al. 2023). While a few have poor sleep because of stress, their performance is not up to the mark (Shahzadi et al. 2024). Employees' engagement and productivity are supported through WB, as universities' recruitment and training costs are saved by employees having high WB, demonstrating creativity in their assigned task and staying with universities for a longer period (Krekel et al. 2019).

A leader capable of handling challenges and supporting his university employees at adverse circumstances, specifically focusing on realistic adaptation to overcome the crisis, is referred to as having resilient academic leadership (RAL) qualities (Day and Gu 2014; Niemeyer-Rens et al. 2022). Unlike the traditional leadership styles that merely focus on the vision of timely task completion, either utilising punishment or reward, a resilient leader has motivated their employees to give their best in challenging situations, as the leader believes in an adaptive approach to tackle and thrive (Sarkar and Fletcher 2020; Gupta and McDaniel 2022; Ledesma 2023; Zadok and Benoliel 2024). RAL is defined as a combination of observable behaviour of a leader, which is conceptualised through three core sub-constructs of observational learning (OL), social support (SS), and self-efficacy (SE), collectively representing how a leader spreads resilience among its employees. OL is the name of the leader's ability to demonstrate constructive behaviour in challenging situations that enables employees to learn effectively adaptive strategies through observation. Emotional and professional support from a leader is reflected through SS in the form of guidance, resources, and appreciation. A leader's confidence in their employees' capabilities is reflected through SE indicating that they can manage their responsibilities and effectively overcome challenges that they encounter at the workplace.

Setting an example is one of the finest ways to build resilience, because subordinates learn to cope for themselves after observing their leaders' way to handle difficulties. People learn new ways to react (first think and then behave) after observing others. A lesson of staying steady and not panicking, even under pressure, for all staff members is

hidden in a leader's action who appears to remain calm and composed even after a system failure and find ways for recovery. The studies by Ledesma (2023) and Farmer et al. (2019) showed that employees develop stronger coping skills after observing resilient behaviour in their leaders.

SS is another dimension of RAL that offers the assurance of emotional and practical support. For academic faculty, this support might be seen in the provision of suitable time and facilities for research, and for administrative staff, it could be updated technology and adequate workload distribution. The perception that their leaders value their work and contributions elevates their sense of contentment. Support from the supervisor and organisation reduces stress and enhances the commitment level of employees (Kurtessis et al. 2017). Furthermore, Charoensukmongkol and Phungsoonthorn (2021) also reported the inverse relation between supervisor support and emotional exhaustion.

The third component of RAL is helping staff members believe in themselves. SE is the confidence of a person to achieve their goals by handling all challenges. Leaders can polish this ability by strengthening the staff, assigning them responsibilities according to their capabilities, and encouraging them by giving constructive feedback. This can be possible by giving an opportunity to a junior employee to lead in a particular project, a chance to build confidence through practical experience. Research provides evidence for a stronger relationship between higher SE and higher JP (Lee et al. 2020; Mahmood et al. 2021).

Resilient leaders (RL) can provide their employees with a stable and supportive environment that strengthen their resilience, secure their WB and boost their work performance (Bowers and Hakanen 2022; Li 2026). To have a positive effect on RL, there should be a working relationship with a leader to develop strong trust in them. Therefore, a strong mechanism illustrates the direct relationship of RAL with employees' WB and JP after building a foundation of trust among them (Houghton et al. 2021).

Social-Emotional Competence (SEC) refers to the understanding and managing of one's own emotions first, and then reacting towards others' emotions after recognising them. Such competencies provide great support while interacting with students, having positive and productive relationships with colleagues, and most importantly, assist to deal with departmental politics. A person

can produce better results in personal and professional realms because of SEC, as it has an inverse relationship with burnout and a direct correlation with FJP. It also has predictive properties for RAL. Employees' with higher SEC demonstrate better performance (Hur et al. 2022; Sanchez-Cardona et al. 2022; Kopanidis 2023), lower stress (Donaldson et al. 2020; Hur et al. 2022; Kopanidis 2023), fewer conflicts with students, and improved teaching results (Jennings and Greenberg 2009; Schonert-Reichl 2017; Valtierra 2023). Furthermore, an employee having a higher SEC effectively advocates their needs within the hierarchical structure, and for this, there is no need to violate cultural norms. Thus, it helps the employees to survive and flourish in challenging academic settings (Brandao and Jacomuzzi 2025).

In the Pakistani context, the progression in higher education is rapid, but conversely, resources remain limited, and the number of students is increasing, which leads to emotional exhaustion among the majority of teachers (Zahra et al. 2022; Murtaza and Hui 2024; Zhai et al. 2025). Furthermore, higher workload and an unsupportive environment increase the attrition rate, negatively affect institutional stability and students' outcomes. Identification of factors that strengthen employees' performance and WB is the key to solving this issue, and it serves as a fundamental strategy for sustainable institutional performance.

RAL refers to the adaptive nature of leaders to cope with challenges effectively and provide support to their team members at the time of difficulty, as its key components are observational learning (OL), social support (SS), and self-efficacy (SE) (Sott and Bender 2025b). Whereas the SEC focuses on emotional intelligence (EI), self-regulation (SR), and empathy (EM) as essential competencies of leaders, enabling them to constructively respond to others after understanding their emotions (Tindall-Ford and Lipscombe 2025a). Universities face multidimensional challenges in the form of limited funding, changes in policies, advancement in technology, unpredictable crises like COVID-19 and floods. Leaders who demonstrate resilient behaviour in such impulsive situations played a key role for employees' motivation and institutional improvement. The study aimed to identify how RAL and SEC predict JP and WB of Pakistani university employees.

RAL emphasises the roles of leaders that are required to perform including adaptability, emo-

tional support, and effective problem solving. Such leadership practices foster employee's SEC, enhance their professional capabilities, and overall well-being within HEIs.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the current study were to identify the relationships among resilient academic leadership, social-emotional competence, faculty job performance, and well-being. The research also investigated the impact of resilient academic leadership on faculty job performance and well-being, and examined the mediating role of social-emotional competence among Pakistani university employees.

Hypothesis

Based on above theoretical arguments and empirical evidences the following hypothesis were formulated:

- H₁: Resilient academic leadership has a significant positive direct effect on university employees' social emotional competence.
- H₂: Resilient academic leadership has a positive effect on university employees' job performance.
- H₃: Resilient academic leadership has a direct effect on university employees' wellbeing.
- H₄: Social emotional competence has a direct effect on university employees' job performance.
- H₅: Social emotional competence has a direct effect on university employees' wellbeing.
- H₆: Social emotional competence mediates the relationship between resilient academic leadership and job performance.
- H₇: Social emotional competence mediates the relationship between resilient academic leadership and wellbeing.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

Based on the literature review the conceptual framework of the current study was developed to demonstrate the relationship among all four variables of the study, including RAL, SEC, JP, and WB. Each construct consists of three sub-constructs in each variable. This framework depicts the direct relationship of RAL with SEC, JP, and WB. Similarly, SEC is also directly correlated with

JP and WB. Moreover, SEC mediates the relationship of RAL with both dependent variables JP and WB.

METHODOLOGY

The current study deployed a quantitative, ex-post facto design to investigate the relationship among RAL, SEC, JP, and WB. The sample was collected from the six universities across two major educational hubs of Pakistan, namely, Lahore, including the University of the Punjab, Government College University Lahore, and Lahore University of Management Sciences, as well as Islamabad, covering Quaid-i-Azam University, COMSATS University Islamabad, and Bahria University.

Data was collected from academic and non-academic staff, using a multistage sampling technique. Initially, stratified random sampling was employed to select universities based on their sector (public/private). Further, these strata were divided into five sub-strata based on role, gender, age, and discipline, and participants were randomly selected from each stratum by utilising a staff list with the help of computer-generated random numbers, and the universities' HR sent them emails for data collection.

The initial adaptation of the questionnaire was made considering the context of Pakistani higher education institutions, consisting of 28 items (7 items in each sub-construct). In light of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), four items were deleted due to the poor loading values, resulting in a 24-item questionnaire (6 items in each construct). The data was collected from 432 respondents. Moreover, the initial descriptive analysis was conducted through SPSS software, comprising descriptive analysis (data normality reflected through skewness and kurtosis, internal consistency demonstrated by Cronbach's alpha). Inferential analysis included Pearson correlation r (to confirm the relationship among variables and absence of multicollinearity) and multiple regression analysis to identify the effect of RAL and SEC on JP and WB.

RESULTS

Table 1 highlights the demographic details of participants in the current study. The sample was nearly equally collected from Lahore (51.4%) and Islamabad (48.6%), where participants were select-

Table 1: Demographic details of the respondents

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Categories</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>City</i>	Lahore	222	51.4
	Islamabad	210	48.6
<i>Sector</i>	Public	224	51.9
	Private/Non-profit	208	48.1
<i>Role</i>	Executive/Admin Director	61	14.1
	Head of Department	79	18.3
	Faculty Member	182	42.1
	Administrative Staff	86	19.9
	Custodian Staff	24	5.6
<i>Gender</i>	Male	227	52.5
	Female	205	47.5
<i>Age</i>	21-30	104	24.1
	31-40	166	38.4
	41-50	108	25.0
	51+	54	12.5
<i>Discipline</i>	Natural Sciences	113	26.2
	Social Sciences	100	23.1
	Engineering	86	19.9
	Humanities	73	16.9
	Business/Management	60	13.9

ed from public (51.9%) and private (48.1%) universities. Most respondents were from the faculty (42.1%) group, whereas the least were custodian staff (5.6%). The gender distribution was balanced between males (52.5%) and females (47.5%). The largest age group was 31-40 years (38.4%). Similarly, the most representative disciplines were natural (26.2%) and social sciences (23.1%).

These demographic details represent the diverse distribution of the sample across cities, sectors, roles, gender, age, and discipline, suitable for investigating RAL and faculty SEC, JP, and WB in higher education.

Table 2 highlights the descriptive statistics and reliability coefficient for each study construct. The mean scores for RAL, SEC, JP, and WB were 3.74, 3.69, 3.83, and 3.79 respectively, indicating the respondents' favourable perception. All skewness and kurtosis were in an acceptable range (± 1), confirming the data normality and supporting further parametric analysis. The high internal consistency of the data was reflected in Cronbach's alpha values.

Table 2: Normality and reliability of measure

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Skewness</i>	<i>Kurtosis</i>	<i>Cronbach's α</i>
RAL	3.74	0.58	-0.43	0.11	0.91
SEC	3.69	0.61	-0.40	0.10	0.90
JP	3.83	0.54	-0.48	0.18	0.91
WB	3.78	0.55	-0.39	0.12	0.89

Table 3 indicates the results of Pearson's correlation, which shows a significant positive correlation among all variables. RAL correlated with SEC, JP, WB ($r = .58, .44$, and $.41$), respectively. Similarly, the SEC was also correlated with JP ($r = .49$) and WB ($r = .53$), while JP correlated with WB ($r = .56$).

Table 3: Pearson's correlation among variables

	<i>RAL</i>	<i>SEC</i>	<i>JP</i>	<i>WB</i>
RAL	1.0	0.58	0.44	0.41
SEC		1.0	0.49	0.53
JP			1.0	0.56
WB				1.0

All correlation coefficients were below .80, the threshold for multicollinearity, confirming the suitability for further analysis. These results support the hypothesised relationship among variables.

Table 4 presents the results of multiple regression analysis used to predict JP, where RAL and SEC were independent variables. The model was statistically significant, $F(2, 429) = 115.5$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .35$, highlighting 35 percent of variance. Both

Table 4: Multiple regression analysis predicting job performance

Predictor	B	SE B	B	T	p
Constant	0.71	0.15	-	4.8	<.001
RAL	0.23	0.05	0.26	4.79	<.001
SEC	0.39	0.05	0.43	7.90	<.001

Model fit $R^2 = .35$, $F(2, 429) = 115.5$, $p < .001$; VIFs < 2

RAL ($\beta = .26$, $p < .001$) and SEC ($\beta = .43$, $p < .001$) were significant positive predictors, while SEC was a stronger predictor, indicated by its higher beta coefficient. There was no violation of the regression assumption confirmed by the VIFs value, as it was < 2 . These findings support the hypothesised effect of RAL and SEC on employee's JP.

Table 5 presents the results of multiple regression analysis used to predict WB, where RAL and SEC were independent variables. The model was statistically significant, $F(2, 429) = 131.5$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .38$, highlighting 38 percent of variance. Both RAL ($\beta = .21$, $p < .001$) and SEC ($\beta = .50$, $p < .001$) were significant positive predictors, while SEC was a stronger predictor, as indicated by its higher beta coefficient. There was no violation of the regression assumption confirmed by the VIFs value, as it was < 2 . These findings support the hypothesised effect of RAL and SEC on employee's WB.

Table 6 presents the confirmatory factor analysis conducted to validate the four-factor questionnaire, each comprising three sub-constructs. The poor loading items OL3 from observational learning, EI1 from emotional intelligence, WE3 from work engagement, and PF2 from professional fulfilment were deleted from the final research instrument, whereas all retained items exceeded the cutoff of 0.70. The composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) confirmed with the values ranging from 0.89 to 0.91 and 0.61 to 0.62, respectively. The constructs showed strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.89 to 0.91. The results supported the discriminant validity as the square root of AVE for

each construct was greater than its correlation with others. The final model fit demonstrated: CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.05, SRMR = 0.04.

The results of the mediating analysis presented in Table 7 supported Hypothesis 6, which stated the mediating relation of SEC with the independent variables RAL and JP. The bootstrapped analysis confirmed a significant indirect effect, $B = 0.23$, 95 percent CI [0.183, 0.279]. Furthermore, the direct effect of RAL on JP was significant, reduced from 0.33 to 0.10, indicating partial mediation. These results evidently show that RAL directly and indirectly affects the JP by fostering SEC.

The results of the mediating analysis presented in Table 8 supported Hypothesis 7, which stated the mediating relation of SEC with the independent variables RAL and WB. The bootstrapped analysis confirmed a significant indirect effect, $B = 0.29$, 95 percent CI [0.24, 0.34]. Furthermore, the direct effect of RAL on WB was insignificant, as it was reduced from 0.36 to 0.07, indicating complete mediation. These results indicated that WB of university employees primarily improved through RAL by enhancing their SEC, but this effect is not consistent in the direct effect. These findings support the hypothesis that social emotional competence mediates the relationship between resilient academic leadership and wellbeing.

DISCUSSION

Sustainable university performance can be achieved when there are resilient leaders who demonstrate effective management in crises. Moreover,

Table 5: Multiple regression analysis predicting wellbeing

Predictor	B	SE B	B	T	p
Constant	0.85	0.16	-	5.31	<.001
RAL	0.19	0.05	0.21	3.80	<.001
SEC	0.45	0.05	0.50	9.00	<.001

Model fit $R^2 = .38$, $F(2, 429) = 131.5$, $p < .001$; VIFs < 2

Table 6: Confirmatory factor analysis results

Variable	Sub construct	Item	Std. loading	Decision	AVE	Overall AVE	CR	Overall CR	α
Resilient Academic Leadership (RAL)	Observational Learning (OL)	OL1	0.82	Included	0.65	0.61	0.88	0.91	0.91
		OL2	0.79	Included					
		OL3	0.42	Deleted					
	Social Support (SS)	SS1	0.77	Included	0.60		0.85		
		SS2	0.75	Included					
Social Emotional Competence (SEC)	Self-Efficacy (SE)	SE1	0.72	Included	0.58		0.82		
		SE2	0.70	Included					
	Emotional Intelligence (EI)	EI1	0.44	Deleted	0.66	0.62	0.89	0.90	0.90
		EI2	0.81	Included					
		EI3	0.84	Included					
	Self-Regulation (SR)	SR1	0.78	Included	0.61		0.86		
		SR2	0.76	Included					
	Empathy	EM1	0.73	Included	0.59		0.84		
		EM2	0.71	Included					
		COM1	0.83	Included					
COM2		0.80	Included						
WE1		0.78	Included						
Job Performance (JP)	Work Engagement (WE)	WE2	0.76	Included	0.61	0.62	0.89	0.90	0.91
		WE3	0.46	Deleted					
		JS1	0.74	Included					
	JS2	0.72	Included						
	Wellbeing (WB)	Stress/Burnout (SB)	SB1	0.81	Included	0.64	0.61	0.88	0.89
SB2			0.75	Included					
Work-Life Balance (WLB)		WLB1	0.79	Included	0.62		0.86		
		WLB2	0.73	Included					
Professional Fulfilment (PF)		PF1	0.77	Included	0.57		0.81		
	PF2	0.43	Deleted						
	PF3	0.70	Included						

Measurement Model Fit: CFI = .95, TLI = .94, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .04.

Table 7: Mediating analysis of SEC on the relationship between RAL and JP

<i>Path</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
<i>Direct Effects</i>						
RAL $\square$ JP	0.10	0.04	2.50	0.013	0.02	0.18
<i>Indirect Effects</i>						
RAL $\square$ SEC $\square$ JP	0.23	0.02	-	-	0.183	0.279
<i>Component Paths</i>						
RAL $\square$ SEC (a path)	0.57	0.03	19.00	<.001	0.51	0.63
SEC $\square$ JP (b path)	0.40	0.05	8.00	<.001	0.30	0.50
<i>Total Effect</i>						
RAL $\square$ JP	0.33	0.04	8.20	<.001	0.25	0.41

Note: N = 432. Unstandardised regression coefficients are reported. Bootstrap sample size = 5000. LLCI and ULCI represent the lower and upper limits of the 95 percent bias-corrected confidence interval. Confidence intervals not containing zero indicate a significant effect.

Table 8: Mediating analysis of SEC on the relationship between RAL and WB

<i>Path</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
<i>Direct Effects</i>						
RAL $\square$ WB	0.07	0.04	1.75	0.081	-0.01	0.15
<i>Indirect Effects</i>						
RAL $\square$ SEC $\square$ WB	0.29	0.02	-	-	0.24	0.34
<i>Component Paths</i>						
RAL $\square$ SEC (a path)	0.57	0.03	19.00	<.001	0.51	0.63
SEC $\square$ WB (b path)	0.50	0.05	10.00	<.001	0.40	0.60
<i>Total Effect</i>						
RAL $\square$ WB	0.36	0.04	8.88	<.001	0.28	0.43

such leaders cultivate these competencies in their employees, enabling them to manage emotions, stress and interpersonal challenges. The current study identified significant positive relationships among RAL, SEC, faculty JP, and WB among Pakistani university employees. The findings also confirmed the impact of resilient academic leadership on faculty job performance and well-being, and examined the mediating role of social-emotional competence. The findings supported the six hypotheses out of seven which are mostly consistent with the existing literature. The first hypothesis, RAL has a significant positive direct effect on university employees' social emotional competence was confirmed as ($r = .58$), which indicated that resilient nature of an academic leader support their employees to develop stronger social emotional competencies. Tindall-Ford and Lipscombe (2025a), also pointed out the same results that socially competent leaders have the capacity to develop same quality among their staff members. Sott and Bender (2025a) and Zadok and Benoliel (2024) highlighted that adaptive leaders effectively developed emotional competencies among their employees. Based on the findings of regression analysis second

hypothesis was confirmed as ($\beta = .26, p < .001$), showing a significant positive effect of RAL on JP of university employees', when a leader motivate his employees' to face challenging situation with the availability of resources to achieve clear goals that set earlier. To have a positive effect on RL, there should be a working relationship with a leader to develop strong trust in them. Therefore, a strong mechanism illustrates the direct relationship of RAL with employees' WB and JP after building a foundation of trust among them (Houghton et al. 2021). However, the third hypothesis RAL has a direct effect on university employees' WB was rejected because direct effect of RAL on WB become insignificant when SEC was included in mediating model ($B = .07, p = .081$), indicating that resilient leader did not directly improve the WB of their university employees but through SEC. These results are contradictory with previous studies that showed direct relationship between university leadership and WB of their employees (Bowers and Hakanen 2022; Li 2026). The reason behind this discrepancy may be due to context of Pakistani HEIs. Where leadership support proves helpful to improve WB when they already have developed

their emotional skills (Siddiqui 2021). The above findings of the current research are consistent with the results of a previously conducted study by Hur et al. (2022), highlighting the strong predictive role of SEC for JP, and it also supports reducing stress among employees. The fourth and fifth hypotheses were also confirmed ($\beta = .43$, $\beta = .50$, $p < .001$) showing that SEC is stronger predictor for JP and WB respectively as compared to RAL, demonstrated that employees having stronger SEC are capable to manage and perform well workplace tasks, they maintain better relationships with their colleagues, they have capacity to effectively respond even in stressful situations. Collectively these competencies help to improve both JP and WB. Similar results were reported by studies of Sanchez-Cardona et al. (2022), Kopanidis (2023), Brandao and Jacomuzzi (2025) and Zhai et al. (2025), wherein they confirmed the positive effect of SEC on university employees JP and WB.

The results of the current study also demonstrate the mediating effect of SEC on JP and WB of employees working in higher educational institutions. This evidence aligns with the findings of Donaldson et al. (2020) and Valtierra (2023) indicating that social emotional skills directly affect the performance, and also mediate between leadership and JP in educational institutions. The findings also support to accept sixth and seventh hypotheses where SEC partially mediate the relationship between RAL and JP and fully mediate the relationship between RAL and WB respectively ($B = .23$, 95% CI [.183, .279], $B = .29$, 95% CI [.24, .34]). Which showed that although SEC mediate the relationship but due to its partial nature RAL still has direct effect on JP, that illustrated that leadership effect employees' performance in both ways directly and by developing emotional competencies. While full mediation showed the elimination of direct effect of RAL on WB when SEC introduced that highlighted the importance of leadership practices developing emotional competencies to improve WB among employees.

Recent studies also pointed out the importance of leadership practices to improve the emotional competencies of employees, that resultantly elevated their performance and well-being at the workplace (Sott and Bender 2025a, b; Tindall-Ford and Lipscombe 2025b; Li 2026). This study contributed to fill a gap in the existed literature by providing empirical evidences how RAL improves JP and

WB of employees incorporating the mediating role of SEC. Because previously studies largely examined RL, SEC, JP, and WB, but limited evidence is available about mediating role of SEC for RAL and its outcomes considering the HEIs within developing countries like Pakistan.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above results, this study concludes that RAL and SEC are two important variables that enhance the JP and WB of university employees. RLs are responsible for fostering SEC among their employees, and as a result, they adapt to demanding situations while showing their engagement. RAL has a direct effect on employees' performance in terms of setting goals, allocating resources for their better performance, and most importantly, motivating them to accomplish tasks consistently. Simultaneously, it is responsible for indirectly improving performance by enhancing SEC, which polishes employees' emotional and interpersonal skills. The modelling results reflect the partial mediation of SEC between the relationship of RAL and JP. In contrast, the SEC shows full mediation between RAL and WB.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, it is recommended that universities arrange training for leaders to understand resilience and ways to implement it in practice. Such training should incorporate the central assumptions of SEC, including EI, SR, and EM to strengthen it in employees. The current study only utilises quantitative data gathered through a single questionnaire. Future researchers should employ multi-source data to mitigate the potential bias of this method. This study is based on the public and private universities of Lahore and Islamabad, which may limit the generalisability to other regions of Pakistan and the international context.

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