

The Influence and Interplay of Emotional Intelligence and Leadership Type on Early Childhood Educators' Organizational Commitment

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this study was to assess the influence of emotional intelligence on the organizational commitment of early childhood educators. Organizational commitment and its precursor, job satisfaction, have gained relevance because of routinely high industry of turnover. The interplay among educators' job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and supervisors' leadership type were secondarily assessed. A valid and reliable survey was administered to educators in the southeastern United States. Although select dimensions were correlated, no significant relationship was found between educators' overall emotional intelligence and organizational commitment. However, emotional intelligence was moderately correlated with job satisfaction. There was no significant relationship found between supervisors' leadership traits and processes and educators' organizational commitment, although educators' job satisfaction and supervisors' leadership traits and processes were slightly correlated. Based on positive associations within the current study, it is recommended that organizations incorporate emotional intelligence assessment into the educator hiring process as well as determine the job satisfaction and organizational commitment levels and leadership type preferences of current educators as a basis for forming training budgets, retention strategies, and succession management plans.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, Organizational commitment, Job satisfaction, Leadership, Early childhood education

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1. INTRODUCTION

As the United States population topped 330 million in 2019, roughly 66% of mothers of children from birth to age six were in the workforce, and almost 76% of employed mothers worked full time [1]. The number of mothers working outside the home, and the resulting demand for early childhood programs and commensurate educators from 1975 to 2013 grew almost 250% [2]. Professionals in the early childhood industry serve over 6 million children [3], with over 1.1 million childcare jobs and 540,000 jobs for preschool teachers according to labor statistics [1]. With nationwide job turnover for early childhood educators between 26 and 40%, the current employee shortage in many organizations has reached crisis proportions [4]. In turn, such staffing shortage causes undue burden in organizations because it depletes the pool of applicants in addition to causing recurring turnover in this high-emotion high-demand job [4]. According to Jewell [5], emotionally intelligent employees tended to be more satisfied with and committed to their organization, and they stayed there longer. Consequently, Law, et al. [6], declared that employees who performed better had notably higher emotional intelligence. Therefore, understanding how emotional intelligence affects job satisfaction and organizational commitment can help early childhood leaders address turnover

by better determining at the onset who is likely to be successful teaching young children. Thus, employee recruitment, hiring, and training dollars can be prudently applied during the selection process, rather than on unnecessary turnover costs. Previous research and literature empirically linked emotional intelligence to job satisfaction and job satisfaction to organizational commitment, respectively. However, Jewell [5] has tried to identify a relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational commitment. The current study includes surveying early childhood educators to determine a potential relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational commitment.

1.1 Statement of the Problem and Purpose

Nearly one million people are employed to provide basic care and educational services for over 21 million U.S. children from birth to age six [1]. Pay rates for early childhood educators range from \$9.50 (entry level) to \$12 (experienced) per hour, significantly below the average wage of elementary school educators who earn approximately \$19.11 (entry level) to \$28.32 (experienced) per hour [1]. Program directors and managers within the early childhood industry have encountered standard annual turnover of employees ranging from 26% to 40% for the last two decades with low pay rates being cited as a primary reason for employees' departures [4].

The dilemma of high turnover throughout early childhood education reveals the need for industry leaders to differentiate between symptoms and underlying problems, search for potential correlations, discover possible relationships, as well as offer and test solutions for an industry in apparent crisis. With approximately one third of early childhood educators

leaving their organizations each year, exiting employees seem to lack devotion to teaching children or loyalty toward their organizations [4]. Teachers' organizational commitment is either being nurtured or smothered by one or more factors. It is possible that the early childhood industry's plethora of interrelated problems of job turnover, dissatisfaction, low pay, stressful relationships, poor performance, apathetic attitudes, and a lack of commitment are merely consequences of hiring applicants in an employment role who lack the fundamental abilities necessary for a successful and satisfied teaching career [6, 7].

Providing quality care and educational experiences for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers is a high-stress, high-emotion, and high-burnout job [4, 7]. Evidence indicates that employees with knowledge, skills, and abilities are most likely to enjoy their work to a greater degree and be good at it, a situation that is the product of a congruent person-environment fit [8]. Satisfied and committed educators likely possess some attribute that is highly predictive of and promotes their actualized success, resiliency, satisfaction, and commitment. Conceivably, these teachers must be categorically highly emotionally intelligent [9]. A lack of emotional intelligence in teachers could negatively affect their satisfaction and commitment, which could reveal itself in familiar symptomatic ways, including burnout, turnover, poor attitudes, shoddy performance, and stressed relationships. These potential issues demonstrate the need for an examination of how emotional intelligence might be related to job satisfaction or organizational commitment. Thus, this study was highly relevant, essential, and timely considering current dynamics in the field of early childhood education. The results of this study were used to identify potential solutions for improvement combined with ways to avoid additional adverse impact.

2. BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM

Selecting early childhood educators based on high emotional intelligence would allow organizations to profit in multiple ways. According to Law et al. [6], emotionally intelligent employees typically performed better. Therefore, teaching teams made up of high performing emotionally intelligent educators should directly contribute to positive teacher-child interactions, developmentally appropriate learning, an inviting classroom environment, and comprehensive organizational quality. As a result, teachers' performance-driven pay and upward mobility within the organization should increase; however, organizations must balance performance ratings, pay increases, and opportunity for advancement with consideration of influences beyond the teacher's control such as the physical environment, materials available, or staffing patterns. Nevertheless, many improvements made to local and state operating licenses (higher ratings), as well as national accreditation, could be clearly linked to teachers' performance, since evaluators conduct intense classroom observations and rate how teachers lead various activities [10]. High quality early childhood programs could gain performance-based advanced environmental ratings, improved licensing scores,

positive compliance audits, and distinguished national accreditation – all tied to additional money and resources. Consequently, each enhancement could enable early childhood services to be expanded or facilities upgraded, remodeled, or newly constructed. Additional avenues and opportunities to meet eligibility for grant funds would facilitate expansion of services and facilities based on demonstrated establishment of superior early childhood educational services.

Identifying a relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational commitment can assist early childhood programs from the beginning of the hiring process to invest resources on recruitment, selection, and training for genuine educators who will exhibit short-term satisfaction with teaching and long-term commitment to the organization [11]. Personnel selection decisions must become more comprehensive given that early childhood education is a job that requires a substantial degree of emotional expenditure and the ability to understand, regulate, and appropriately channel emotions within oneself and to teach children likewise [12, 13]. Lamentably, industry turnover of 25% to 40% is one sign that poor personnel selection decisions have been the norm, and teachers are responding by leaving their organizations [4]. In addition, distant and unsupportive relationships with supervisors further contribute to poor performance, burnout, and turnover [14, 15].

Turnover costs can range from 93% to 200% depending on exiting employees' skills and responsibilities [9]. Without emotional intelligence to help regulate job satisfaction, teachers who leave the industry might lack the capability to cope with the constant expenditure of emotional labor required in the early childhood classroom [16]. Job dissatisfaction manifests itself through a lack of commitment, poor performance, strained relationships, absenteeism, and turnover [5]. The aforementioned issues are consequential of hiring personnel without sufficient pre-employment screening while also failing to adequately match interests and abilities of job candidates with job requirements of the position for which they are being considered [8].

2.1 Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to identify and examine the elements that correlate between emotional intelligence and organizational commitment, which influence early childhood educators' capability, performance, relationships, and intention to stay with their organization. A quantitative correlational methodology was applied, and a survey instrument was developed as an assessment tool and distributed to a sample of early childhood educators. Survey items were primarily designed to determine the degree to which self-reported emotional intelligence, as defined in the study, related to job satisfaction, and further, to organizational commitment. The moderating variable of educators' experiences with supervisors (specifically the supervisor's leadership traits and processes) was also considered. Therefore, included in the scope of this research was the interplay of emotional intelligence, leadership dynamics, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Data was

collected, measured, and interpreted to determine whether these specific factors were associated with employees' level of commitment to the organization in which they were employed.

Figure 1, which displays potential interactions between or among variables, follows the research questions and accompanying hypotheses:

1. To what extent, if any, is emotional intelligence related to organizational commitment among early childhood educators?
2. To what extent, if any, is emotional intelligence related to job satisfaction among early childhood educators?
3. To what extent, if any, are the supervisor's leadership traits and processes related to job satisfaction among early childhood educators?
4. To what extent, if any, are the supervisor's leadership traits and processes related to organizational commitment among early childhood educators?

H0: Emotional intelligence is not related to organizational commitment.

H1: Emotional intelligence is related to organizational commitment.

H0: Emotional intelligence is not related to job satisfaction.

H2: Emotional intelligence is related to job satisfaction.

H0: The supervisor's leadership traits and processes are not related to job satisfaction.

H3: The supervisor's leadership traits and processes are related to job satisfaction.

H0: The supervisor's leadership traits and processes are not related to organizational commitment.

H4: The supervisor's leadership traits and processes are related to organizational commitment.

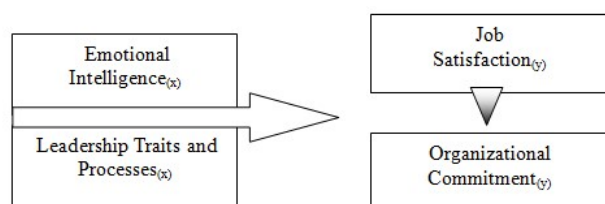


Figure 1: Variables diagram.

2.2 Highlights and Summary

The material presented in this chapter provides a rationale for the research that was completed through the conduct of this study. In this quantitative correlational study, an attempt was made to determine whether, and to what extent, a relationship existed between early childhood educators' emotional intelligence and organizational commitment. The theoretical framework of this inquiry was based on several concepts: emotional intelligence, leadership traits and processes, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. The expectation of findings that will contribute positively to early childhood educators and organizational leaders in formulating and implementing hiring, training, and retention practices based on

emotional intelligence and organizational commitment was justification for this study. Therefore, the findings of the study should be of interest to early childhood program directors and owners, human resources departments of early childhood programs, training and technical assistance liaisons, the academic community, industry-specific experts, as well as state and national level early childhood leaders and policymakers.

3. METHODOLOGY

Although supplementary variables and potential relationships were assessed, the overarching research was quantitative with emphasis on whether a relationship exists between early childhood educators' emotional intelligence and organizational commitment with consideration given to job satisfaction as a predictor or antecedent of commitment. Included in the research design was a combination of two historically defined valid and reliable instruments including Meyer and Allen's [17] Organizational Commitment Scale and the Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) from Law, et al. [6]. Job satisfaction and leadership dimensions were measured respectively using the Lucas, et al. [18] Job Satisfaction Measurements Scale and descriptive leadership attributes from Northouse [19]. Emotional intelligence, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and leadership dimensions were represented in the combined survey instrument with no questions containing a mixture of the constructs.

3.1 Description of Research Design

A quantitative research design was selected to assess and describe a potential correlation between early childhood educators' emotional intelligence and organizational commitment. This study was non-experimental in nature. The design was appropriate for the further exploration of related research questions concerning the potential moderating interactions of job satisfaction, and leadership traits and processes.

A plethora of literature existed for emotional intelligence (personality and ability models) and organizational commitment, respectively. In addition, the job satisfaction and leadership variables were cited in several emotional intelligence and organizational commitment studies [11, 20-22]. Using what was learned from these studies, a survey instrument was developed that was a combination of other valid and reliable instruments designed to measure the variables identified in the current study. The individual scales were the Law, et al. [6] WLEIS Scale; the Job Satisfaction Measures Scale by Lucas, et al. [18]; and Meyer and Allen's [17] Organizational Commitment Scales. Supervisors' leadership traits and processes were rated using identifying indicators from Northouse [19].

A convenience sample of 296 educators who attended training conferences was secured for this study. Historically, attendees included a cross-sectional representation of early childhood education roles, locations, and organizations. While it would have been preferable to have a random sample, the community-based and independent nature of early childhood

program types across the country made the acquisition of program and employee contact information time and cost prohibitive. Moreover, a convenience sample as such, though non-generalizable, can still be used for causal analysis. The survey research design and sampling approach was chosen to solicit multiple data elements from as many volunteer educators in an economical and efficient manner [23]. Data related to all variables was collected by means of a 51-question, self-reported survey with design elements aligned with respective research questions. The survey began with demographic data including date of birth, gender, number of children parented, education, and salary. Data related to leadership traits and processes was assessed by participants' selection of leadership indicators exhibited by their current supervisor as well as preferred indicators. Participants were then asked to rate their self-perceived emotional intelligence, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment levels on seven-point Likert type instrument.

4. FINDINGS

Although select variable dimensions were correlated, a significant relationship between early childhood educators' total average emotional intelligence (TOTEI AVG) and total average organizational commitment (TOTCAVG) was not found. The absence of statistical evidence indicating a significant relationship between educators' emotional intelligence and organizational commitment was not consistent with the results from another study used to suggest a correlation between service providers' emotional intelligence and organizational commitment [9]. Nevertheless, the result from the current study was still deemed satisfactory given the interrelatedness of emotional intelligence and job satisfaction [24], and subsequently, the identification of job satisfaction as a precursor to organizational commitment [25]. While emotional intelligence can influence job satisfaction [11], it appeared to be, based on results from the current study, not significantly related to organizational commitment solely on its own. However, through further analysis, additional insight was derived related to specific dimensions of emotional intelligence and organizational commitment.

4.1 Select EI and OC Dimensions

From the data obtained in this study, it appeared that while emotional intelligence (EI) as a comprehensive factor was not significantly related to organizational commitment (OC), several dimensions within both constructs were correlated as listed in Table 1. As indicated by results from Pearson's R, related averaged dimensions were observed below the 0.05 level. This finding was consistent with Humphreys, et al. [26] who found a significant correlation among emotional intelligence, emotional coping ability, and organizational commitment indicating that some workers who exhibited higher emotional coping abilities were more committed overall when certain emotional intelligence dimensions were high rather than low.

EI dimension	OC dimension	Pearson correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Self-emotions (SEAAVG)	Affective (CAAVG)	0.129	0.026
Others-emotions (OEAAVG)	Affective (CAAVG)	0.147	0.011
Others-emotions (OEAAVG)	Normative (CNAVG)	0.144	0.013
Regulation of emotion (ROEAVG)	Affective (CAAVG)	0.134	0.021
Regulation of emotion (ROEAVG)	Continuant (CCAAG)	- 0.133	0.022

Table 1: Select EI and OC Averaged Dimensions.

4.2 EI and Affective OC

From the data obtained in this study, it appeared that a significant correlation existed between affective organizational commitment (CAAVG) and total average emotional intelligence (TOTEI AVG). Using Pearson's R, a correlation coefficient of .183 and a significance level of 0.002 were obtained. Across all emotional intelligence dimensions, correlations existed with affective commitment within the 0.05 significance level (Table 2). This finding was consistent with Jewell [5] who also found a correlation between the emotional intelligence and organizational commitment, particularly affective commitment, of frontline service providers in the airline industry.

EI dimensional averages		Affective commitment
Self-emotions (SEAAVG)	Pearson Correlation	.129
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.026
Others-emotions (OEAAVG)	Pearson Correlation	.147
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011
Use of emotions (UOEAVG)	Pearson Correlation	.181
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002
Regulation of emotion (ROEAVG)	Pearson Correlation	.134
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.021
Emotional intelligence (TOTEI AVG)	Pearson Correlation	.183
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002

Table 2: EI Dimensions Related to CAAVG.

It appeared there was a significant relationship between early childhood educators' total average emotional intelligence (TOTEI AVG) and total average job satisfaction (TOTS AVG). This finding was consistent with Law, et al. [6] who stressed the relationship between employees' emotional intelligence,

job performance, and overall life satisfaction. Emotionally intelligent employees tended to perform their jobs well and experienced accompanying satisfaction. This finding was also consistent with a Harvard Business Review article in which managers were encouraged to hire based on interviews crafted to determine applicants' emotional intelligence since it "accounts for anywhere from 24% to 69% of performance success" [27]. In addition, these findings supplemented those by Opengart [28] and Borchers [8] whose study results indicated that emotionally intelligent employees, particularly within high emotion jobs, demonstrated enhanced job performance and job satisfaction.

4.3 JS and EI Dimensions

Information related to individual job satisfaction (JS) and emotional intelligence (EI) dimensions was also obtained. Seven out of eight dimensions of job satisfaction and emotional intelligence were significantly correlated with the most significant correlations occurring between dimensions of emotional intelligence and intrinsic job satisfaction (IJS AVG). This finding was consistent with respondents' job satisfaction mean scores as listed in Table 3 in which respondents indicated more intrinsic than extrinsic job satisfaction.

Dimension		EJSAVG	IJSAVG
SEAAVG	Pearson Correlation	.075	.329
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.196	.000
	N	296	296
OEAAVG	Pearson Correlation	.237	.372
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	296	296
UOEAVG	Pearson Correlation	.157	.460
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	.000
	N	296	296
ROEAVG	Pearson Correlation	.126	.353
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.031	.000
	N	296	296

Table 3: JS and EI Pearson's R Result.

Further insight into the correlation between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction was developed (and to the finding from research question one) by testing early childhood educators' job satisfaction and organizational commitment scores. It appeared that a significant correlation existed between educators' job satisfaction and organizational commitment. As reported by Samad and Alam [20] and Rayton [24], job satisfaction and organizational commitment are strongly interrelated. However, affective organizational commitment appeared to develop only after years of service and consistent job satisfaction [5, 29, 30].

Early childhood educators' job satisfaction and their supervisors' leadership traits and processes were significantly related. However, it did not appear that a significant relationship existed between early childhood educators' organizational commitment and their supervisors' leadership traits and processes. Nonetheless, a negative correlation of the

JS and OC variables with the LTP variable is reasonable given that 198 of 296 respondents indicated they did not experience the type of leadership traits and processes from their supervisor that they preferred.

In this study, no indication was found that a significant relationship existed between supervisors' leadership traits and processes and the organizational commitment of early childhood educators; however, a significant negative correlation was found between early childhood educators' job satisfaction and their supervisors' leadership traits and processes. This finding was consistent with Walumbwa, et al. [31] whose study results showed that transformational leadership has a strong and positive effect on job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Respondents in the current study indicating their preferred leadership traits and processes match their current leader totaled 98; respondents indicating their preferred leadership traits and processes do not match their current leader totaled 198, thus a negative correlation with job satisfaction (-0.114). As such, it appeared that early childhood educators experience job satisfaction when their leaders possessed and practiced the leadership traits wanted by employees; such traits were consistent with transformational leadership as described by Northouse [19]. This finding added insight related to Dvir, et al. [32] whose findings demonstrated that the ability to inspire affective commitment (the most preferred type) among employees is a trademark of transformational leadership. As previously addressed, early childhood educators surveyed for this study did not appear to be affectively committed to their organization. As such, it appeared that a lack of organizational commitment, as found in this study, is associated with a deficiency in transformational leadership traits and processes.

4.4 LTP and JS Dimensions

Statistics were derived related to specific dimensions of supervisors' leadership traits and processes and early childhood educators' job satisfaction levels. Pearson's R was performed at the 95% confidence interval to determine which specific dimensions of job satisfaction (JS) were correlated to supervisors' leadership traits and processes (LTP). A significance level of 0.032 was obtained between supervisors' leadership traits and processes (LTP) and early childhood educators' extrinsic job satisfaction (EJSAVG). This significance level was less than 0.05 (Table 4). As such, it appeared that supervisors' leadership traits and processes (LTP) were significantly correlated to early childhood educators' extrinsic job satisfaction levels (fairness of pay, financial rewards, pay satisfaction, working conditions, and benefits). This finding was consistent with Aryee, et al. [15] who reported that subordinates' perceptions of justice in the workplace fully mediated the relationship between abusive supervision and the work outcomes. The implication is that early childhood educators' favorable perception of their supervisors' leadership traits and processes appeared to trump employee treatment related to pay, benefits, and working conditions.

		Leadership
EJSAVG	Pearson Correlation	-.125
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.032
	N	296
IJS AVG	Pearson Correlation	-.067
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.250
	N	296
TOTSAVG	Pearson Correlation	-.114
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.050
	N	296

Table 4: LTP and JS Pearson's R Result.

The purpose of this study was to assess and describe the relationship between early childhood educators' emotional intelligence and organizational commitment. In this study, an examination and description also occurred for potential interplaying factors including job satisfaction and supervisors' leadership traits and processes. In summary, the key findings for this research are as follows:

4.5 Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Organizational Commitment

A significant relationship was not found between early childhood educators' emotional intelligence and organizational commitment. However, in subsequent analyses, specific dimensions of emotional intelligence and organizational commitment were observed to be significantly correlated.

4.6 Relationship between Job Satisfaction and Emotional Intelligence

A relationship was found between early childhood educators' emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. Also, in subsequent analyses, it was observed that job satisfaction and organizational commitment are significantly correlated.

4.7 Relationship between the Supervisor's Leadership Traits and Processes and Early Childhood Educators' and Job Satisfaction or Organizational Commitment

A significant relationship was not found between supervisors' leadership traits and processes and early childhood educators' organizational commitment; however, a significant relationship between supervisors' leadership traits and processes and early childhood educators' job satisfaction was observed.

It is imperative to remember that this research does not demonstrate causality. Nevertheless, findings derived from this research arguably demonstrate the need for further research designed to describe the strength of relationships and associations as well as determine if causality exists between emotional intelligence and organizational commitment in combination with other variables. Although emotional intelligence remains an emerging theory, the significance of the current study is that emotional intelligence research, as

related to other select variables, can aggressively move toward practical research and implications.

5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

In this study, the proposition was made that emotional intelligence and organizational commitment, among other factors, lie beneath the early childhood teacher turnover epidemic. Emotional intelligence is important as it is related to satisfaction, performance, and retention [5, 6] while organizational commitment is associated with whether and for what reason employees stay with an organization [17]. Given the important role early childhood professionals play, the loss of any experienced teaching staff is costly to the organization both in terms of replacement cost as well as the intangible cost associated with reduced quality of care, disruption to children's adjustment, team morale decline, and reduced operational efficiency [7].

Substantial research exists establishing the link between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction [11, 21]. Additionally, ample evidences exist naming job satisfaction as an antecedent of organizational commitment [24-26]. However, a paucity of research exists on the relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational commitment. In this study, a quantitative correlational methodology was adopted to analyze the results from a 51-question survey instrument. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were conducted on collected data to test hypotheses associated with the following research questions:

1. To what extent, if any, is emotional intelligence related to organizational commitment among early childhood educators?
2. To what extent, if any, is emotional intelligence related to job satisfaction among early childhood educators?
3. To what extent, if any, are the supervisor's leadership traits and processes related to job satisfaction or organizational commitment among early childhood educators?

In this study, statistical evidence was not found to show that the emotional intelligence of early childhood educators is significantly related to their organizational commitment. This result could not support the results from other studies that suggested a relationship between employees' emotional intelligence and organizational commitment [9, 26]. As such, it appeared from this study that while emotional intelligence was related to job satisfaction – the precursor to commitment – it was not significantly related to organizational commitment solely on its own [11]. However, in further analysis, additional insight was derived related to specific dimensions of emotional intelligence and organizational commitment. Respondents' scores indicated that several dimensions across both constructs were related even though the total average construct scores were not.

Significant statistical evidence was found to support a relationship between early childhood educators' emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. This finding was consistent with Law, et al. [6] who stressed that emotionally intelligent employees tend to perform their jobs well and experience accompanying satisfaction. This finding supplemented those by Opengart [28] and Borchers [8] whose study results indicated that emotionally intelligent employees, particularly within high emotion jobs, demonstrated enhanced job performance and job satisfaction. Furthermore, respondents' scores suggested that emotionally intelligent employees experienced greater intrinsic job satisfaction.

Significant statistical evidence was not found to support a relationship between the supervisors' leadership traits and processes and the organizational commitment of early childhood educators; however, a relationship was found between early childhood educators' job satisfaction and their supervisors' leadership traits and processes. This finding was partially consistent with Walumbwa, et al. [31] whose study results showed that transformational leadership had a strong and positive effect on job satisfaction as well as organizational commitment. Findings from the present study suggested that employees experienced greater job satisfaction when their leaders possessed and practiced the leadership traits and processes wanted by employees; such traits were consistent with transformational leadership as described by Northouse [19]. Given the ability to inspire affective commitment (the most preferred type) among employees is a trademark of transformational leadership [32], it appeared that a lack of such commitment, as found in this study, was consequently related to a deficiency in transformational leadership traits and processes exhibited by early childhood leaders.

5.2 Conclusions

With over 66% of the mothers of children from birth to the age of six in the workforce, over 1.6 million early childhood professionals are serving slightly more than 6 million children [1, 3]. With annual nationwide job turnover for early childhood educators between 26% and 40%, the current employee shortage in many organizations has reached crisis proportions [4]. The trend is clear – desperately needed early childhood educators are leaving their organizations in droves, and the increasing turnover rate compels managers to reassess their hiring practices and evaluate why employees are not staying with their organization. It was proposed in this study that emotional intelligence and organizational commitment, among other factors, lie beneath the early childhood teacher turnover epidemic. Associations were uncovered in this research that may prove insightful for managers as they consider applicants' abilities and potential for early childhood teaching positions as well as retention strategies for existing teachers.

In the current study, examination and description occurred of the relationship between early childhood educators' emotional intelligence and organizational commitment by understanding the similarities and differences between teachers' organizational commitment levels and dimensions compared

to their emotional intelligence. An examination and description were also conducted of the relationship between the job satisfaction levels of early childhood professionals in relation to their emotional intelligence since job satisfaction is an antecedent of organizational commitment [24]. Also examined and described was auxiliary information about teachers' perceived efficacy of their supervisor's leadership traits and processes and other associations of emotional intelligence, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment.

5.2.1 Research question one conclusion

In this study, statistical evidence was not found to support the proposition that early childhood educators' emotional intelligence is significantly related to their organizational commitment. Therefore, it appeared that while emotional intelligence was related to the precursor of commitment (job satisfaction), yet as a single comprehensive factor, it was not related to organizational commitment [11, 25]. Albeit several internal dimensions across both constructs were related even though the total average construct scores were not. While it remains difficult to predict which individuals may be successful early childhood educators, the relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational commitment dimensions can give managers practical insight into candidates' requisite abilities and potential to develop certain types of commitment.

5.2.2 Research question two conclusion

In this study, significant statistical evidence was found to indicate a high correlation and significant relationship between the job satisfaction and emotional intelligence of early childhood professionals. It appeared that emotionally intelligent employees, particularly within high emotion jobs such as teaching, demonstrate enhanced job satisfaction [8, 9]. In further analysis, determination was made that the stronger relationship exists between the intrinsic job satisfaction dimension and all dimensions emotional intelligence. Statistical significance was also found for the interrelationship of job satisfaction and organizational commitment [20, 24]. Of consequence to the early childhood industry, Law, et al. [6] found that emotionally intelligent employees tended to be better performers, and subsequently, Lucas, et al. [18] found that better performers tended to experience greater job satisfaction with less-propensity for turnover.

5.2.3 Research question three conclusion

In this study, a statistically significant relationship was not found between supervisors' leadership traits and processes and the organizational commitment of early childhood educators. However, a statistically significant relationship was found between early childhood educators' job satisfaction and their supervisors' leadership traits and processes. It appeared that teachers experiencing job satisfaction worked for, and actually preferred, supervisors who practiced leadership traits and processes described as transformational by Northouse [19]. In subsequent analysis, it was also discovered that supervisors' leadership traits and processes were significantly related to early childhood educators' extrinsic job satisfaction levels (fairness of pay, financial rewards, pay satisfaction, working

conditions, and benefits). The implication for early childhood programs was that teacher perspectives of their supervisors' leadership abilities and the ensuing leader-follower relationship trumped most frustration teachers might have with overall programmatic policy (i.e., extrinsic job satisfaction). Regarding organizational commitment, Dvir, et al. [32] demonstrated that the ability to inspire affective commitment among employees is a trademark of transformational leadership. Determination was made, that of the three-dimensional nature of commitment, early childhood educators were affectively committed to their organizations least. Consequentially, it appeared that a lesser amount of affective commitment in early childhood educators was associated with a deficiency in their supervisors' transformational leadership traits and processes.

5.3 Recommendations

In conducting this study, the intention was to use the results to provide readers with a better understanding of the emotional intelligence and organizational commitment dynamism. Not to the exclusion of other factors such as job satisfaction and leadership traits and processes, the goal was to identify comprehensive variable and dimensional relationships that could provide insight for the early childhood community in addressing elevated teacher turnover rates. Nonetheless, due to the utilization of convenience sampling in the current study, subsequent recommendations are for individuals, groups, or organizations represented within the sample population only.

5.3.1 Recommendations for early childhood education decision makers

With over 6 million young children requiring services in their most formative years, early childhood decision makers are charged with hefty responsibility [3]. As such, the need exists to hire teachers who are most likely to stay with the organization so that turnover and associated tangible and intangible costs are minimized. However, with almost one million teachers already in the field, leaders must devote balanced attention to the development of purposeful and strategic retention efforts [1]. Based on findings from this study, early childhood decision makers on the organizational level might consider the following recommendations and associated implications:

1. Continue supporting state and national efforts aimed at enhancing teacher education.
2. Revise teacher hiring practices for the incorporation of emotional intelligence assessment.
3. Survey currently employed teachers to determine job satisfaction levels and commitment types as a basis for forming training budgets and retention strategies.
4. Survey employees during exit interviews to discover reasons educators give for leaving the organization specifically relevant to emotional intelligence, leadership traits and processes, satisfaction, and commitment as a basis for transforming recruitment, training, and retention strategies.
5. Provide training and mentoring for new supervisors and organizational leaders.

Based on findings from this study, early childhood decision makers on the state and national levels might consider the following recommendations and associated implications:

1. Continue earmarking funds and raising the standards for professional development and teacher education. Provide subsequent allotment for increased salaries.
2. Train organization and program leaders in relevant human resource functions namely recruitment, selection, and retention and assist in the development of emotional intelligence abilities, transformational leadership abilities, and interpersonal communication and conflict resolution skills.
3. Require reporting of teacher recruitment and hiring policies and procedures, organizational turnover rates and costs, retention strategies, organizational development plans, and quality improvement plans.

5.3.2 Recommendations for enhanced research

Researchers conducting future studies involving similar variables might consider the following factors for enhanced research:

1. Select a high-emotion industry in which it is possible to obtain a random sample to aid with generalizability rather than a convenience sample, or a purposive sample used in a qualitative study.
2. Use regression to determine causal links, their absence, and possible future research suggestions.
3. Clearly identify the emotional intelligence construct adopted due to the contrasting nature of the ability and personality models and the continuing emergence of the construct in general.
4. Conduct supplementary emotional intelligence measures via self-reporting, others-reporting, and instrumentation.
5. Control for new employees indicating job satisfaction or organizational commitment.
6. Specify years of service within the organization and industry of interest rather than years in the workforce in general.

5.3.3 Recommendations for future research

The findings from this study provide future researchers with a sufficient foundation from which to broaden the scope of study related to emotional intelligence and organizational commitment. This study was correlational in nature and executed at a time of rapid change and advancement in early childhood education and organizations in general. As early childhood demographics and the emergence of the emotional intelligence construct continue to unfold, it may be interesting for future studies to revisit the impact on educators' organizational commitment. Researchers conducting future studies involving emotional intelligence and organizational commitment might consider the following factors:

1. Studies focusing on other high emotion jobs or work teams in the service industry could provide additional insight into the emotional intelligence and organizational commitment relationship.

2. Studies focusing on clarifying the job satisfaction and organizational commitment correlation could have implications for those constructs as well as other research endeavors with associated predictive methodologies.
3. Studies focusing on emotional intelligence and organizational commitment in combination with other variables such as performance, occupational stress, or customer orientation may uncover other latent relationships or covariances.
4. Studies focusing on emotional intelligence and organizational commitment versus commitment to an occupation or industry may uncover additional dimensional correlations and provide further theory development.

Associations among early childhood educators' emotional intelligence, job satisfaction, leadership traits and processes, and organizational commitment were examined throughout this research. Several practical applications and research directions are available because of this research. The most fundamental approach necessitates replication of this study to confirm the general results and to increase the validity of the results obtained. Using the same method but tightening the scope of the target subject pool could produce further advances with an early childhood segment (i.e., Head Start only or state sponsored Pre-K only) and increase the generalizability of the findings. However, to move the field of study forward, a change in methodology is recommended to conduct this study in a more centralized high-emotion industry in which a random sample can be obtained. Any of these approaches would test the variability of this research with respect to the timeframe in which it was conducted. Does this research apply to all segments within the early childhood industry? Does it apply in both times of expansion and recession or across regional, cultural, or linguistic boundaries? These are questions that could be answered in future research.

Perhaps a more aggressive research approach can also be legitimized in an organizational setting by developing a causal study to test whether increasing emotional intelligence improves job satisfaction and subsequently organizational commitment. This research allows for that possibility; however, it is recommended only within an early childhood organization with both rigorous monitoring and a highly supportive human resources staff to reduce the possibility of any negative repercussions reaching children and families. Since early childhood teachers typically work in teams of two to five, it is also feasible and highly recommended that this type of study be done with a pilot group before undertaking it throughout an organization.

Industries, organizations, and academia in the United States and abroad appear to be continually interested in moving the field of study forward as they note that emotional intelligence is an intricate and shaping influence on their personal and professional lives. Likewise, job satisfaction and organizational commitment have strong implications given the tendency of satisfied employees to perform better and develop commitment while committed employees remain in the

organization, thus substantially reducing turnover costs [5, 6, 17]. Since several associations in the current research were shown to be positive, additional research can be justified with greater confidence in the relevance of these topics within the organizational setting. This progression of research should be filled with relevant responses and implications derived from objective research rather than subjective opinion.

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