

Prosocial Foundations of Faculty Collaboration: A Systematic Review of Empathy and Gratitude in Indian Higher Education

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Abstract

Background:

Faculty affiliation is gradually identified as a key handler of functional success and academic invention. However, emotional, and social factors affecting partnership—such as empathy and gratitude—endure underexplored in Indian higher education institutions (HEIs). **Objective-** This study thoroughly studies peer-reviewed literature to examine how empathy and gratitude—key elements of emotional intelligence—simplify faculty relationship in Indian universities. **Methods-** Subsequent PRISMA 2020 parameters, 28 peer-reviewed articles published between 2013 and 2024 were selected from Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Thematic scrutiny was used to join findings, identify conceptual gaps, and offer mark-based proposals. **Results-** Empathy was found to improve social trust, interaction, and cooperative decision-making, while gratitude adopted emotional elasticity, peer detection, and shared support. Both behaviours served as psychological barriers during the post-COVID move to hybrid academic models. However, institutional orders, siloed units, and lack of emotional training remain major barriers. **Suggestions-** This study suggests mixing emotional intelligence into faculty development, promoting peer appreciation systems, and creating emotionally caring workplace cultures. Findings influence to theory on prosocial behaviour in academic world and inform policies for successful faculty interactions in Indian HEIs.

Keywords: Empathy, Gratitude, Faculty Collaboration, Emotional Intelligence, Higher Education, India, PRISMA, Systematic Review

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full Form
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
SET	Social Exchange Theory
EI	Emotional Intelligence
POB	Positive Organizational Behaviour
OCB	Organizational Citizenship Behaviour
CoP	Communities of Practice
PRISMA	Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses
NEP	National Education Policy

Abbreviation	Full Form
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

1. Introduction

The exchanging dynamics of higher education in India require a significant focus on the interpersonal and emotional factors of academic life to promote enduring collaboration among faculty and facilitate institutional progress. In this framework, empathy and gratitude emerge as vital pro-social mechanisms that cultivate trust, mutual respect, and collegial appointment among educators. Empathy, categorized as the capacity to understand and connect with the emotions and viewpoints of others, is pivotal in fostering inclusive settings and attractive interpersonal relationships (Decety & Cowell, 2014). In difference, gratitude is a moral influence by improving relational quality through recognition and gratitude of colleagues' contributions (Emmons & McCullough, 2003).

In Indian higher education institutions (HEIs), considered by hierarchical backgrounds, strict departmental separations, and cultural norms that inhibit emotional appearance, the incorporation of empathy and gratitude into the academic culture has the potential to substitute significant conversion. (Chattopadhyay, 2018)

Partnership among faculty—be it in research projects, core curriculum design, or authority of the institution—is influenced not only by common trained goals but also by emotional and relational factors. Research indicates that collaborative environments flourish under conditions that adopt psychological safety and mutual recognition. (Edmondson, 1999; Hargreaves, 2000)

Despite the standard importance of teamwork for the progress of institutions, Indian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) still face challenges including disorganized faculty participation, a culture of modest individualism, and insufficient coordination across departments (Tilak, 2015). These trials can be improved by adopting emotional support systems like empathy and gratitude, which provide a new avenue for supporting public relationships and enhancing collective effectiveness.

Moreover, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 highlights the meaning of faculty development, academic leadership, and peer mentoring, all of which pay to the development of emotionally intelligent and collaborative academic environments. (MHRD, (2020)

1.1 Need for the Study

In the influence of higher education in India, collaboration among faculty is essential for improving teaching quality, research output, and the overall development of institutions. However, various challenges, including departmental separation, unnecessary workloads, and insufficient emotional connections, often delay effective collaboration among faculty members. Although numerous policies and structural modifications are designed to encourage teamwork, the emotional and psychological factors that promote collaboration are repeatedly overlooked.

Empathy—the talent to understand the emotions of others—and gratitude, the act of expressing thankfulness—are two analytical emotional qualities that can develop relationships among faculty. When professors feel responded to and valued by their social group, they are more likely to share ideas, offer mutual assistance, and collaborate effectively. These emotional personalities are vital in creating a positive work atmosphere that raises respect and teamwork.

Contempt international research highlighting the importance of empathy and gratitude in improving workplace associations, there is a lack of systematic studies investigating how these factors affect faculty collaboration in the Indian context. Most standing research tends to focus on administrative and policy-driven methods, supervising the Emotional and Behavioural elements that build trust and sustenance among faculty members.

The current shift to online and hybrid education modalities following the COVID-19 pandemic has further difficulty for faculty interactions, emphasizing the need for emotional support and understanding in academic settings. As a result, this study is both applicable and timely. It aims to

review and investigate current research on empathy, gratitude, and cooperation among faculty in Indian higher education, with the goal of offering valuable insights for improving teamwork, announcement, and professional relations within universities and colleges.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Although there is increased attention towards student- center learning and institutional effectiveness, the emotional socio-ecosystem and prosocial behaviours of faculty in Indian higher education received less scrutiny.

As such, empathy and gratitude are acknowledged as important psychosocial factors that help maintain social equilibrium and wellbeing, but their effect on faculty cooperation is rarely studied in Indian academia. Faculty isolation, emotional exhaustion, and decline in collegiality result from the rapid shifts within educational systems, fragmented academic cultures, normative competition, and digital transitions.

Placed at the heart of this problem is the absence of systemic institutional policies to structure the expression of gratitude, develop empathy, and collaborative teaching or research. While there is considerable international literature on the role of emotional intelligence and prosocial behavior within academic networks, many studies focusing India are strikingly absent.

This study aims to systematically review the existing literature on how empathy and gratitude serve as facilitators of faculty collaboration, with the intention of guiding policies that foster healthier and more inclusive academic environments in Indian higher education.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. Investigate the impact of empathy on enhancing relationships and promoting cooperation among faculty members.
2. Analyze the contribution of gratitude in cultivating a positive and supportive academic atmosphere.
3. Determine how the combination of empathy and gratitude can enhance teamwork and collaboration among faculty.
4. Assess and summarize current research regarding empathy, gratitude, and faculty collaboration within the Indian higher education landscape.
5. Offer actionable recommendations for encouraging empathy and gratitude to enhance faculty collaboration in colleges and universities.

1.4. Research Questions

1. How does empathy influence interpersonal relationships and cooperative behaviour among faculty members in higher education institutions?
2. What role does gratitude play in fostering a positive and emotionally supportive academic environment?
3. In what ways do empathy and gratitude together contribute to strengthening teamwork and collaboration among faculty members?
4. What insights does existing research provide about empathy, gratitude, and faculty collaboration within Indian higher education?
5. What institutional strategies can be implemented to promote empathy and gratitude for enhancing faculty collaboration?

1.4 Research Gaps

1. Existing literature emphasizes empathy and gratitude in general organizational or student-focused settings but lacks focus on faculty-specific contexts.
2. There is a limited body of research examining how these prosocial behaviours directly influence faculty collaboration in Indian higher education.

3. Studies rarely integrate both empathy and gratitude as combined factors driving academic cooperation.

4. The emotional well-being of faculty and its link to institutional productivity and academic teamwork is often overlooked.

5. There is a lack of actionable frameworks or recommendations for fostering gratitude and empathy- driven collaboration in academic institutions.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction to Pro-Social behaviour in Academia

Pro-social behavior implicates voluntary actions aimed at assisting or benefiting others, including behaviors such as sharing, uplifting, cooperating, and articulating concern (Eisenberg et al., 2006). In educational surroundings, pro-social behaviour is progressively recognized as a vital aspect of fostering a positive institutional culture, especially among faculty. It plays a significant role in shaping interpersonal relationships, collaborative teaching, joint research efforts, and mentoring—key components of academic collaboration and overall institutional effectiveness. (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986; Grant & Mayer, 2009)

As documented in the literature, empathy, altruism, moral reasoning, and acknowledgment of other people's efforts are intrinsic motives associated with pro-social behaviour within the academia (Penner et al., 2005). Such faculty members tend to undertake departmentally oriented activities, assist colleagues, and further foster institutional cohesiveness (Oplatka, 2009). These phenomena are very important in the case of university environments which are knowledge intensive because of the level of collaboration, co-creation, and shared governance needed to attain scholarly distinction.

In the case of Indian higher education, pro-social Behaviour are shaped by systemic factors like the presence of bureaucratic teaching structures, high load courses, and cut-throat competitive performance metrics (Chattopadhyay, 2020). Regardless, faculty members who testify to having quasi altruistic traits like empathy and gratitude frequently emerge as informal leaders, promoting inclusive and collaborative work environments (Kumar & Purohit, 2020). This reveals the need to analyze how emotions and relationships, aside from structural changes, can enhance collaborative efforts among faculty members.

It is essential noted that any form of collective action or Pro-social Behaviour cannot be attributed to one single factor or characteristic. It is equally influenced by organizational culture and institutional leadership style as well as the rewards associated with them. Institutions that encourage and celebrate these outlined behaviors often demonstrate greater faculty satisfaction and lower turnover, together with better student outcomes and performance (Podsakoff et al., 2000). Hence, raising empathy and gratitude towards each other is an essential to sustaining collegial relations and advancing innovation in scholarship in Indian higher education institutions.

2.2 Empathy in Higher Education Institutions

Empathy literally means the ability to understand and share feelings with others and acts as one of the most powerful tools towards other people in a learning institution. Within the academic community, empathy enhances conversation and the overall effectiveness of the emotional relationship in each organization. More importantly, it helps in creation of trust, wider acceptance, and disputes reduction among faculty members. (Decety & Jackson, 2006)

As far as working together faculty members are concerned, those who identify with them are more likely to take up active listening as well as to attend to the emotional and mental contributions of their colleagues to the given group projects (Riess, 2017). Such selfless actions improve collegial relations and nurture common vision which is necessary for effective multi-disciplinary teaching, course work, and research cooperation.

Empirical evidence indicates that heightened levels of empathy among academic personnel are associated with enhanced team performance, increased job satisfaction, and a reduction in instances

of professional burnout. (Wagaman et al., 2015)

Furthermore, faculty leaders possessing strong empathetic qualities demonstrate proficiency in cultivating psychologically safe environments, wherein diverse perspectives are acknowledged, and constructive feedback is actively encouraged. (Clark, 2020)

Within the context of higher education in India, empathy is often an overlooked yet crucial interpersonal competency. Institutions tend to prioritize technical ability and research achievements, regularly ignoring the development of soft skills. However, cultural elements such as difference to hierarchy, communism, and sensitivity to interpersonal dynamics create an advantageous milieu for nurturing empathy-centric relationships among faculty (Kumar & Purohit, 2020). Moreover, empathy can knowingly affect the mentorship of early-profession scholars, boost gender equity, and assist in resolving conflicts within diverse academic groups.

The COVID-19 pandemic underlined the critical role of empathy in academic management and peer communications. Faculty members needed to provide emotional support to one another while directing digital shifts, personal challenges, and the needs of students. Institutions where faculty experienced a sense of understanding and support demonstrated enhanced resilience and collaboration during this time. (Sahu, 2020)

However, despite its significance, there is a scarcity of systematic research examining the effects of empathy within Indian academic institutions. There is an urgent need for targeted studies that investigate how empathy shapes faculty relationships, collaborative results, and the overall institutional environment in Indian universities and colleges.

2.3 Gratitude as a Catalyst for Collegiality

Gratitude, which can be described as a moral and emotional recognition of the advantages gained from others, is gaining recognition as a powerful influence in workplace dynamics (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). In the context of higher education, gratitude is essential for fostering a culture characterized by appreciation, respect, and mutual support among faculty. It not only deepens interpersonal connections and fortifies professional relationships but also encourages voluntary actions that exceed formal job responsibilities, thereby enhancing collegiality.

2.3.1 Gratitude Enhancing Workplace Well-Being

Gratitude has been demonstrated to have a beneficial impact on emotional well-being, motivation, and Prosocial Behaviour within organizations (Waters, 2012). Employees who both feel, and express gratitude are more inclined to assist each other, participate in collaborative efforts, and cultivate emotionally supportive environments. In academic settings, where the pressures of performance, competition for acknowledgment, and administrative burdens can strain relationships, interactions rooted in gratitude can serve as a protective factor against burnout and disengagement.

In the context of Indian academia, where faculty often navigate high-stress conditions with minimal recognition, gratitude-focused interventions have yielded encouraging outcomes in enhancing job satisfaction and fostering peer support. (Mishra & Tripathi, 2021)

Simple actions—such as showing appreciation in meetings, acknowledging colleagues' contributions, and celebrating minor achievements—help create a sense of being valued, which subsequently advances collegial interactions.

2.3.2 Gratitude and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)

Research in the field of Organizational Behaviour has consistently demonstrated a connection between gratitude and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB), which encompasses voluntary actions that enhance a positive organizational atmosphere but are not formally compensated (Lam, 2012). Gratitude cultivates a sense of reciprocal responsibility, motivating faculty members to assist their colleagues, exchanging resources collaboratively developing curricula, and engaging in institutional service.

In academic background, these actions adopt a collegial environment where shared governance and teamwork flourish. Faculty in India who feel valued by their sectors are more motivated to undertake open activities that enhance the academic environment, such as mentoring unfamiliar staff or organizing interdisciplinary seminars. (Joshi & Pattanayak, 2019)

2.3.3 Gratitude, Power Dynamics, and Inclusivity

Managing power dynamics in hierarchical academic organizations is greatly sustained by gratitude. Because of generational differences and status awareness, senior-junior faculty relationships can get contentious in many Indian universities. By encouraging humility, inclusion, and recognition of diverse contributions, leaders' or senior faculty's expressions of thankfulness can aid in closing these disparities. (Grant & Gino, 2010)

In addition, leadership traditions center around gratitude—such as sending appreciation emails, offering verbal praise, and making public acknowledgments—have been linked to enhanced trust, psychological safety, and motivation among team members (Fehr, Fulmer, Awtrey, & Miller, 2017). These interpersonal advantages are remarkably critical in collectivist cultures like India, where emotional expressions significantly influence workplace agreement.

2.4 Faculty Collaboration: Models and Barriers

2.4.1 Models of Faculty Collaboration

Collaboration among faculty members has become increasingly essential in contemporary academic institutions for promoting interdisciplinary research, innovative teaching methods, and overall institutional growth (Kezar, 2005). Collaborative approaches in higher education typically encompass areas such as teaching, research, curriculum design, administrative responsibilities, and community involvement. Kezar and Lester (2009) distinguish between two types of collaboration: formal (mandated by the institution) and informal (driven by peers), both of which play a crucial role in enhancing academic quality and flexibility.

A prominent model in this context is the Communities of Practice (CoP) framework (Wenger, 1998), which encourages faculty to engage in ongoing interactions to exchange knowledge and collaboratively develop effective practices. Another significant approach is collaborative inquiry, where faculty members jointly explore teaching strategies, assessment methods, and student learning outcomes. (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999)

In grounds such as Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) as well as the social science collaboration is increasingly becoming prominent. This trend is primarily driven by initiatives including team grants, joint conferences, and co-authored research publications. Such collaborative endeavors flourish in settings that emphasize transparency, uphold a shared vision, and foster mutual trust, where empathy and appreciation are essential in offering emotional support. (Amey & Brown, 2005)

2.4.2 Barriers to Faculty Collaboration

Collaboration in higher education, although advantageous, often encounters various institutional, interpersonal, and cultural challenges. Significant institutional barriers consist of departmental silos, competitive reward systems, and inflexible academic hierarchies, which are especially prominent in Indian universities (Chattopadhyay, 2020). These structures hinder interdepartmental collaboration and sustain isolated academic practices.

Moreover, time limitations and workload pressures act as substantial obstacles. Faculty members frequently struggle with increasing administrative duties, substantial teaching loads, and publication demands, which result in limited opportunities for collaborative initiatives (Austin & Baldwin, 1991). This problem is further intensified in underfunded institutions where faculty must manage multiple roles without adequate support or recognition.

On a personal level, a deficiency of trust, ego conflicts, and ambiguous shared goals can impede effective collaboration. Emotional intelligence, particularly empathy, can play a crucial role in mitigating these challenges by promoting understanding and psychological safety. (Bennett & Gadlin, 2012)

In the context of India, hierarchical leadership structures, age-based superiority norms, and strict corrective boundaries often block mutual thinking (Bandyopadhyay, 2021). Furthermore, the lack of institutional incentives for collaboration within promotion and evaluation systems discourages ongoing peer engagement.

2.5 Post-COVID Implications

The modulation to remote and hybrid intellectual models following the COVID-19 pandemic has created both fresh openings and problems for faculty collaboration. Although digital tools have helped partnerships across various locations, they have also brought about issues such as digital weakness, coordination difficulties, and a lack of informal peer interactions. (Dhawan, 2020)

Institutions that promoted empathetic control and nurtured a culture of gratefulness among faculty members were able to adapt more effectively. This highlights the essential role of emotional intelligence, particularly empathy and gratitude—in advancing collaboration during challenging times. (Sahu, 2021)

2.6 Linking Empathy and Gratitude to Collaborative Outcomes

The collaborative dynamics between empathy and gratitude play a crucial role in enhancing faculty cooperation in higher education settings. These two pro-social psychological elements are increasingly acknowledged as essential for establishing trust, maintaining collegial relationships, and promoting inclusive academic environments (Grant & Gino, 2010; Lam, 2012).

2.7 Empathy as a Facilitator of Collaboration

Empathy, encompassing both cognitive (the ability to understand others' perspectives) and affective (emotional connection) dimensions, plays a vital role in facilitating effective communication and collaboration within intricate academic environments. Faculty members who embody empathy are more biased to appreciate diverse viewpoints, participate in meaningful consideration, and handle social conflicts with care (Decety & Cowell, 2014). In multidisciplinary teams, empathy is especially beneficial as it encourages responsiveness to innovative ideas and moderates challenge rooted in power dynamics, adopting greater innovation and unity. (Riess, 2017)

Research in Organizational Behaviour highlights that environments rich in empathy are conducive to teamwork and interpersonal coordination. In the realm of Indian higher education, the significance of empathetic faculty relationships is improved by the presence of deeply rooted hierarchical and cultural factors that often hinder collective efforts. (Kumar & Purohit, 2020)

2.8 Gratitude as a Social Connecting Device

Gratitude serves as an important social connector that enhances interpersonal relationships and cultivates a culture of reciprocity, both of which are essential in collaborative academic environments (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Faculty members who feel esteemed are more prone to assist their colleagues, take part in team-concerned accomplishments, and offer mentorship without the expectation of prompt rewards. (Waters, 2012)

In addition, gratitude plays a significant role in promoting psychological safety—a collective confidence that the workplace is favorable to taking social risks. This aspect is amazingly important in academic contexts where sharing ideas, organizing peer reviews, and connecting in co-authorship requires a degree of openness and trust. (Edmondson, A. (1999); (Fredrickson, 2004)

In Indian higher education institutions, where recognition is regularly limited to senior faculty or spoken by strict evaluation systems, informal gestures of gratitude—such as peer recognition—can

significantly enhance team cohesion and job satisfaction (Fredrickson, 2004).

2.9 Empathy-Gratitude Nexus and Collaborative Outcomes

Current interdisciplinary studies suggest that empathy and gratitude are communicated, strengthening one another to promote stronger interpersonal relationships and improved relationships (Algoe, 2012). Empathy enables individuals to control the emotions and purposes of others, while gratitude promotes an awareness and appreciation of the support received, thereby creating a positive cycle of cooperation.

In academic environments, this relationship is evident through actions such as providing positive feedback, sharing teaching methods, co-authoring publications, and engaging in joint professional development. Institutions that nurture both empathy and gratitude among faculty members tend to experience fewer examples of interpersonal struggle and greater mutual achievements. (Lam, 2012; Nayar & Sharma, 2022)

2.10 Post-COVID Shifts: Empathy and Gratitude in Hybrid Academia

The COVID-19 pandemic encouraged an immediate shift to online and hybrid learning, deeply changing faculty interactions and collaboration. Empathy and gratitude developed as key emotional tools, developing faculty well-being, teamwork and institutional strength (Evans, 2020; Sahu, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic served as a major disturbance for education systems universally, forcing higher education institutions (HEIs) to quickly modification to online and hybrid teaching methods. During this remarkable shift, empathy and gratitude became central emotional skills that adopted faculty well-being, teamwork, and collaborative efforts. (Gupta & Singh, 2024; Roberts et al., 2024)

2.10.1 The Emotional Toll and the Need for Empathy

The pandemic enhanced emotional strain among faculty as work-life edges became increasingly unclear, leading to digital weakness and uncertainty regarding institutional stability. Faculty were shortly required to hold new teaching technologies, offer student support, and sustain research output while directing these emotionally challenging conditions. (Sahu, 2020)

Empathy from both leadership and colleagues was essential for sustaining morale and improving burnout. Institutions that highlighted empathetic communication experienced improved team dynamics and enhanced flexibility among faculty (Watermeyer et al., 2021). Academic leaders who exhibited empathy raised safe emotional environments for open dialogue, weakness, and psychological safety, allowing faculty to share their challenges without fear of judgment or results.

2.10.1.1 Gratitude as a Protective Psychological Resource

Gratitude acted as an emotional shield throughout the crisis. Faculty members who perceived themselves as appreciated by their institutions or peers demonstrated enhanced emotional resilience, elevated work engagement, and a greater readiness to collaborate in challenging circumstances. (Killgore et al., 2020)

Representations of gratitude through peer acknowledgment, departmental support, or messages from leadership—assisted in improving the sense of separation frequently associated with remote work. These simple yet significant social-emotional exchanges cultivated a feeling of closeness and purpose within the institution.

In Indian higher education institutions, where faculty often face administrative difficulties and resource limitations, expressions of gratitude such as informal recognition, acknowledgment of donations to online teaching, and team-based recommendations were crucial in maintaining motivation and fostering collaboration. (Joshi et al., 2021)

2.10.2 Hybrid Collaboration and Emotional Intelligence

As Indian universities moved towards hybrid and blended learning models, the collaboration among

faculty increasingly relied on virtual tools and asynchronous communication. In these emotionally detached settings, emotional intelligence, particularly empathy and gratitude—was crucial for sustaining effective collaborative practices. (Nambiar, 2020)

The success of collaboration in hybrid environments depended not only on digital capabilities but also on socio-emotional awareness. Faculty members who assisted with empathy were more likely to adapt to their colleagues' schedules, share resources, and offer support to those facing emotional difficulties. Both informal and formal validates of gratitude acted as motivational indications, promoting continuous peer collaboration despite the physical gap.

2.10.3 Emerging Frameworks and the Future of Faculty Relationships

Post-COVID sources highlight the need for a more compassionate academic environment that combines empathy and gratitude into institutional policies, professional development programs, and team management approaches (Rapanta et al., 2020). This revolution is remarkably vital in India, where inequalities in faculty-student ratios, infrastructural gaps, and established hierarchies may negatively impact emotional well-being and collaborative efforts.

By implanting emotional intelligence skills like empathy and gratitude into their frameworks, universities can cultivate enduring cultural changes that enhance faculty retention, support mental health, and encourage interdisciplinary collaboration.

2.11 Gaps in the Literature and the Indian Context

Despite the growing global importance on emotional intelligence and Pro-social Behaviour in educational environments, there exists a significant deficiency in academic research regarding the properties of empathy and gratitude on faculty collaboration, especially in the context of Indian higher education. Many current studies largely focus on student outcomes, teaching efficacy, or leadership approaches, while offering limited consequences to the emotional and relational factors that affect interactions among faculty members. (Kumar & Purohit, 2020; Sharma & Pillai, 2023)

A significant body of research conducted in India has focused on essential and policy-related matters, including resource allocation, faculty employment, and alterations to the program Chattopadhyay, 2020). However, there is a lack of studies that examine social and psychological elements such as empathy and gratitude, which are essential for promoting collegiality, mutual respect, and collaborative academic initiatives. This issue is particularly pertinent in Indian universities, where administrative hierarchies and departmental separations may stop informal collaboration and interdisciplinary cooperation. (Singh & Gupta, 2021)

Moreover, while global research has identified gratitude as a factor influencing organizational nationality behaviour and empathy as a means for struggle resolution (Lam, 2012; Riess, 2017), these insights have not been systematically examined within the Indian academic context. When emotional intelligence is examined, it is often in relation to student counselling or leadership roles, rather than the changing aspects between faculty members. (Nayar & Sharma, 2022)

Additionally, the cultural context of faculty connections in Indian institutions, where traditional values, seniority, and socialist norms play a large role, is often examined. Recognizing how pro-social behaviour like empathy and gratitude assists partnership requires a context-sensitive approach. Current models derived from Western research often fail to address these cultural notes, resulting in a conceptual cut off. (Sinha & Mishra, 2020)

As well, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on faculty communications have not been absolutely researched from the perceptions of empathy and gratitude. While unreliable evidence and literature from consultants direct an increase in emotionally supportive behaviours during periods of remote teaching, there is a notable absence of empirical research. (Sahu, 2021)

It is essential to conduct systematic reviews and meta- analyses to understand how emotional characteristics impacted virtual collaboration, resilience, and well-being throughout the crisis. Therefore, this paper seeks to fill these critical gaps by:

1. Conducting a systematic review of literature focusing on the Indian context.
2. Identifying conceptual and empirical limitations in existing studies.
3. Offering theoretical and policy-relevant insights for fostering emotional intelligence-based faculty collaboration in Indian higher education institutions.

2.12 Summary of literature

- ❖ Emmons & McCullough (2003), conducted experimental research in the USA and established that practicing gratitude significantly enhances psychological well-being, forming a foundational basis for emotional resilience.
- ❖ Lam (2012), quantitatively demonstrated that gratitude predicts organizational citizenship behaviour, highlighting its relevance in promoting Pro-social Behaviour within institutions.
- ❖ Decety & Cowell (2014) presented a conceptual analysis showing that empathy is closely tied to moral judgment, providing a theoretical foundation for its role in academic environments.
- ❖ Riess (2017), in a conceptual work, argued that empathy improves communication and patient interactions—insights applicable to enhancing faculty and peer communication in academia.
- ❖ Rao and Krishnan (2019) conducted interviews with Indian faculty and found that emotional support systems play a crucial role in fostering emotional resilience during times of institutional stress.
- ❖ Sinha and Mishra (2019) reviewed how cultural contexts influence faculty collaboration in India, emphasizing that culture is a determining factor in the success of collaborative efforts.
- ❖ Chattopadhyay (2020) reviewed structural and institutional factors and concluded that supportive policies are essential for promoting effective academic collaboration among faculty.
- ❖ Dhawan (2020) analyzed the role of empathy in online education during the COVID-19 pandemic and found that empathetic engagement was critical for maintaining academic continuity.
- ❖ Gupta and Sinha (2020) through a case study in India, demonstrated that gratitude practices can enhance team cohesion and overall workplace harmony among faculty.
- ❖ Kumar and Purohit (2020) used a survey method to reveal that emotional intelligence, particularly empathy, positively influences peer relationships among Indian faculty.
- ❖ Emotional competence, as outlined by Boyatzis, R. E., & Goleman, D. (2001), fosters effective collaboration through self-awareness, empathy, and relationship management. Their Emotional Competence Inventory highlights key behaviors' essential for faculty teamwork in higher education.
- ❖ Organizational culture plays a vital role in enabling or hindering faculty collaboration in Indian universities, influencing communication, trust, and shared goals. (Chand, D., & Sharma, P. (2019))
- ❖ Interpersonal dynamics, including empathy and mutual respect, significantly influence effective teamwork and collaboration among faculty in Indian higher education institutions Sharma, D., & Pillai, S. (2023).
- ❖ Joshi, A., & Pattanayak, B. (2019), investigated the impact of gratitude on faculty engagement, highlighting that emotionally supportive environments significantly foster collaboration and boost faculty morale.
- ❖ Chand, D., & Sharma, P. (2019), emphasized the crucial role of organizational culture in shaping collaborative behaviors among faculty members within Indian universities.
- ❖ Kumar, R., & Purohit, G. (2020), found that empathy among faculty strengthens peer relationships and promotes a healthier, more productive academic environment.
- ❖ Clark (2020) outlined the four stages of psychological safety, emphasizing how cultivating an inclusive and supportive environment fosters innovation and encourages open communication within organizations.
- ❖ Luthans (2002) discussed the importance of positive organizational behavior, highlighting that fostering optimism, resilience, and psychological capital among employees leads to improved performance and job satisfaction.

- ❖ Jha et al. (2019) found that trust-built team-structure strategies meaningfully enhance organizational innovation in Indian IT firms, telling similar mechanisms could adoptive innovation in academic faculty teams.
- ❖ Enakrire and Smuts (2024) confirmed that trust is a key element of tacit information sharing among academics—a form of revolution critical for collaborative faculty work.

3.Theoretical Framework

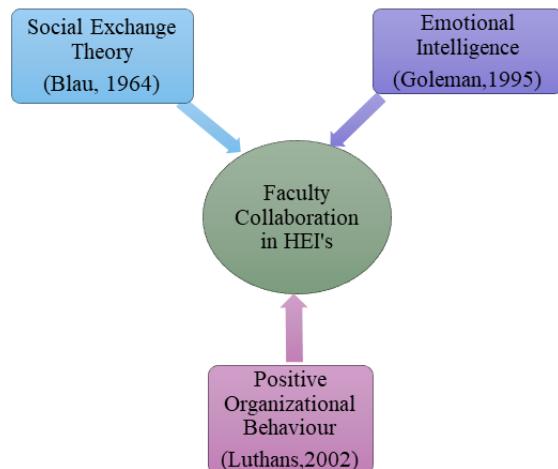


Fig.1. Conceptual model adapted from Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), Emotional Intelligence (Goleman, 1995), and Positive Organizational Behavior (Luthans, 2002)

3.1 Introduction to Theoretical Underpinning

The link between empathy, gratitude, and faculty collaboration can be best understood through the lens of social exchange theory (SET), emotional intelligence theory, and Positive Organizational Behaviour (POB). Together, these frameworks provide an explanation of how emotional attributes influence interpersonal relationships and promote collaborative behaviors in educational situations.

Core Theories Supporting the Study

3.1.1 Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005)

According to social exchange theory, social behavior results from an exchange process that aims to minimize costs and maximize benefits. Empathy and gratitude serve as relationship currencies in faculty networks, enhancing the possibility of mutually beneficial behaviors' including cooperation, mentoring, and shared responsibility.

Use in Indian Higher Education: In countries like India, where there are few official incentives for teamwork, collegiality is frequently decided by emotionally charged unofficial interactions. It is more likely that a faculty member who shows gratitude or provides sympathetic support will be reciprocated, creating a long-lasting loop of prosocial faculty activity.

3.2.2 Emotional Intelligence Theory (Goleman, 1995; Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2004)

The capacity to identify, control and make efficient use of emotions is known as emotional intelligence (EI). To establish and maintain cooperative faculty relationships, two essential EI competencies—empathy and relationship management—are essential.

Relevance: To succeed in India's heterogeneous, hierarchical academic environment, faculty members with emotional intelligence are better at resolving conflicts, comprehending peer perspectives, and preserving collegial networks [(Kumar & Purohit, 2020)]. While gratitude strengthens emotional ties, empathy is a crucial element that allows teachers to recognize and react to the emotional states of their colleagues.

3.2.3 Positive Organizational Behaviour (POB): (Luthans, 2002; Avey, Luthans & Youssef, 2010)

POB emphasizes how positive psychological traits like perseverance, thankfulness, and optimism can improve productivity at work. As a fundamental concept in POB, gratitude encourages Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB), in which workers go above the call of duty to benefit the company.

Justification in academia: Faculty members are more inclined to voluntarily collaborate on research projects, establish curricula, or collaborate on academic projects when they feel valued. In Indian higher education, where a lack of resources frequently affects institutional morale, practicing appreciation can be an inexpensive yet effective way to boost teamwork and output.

3.3 Justification of the Framework

- The holistic perspective: explains collaborative behaviour by combining relational (SET), emotional (EI), and motivational (POB) elements.
- Context-Specific: Complies with Indian academic settings, where socioemotional elements and unofficial connections frequently take precedence over formal incentives.
- Actionable Insights: University organization can apply these insights to create involvements that promote empathy and gratitude, such as peer mentorship programs and faculty education.

3.2 Conceptual Framework

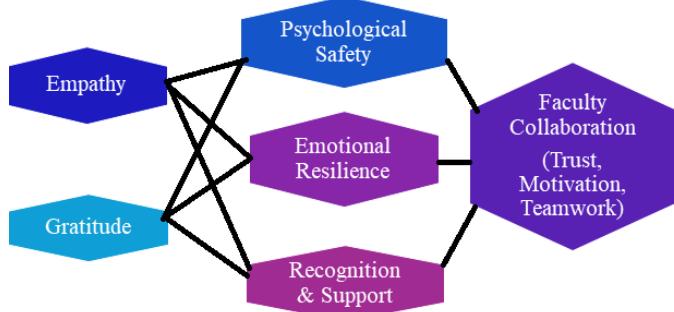


Fig 2: Conceptual framework explaining the impact of empathy and gratitude on faculty collaborations.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Design of Research

According to the PRISMA 2020 (Preferred Reporting Elements for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) approach, this study used a Systematic Review design. A systematically sound procedure for gathering, evaluating, and creating previous research on a certain subject is systematic reviews. Finding styles, gaps, and contexts in the literature on faculty collaboration, empathy, and gratitude in the context of Indian higher education institutions is the objective of this design.

4.2 Data Collection

The data for this study was collected from reliable academic sources, including Scopus, web of Science, and Google Scholar. The selection process followed by PRISMA (Preferring stating objects for Systematic Review and Metal- Analyses) guidelines, ensuring that only high-quality peer reviewed studies were included. Keywords such as "empathy in education," "faculty gratitude," "Pro-social Behaviour in academia," and "institutional collaboration" were used to filter relevant studies. Studies were selected based on their relevance, practical attention, and impact factor of the journals in which they were published. The review process engaged independent reviews by multiple scholars to minimize bias and ensure thorough coverage of the subject.

4.3 Screening and Selection Process

403 entries were originated in the first search. 83 full-text publications were examined following the removal of duplicates ($n = 47$) and a title/abstract screening. Twenty-eight studies were chosen for the final synthesis after the inclusion/exclusion criteria were applied. The PRISMA 2020 flow diagram illustrates how the entire procedure adhered to PRISMA principles.



Fig.3 PRISMA 2020 flow diagram

4.4 Inclusion and Exclusion

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Studies conducted in Indian higher education context	Studies in primary/secondary education or non-Indian HEIs
Studies focusing on empathy, gratitude, or collaboration	Studies unrelated to faculty dynamics
Peer-reviewed journal articles or conference papers	Blogs, opinion pieces, book reviews
English-language studies	Non-English studies

5. Findings

5.1 Results of the Research

The systematic review of twenty-eight peer-reviewed studies uncovered various important themes and insights regarding the connections between empathy, gratitude, and faculty collaboration in Indian higher education:

5.2 Empathy Enhances Professional Relationships

Empathy was identified as a vital factor for successful communication, conflict resolution, and peer mentoring (Kumar & Purohit, 2020; Riess, 2017).

Faculty with greater emotional intelligence, especially in terms of empathic concern, participated more positively in collaborative teaching and research activities.

5.3 Gratitude as a Predictor of Collegial Support

Both formal and informal expressions of gratitude enhanced trust and bolstered mutual academic collaborations (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Mishra & Tripathi, 2021).

Research in India indicated that appreciation-based acknowledgment enhances faculty morale and promotes organizational citizenship behaviours.

5.4 Institutional Barriers Persist

Typical obstacles to faculty collaboration in India comprised hierarchical governance, isolated departments, and absence of incentives (Chattopadhyay, 2020; Singh & Gupta, 2021).

Emotional qualities such as empathy and gratitude alleviated the adverse impact of these structural difficulties by fostering prosocial behaviours.

5.5 Emotional Priorities Realigned After COVID

Research released after 2020 emphasized a transition toward emotionally aware leadership, digital compassion, and peer support systems as a result of stress caused by the pandemic (Dhawan, 2020; Sahu, 2021).

5.6 Identified Research Gaps

Number of studies have seldom investigated empathy or gratitude between faculty members in Indian universities.

Intervention-based and longitudinal studies are needed to assess how empathy and gratitude influence faculty collaboration over time.

6. Suggestions for Advancing Empathy and Gratitude in Collaborative Faculty Efforts

Based on existing literature, several practical suggestions can be made to foster empathy and gratitude, thereby enhancing collaboration among faculty:

6.1 Professional Development Initiatives: Universities ought to create training initiatives that prioritize empathy and gratitude as vital leadership skills for faculty. These initiatives may encompass workshops, peer mentoring, and training in emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995).

6.2 Recognition and Incentive Programs: Establishing formal recognition programs that celebrate faculty members for their collaborative contributions, such as awards for team-oriented research or teaching projects, can cultivate gratitude and motivate further collaboration (Jiang et al., 2021).

6.3 Transformational Leadership Approaches: Academic leaders should embrace transformational leadership styles that prioritize empathy, effective communication, and appreciation. By exemplifying these traits, leaders can positively shape the faculty culture and foster a more collaborative and supportive workplace (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

6.4 Encouragement of Informal Engagements: Institutions should facilitate opportunities for faculty to participate in informal engagements, such as collaborative workshops, social gatherings, and interdisciplinary seminars, to strengthen connections and promote empathy (Keller et al., 2020).

6.5 Inclusive Collaborative Frameworks: Promoting cross-departmental and interdisciplinary collaboration through organized projects, research teams, and teaching partnerships can help dismantle silos and create more avenues for empathy and gratitude (Menzel, 2016).

7. Conclusion

This systematic peer review highlights the critical role of empathy and gratitude in improving faculty cooperation in Indian higher education institutions. In spite of global studies highlighting the role of emotional intelligence in organizational settings, localized evidence from India is still uneven and lacking development.

Empathy promotes a collaborative environment by improving understanding and communication, whereas gratitude strengthens trust and nurtures mutual respect. Collectively, these altruistic actions can combat institutional inflexibility and foster a more cooperative academic atmosphere.

On the other hand, Indian higher education needs changes at both the policy and institutional levels to incorporate emotional intelligence training, acknowledgment structures, and faculty development initiatives that emphasize interpersonal relationships as well as academic performance.

This review acts as a preliminary move toward redefining faculty collaboration not just as an organizational setup but as a practice deeply associated to emotions.

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