

Educational Leadership for Alpha-Oriented Multidisciplinary Faculty: Enhancing Collaboration, Harmony, and Productivity in Higher Education Settings

ANANG FATMA T. JAWALI*

Sulu State College, Jolo, Sulu 7400, Philippines
Corresponding author: anangtagayan_05@gmail.com

ABSTRACT. Despite the need for cooperation, managing interdisciplinary faculty that demonstrate alpha-oriented tendencies in higher education presents serious issues for educational leadership. By examining the containment and empowerment tactics used by academic administrators, this study closes a research gap. The study used an exploratory qualitative approach and conducted in-depth interviews with 25 academic leaders who were specifically chosen for the study. In order to investigate how leadership behaviors affect dominant personality traits, the data were examined using reflexive thematic analysis, which was framed by trait activation theory. The results show that structural mechanisms that eliminate human power and reduce territorial behavior, such as data-driven dashboards and shared governance, are crucial neutralizers. According to the study, the best approach for handling assertive faculty in terms of productivity is bounded autonomy, which is typified by collaborative project charters and high-trust models. Along with structural empathy interventions like story circles to lessen emotional exhaustion in distributed leadership environments, the need for epistemic translation to resolve disciplinary disagreements is also highlighted. The study comes to the conclusion that effective leadership may use prospective disruptors as catalysts for institutional innovation by transforming affective conflict into cognitive conflict.

KEYWORDS: *Techniques; Harmony at Work; Efficiency; Alpha-Oriented*

INTRODUCTION

Multidisciplinary cooperation has changed from being an optional benefit to a strategic necessity in today's higher education environment ^[1,2]. Faculty members from a variety of academic backgrounds are brought together to work in integrated teams as institutions strive to handle increasingly complex global concerns. However, this change has brought about new interpersonal dynamics, especially when it comes to managing dominant, high-achieving individuals—often referred to as "alpha-oriented faculty" in organizational psychology.

High levels of assertiveness, fierce competition, and a strong desire for influence are traits of alpha-oriented behaviors ^[3, 4]. These characteristics are a double-edged sword in academic settings: they can undermine team cohesion and collaborative governance while simultaneously boosting individual research productivity and institutional reputation. This paradox is what makes this study significant. While educational leadership is essential to fostering an atmosphere that strikes a balance between authority and autonomy ^[5,6], traditional leadership models frequently fall short of managing the conflict that results from forcing several alphas from various disciplines to work together without a clear hierarchy.

The general well-being of teachers, digital adaption in times of crisis, and the particular stressors influencing faculty performance are the main topics of current educational leadership research ^[7–10]. Although useful, these studies frequently make the assumption that faculty behaviors follow a conventional distribution and do not address the particular tactics needed to handle high-dominance profiles. There is a substantial gap in empirical research detailing how leaders handle the specific tension between harnessing alpha energy for productivity and minimizing its propensity to damage workplace harmony ^[11,12]. Furthermore, this dynamic in interdisciplinary teams—where the absence of common disciplinary norms exacerbates the alpha battle for dominance—is rarely examined in the literature now in publication.

In order to close this gap, this study isolates educational leadership styles as the independent variable and looks at how they affect two important dependent variables: faculty productivity and work harmony. In contrast to generic leadership studies, this study focuses on the containment and empowering tactics administrators employ to deal with alpha-oriented professors. This study intends to go beyond general leadership theories and find particular, practical processes that enable diverse, assertive faculty teams to operate successfully by including 25 academic leaders in an exploratory qualitative inquiry. The results offer a

strategy for transforming possible interpersonal conflict into long-term academic success.

LITERATURE

Activation of traits and alpha-oriented behaviors. Assertiveness, strong self-direction, competitive drive, and a strong motivation for achievement are traits of alpha-oriented faculty. These people may conflict with collaborative methods, particularly in diverse teams, but they are frequently essential to innovation and research productivity^[13]. This study makes use of trait activation theory to comprehend this dynamic. Behavior is not always driven by personality qualities; rather, they are dormant until a certain working circumstance arouses them^[14]. This trigger is frequently the competitive pressure of research rankings and tenure in academia. However, by recognizing and eliminating the particular workplace distractions or triggers that activate these undesirable behaviors, leaders can actively modify behavior^[14].

High-Performance Dynamics' Dangers. Alpha behaviors increase productivity, but they also pose serious hazards to team cohesion. Knowledge sharing and productivity are regularly harmed by workers with a strong sense of entitlement^[14]. Additionally, the pressure to uphold alpha rank can be detrimental to one's mental health. Workers who have a strong internal drive for perfection are much more likely to become addicted to their jobs, a condition that is made worse when they believe their manager is addicted to their job^[15]. This implies that leadership approaches that only emulate grind culture could have unintended consequences. Even yet, the detrimental effects of a demanding leader can be mitigated if the company teaches staff coping mechanisms, such as how to manage public speaking anxiety, find social support, or strike a balance between administrative responsibilities and physical health activities^[14–18].

Distributed to Transformational Leadership. It has long been known that traditional frameworks such as Transformational Leadership, which are characterized by personalized attention and inspirational motivation, improve performance among proactive faculty^[19]. However, distributed leadership, which views leadership as a shared practice throughout the organization, is becoming more and more necessary for diverse teams^[20].

This change is supported by recent research. By fostering an environment where professionals may work together and assume leadership responsibilities, distributed leadership boosts faculty confidence^[21–24]. This paradigm aids in the dismantling of rigid hierarchies and explains professional objectives by promoting open, structured communication^[24]. But implementation calls for subtlety. The degree of trust between administrators and academics is crucial to the effectiveness of shared leadership^[24], and it works best when it is voluntary rather than coerced (Vuori, 2019). Since attaining peace through distributed leadership is a gradual process that necessitates resolving early conflicts, leaders must exhibit patience^[25].

The Function of Conflict in Peace and Efficiency. Differentiating between constructive and harmful conflict is a crucial leadership task. High levels of conflict at work typically hinder innovation because they divert workers and foster a hostile atmosphere^[26]. various conflict kinds, however, produce various outcomes. Diversity in generations and disciplines, especially when it comes to technical faculty who may have different professional belief systems or performance anxiety, can lead to both cognitive conflict that fosters innovation and affective conflict that stifles it^[27–30].

Strategies for effective leadership must bridge this gap. Although shared leadership encourages constructive disagreement, it frequently fails to settle emotional or personal conflicts^[30]. Therefore, in order to prevent conflicts from negatively impacting employee motivation, leaders must utilize proactive measures to establish clear norms and resolve disputes early^[26]. This supports the claim made by Johnson and Johnson^[31] that harmonizing competitive dynamics requires positive interdependence, where team members believe that their success depends on mutual cooperation.

METHODS

1. Research Design

This study uses an exploratory qualitative research methodology to examine the effects of educational leadership techniques on productivity and work harmony among interdisciplinary faculty members who display alpha-oriented tendencies. The exploratory technique is specifically chosen to obtain profound, nuanced insights into the intricate interpersonal dynamics of high-achieving academic teams, enabling the identification of leadership tactics that are not yet well described in the body of current quantitative literature.

2. Population and sampling

Twenty-five academic leaders or administrators from certain higher education institutions—such as deans, department chairmen, and program heads—participate in the study. Participants with direct, current experience leading diverse faculty teams that include members exhibiting alpha-oriented behaviors—which are characterized as forceful, competitive, and high-achieving—were chosen using a purposive sampling

technique. This guarantees that each participant will be able to speak authoritatively on the particular topic being studied.

3. Research Instrument

Researchers developed a semi-structured interview guide to examine the behavioral aspects pertinent to the study. The theoretical frameworks of Transformational and Distributed Leadership, as well as behavioral indications of Alpha qualities found in current research, served as the basis for the questions in this guide. Three specialists in educational management examined the instrument's content to ensure that it collected data on productivity and work harmony without bias. The last handbook focuses on dispute resolution techniques, team dynamics, and leadership skills.

4. Data gathering procedure

One-on-one interviews were used to gather data, and depending on participant preference, these interviews could be done in person or via video conference. All participants gave their informed consent and ethical clearance was acquired prior to the interview. To guarantee accuracy in transcription, each session was audio recorded and lasted roughly 30 to 45 minutes.

5. Data analysis

Reflexive thematic analysis was performed on interview transcripts using Braun and Clarke's six-phase approach [32]. In contrast to more strict coding techniques, this strategy stresses the interpretive role of the researcher. In order to identify preliminary trends, transcripts were first fully acquainted through repeated reads. After that, an inductive coding stage began, during which data segments that deviated from predefined categories were given descriptive names. To make sure they appropriately reflected the lived experiences of the participants, these codes were arranged into possible themes and examined against the entire dataset. The story presented in the results was the culmination of the themes' final definition and naming.

6. Research positionality

The researcher is essential to both data gathering and analysis in qualitative research. The researcher's intimate knowledge as a higher education academic administrator facilitates rapport-building and improves comprehension of technical leadership difficulties. But there is also a chance that shared meanings will be misinterpreted because of this insider status. The researcher used bracketing techniques, purposefully putting aside personal leadership experiences throughout interviews, to mitigate potential biases. In order to ensure that their opinions were appropriately represented, participants were also given the opportunity to assess synthesized topics through member verification.

RESULTS

Research Objective 1. to determine and examine educational leadership tactics that affect collaboration among interdisciplinary faculty members in higher education institutions who exhibit alpha-oriented tendencies.

Theme 1. Structural De-Escalation through Data and Shared Governance

Implementing formal mechanisms to mitigate territorial behavior and interpersonal dominance was identified as a key strategy by participants in the study. They highlighted the importance of shared governance procedures for distributing decision-making authority across departments, thus preventing any individual from monopolizing conversations. Administrators fostered a system-driven atmosphere by forming interdisciplinary groups and rotating leadership roles.

Additionally, leaders adopted data-driven decision-making processes to depersonalize disputes, emphasizing systems design through established procedures and unbiased criteria for evaluating outcomes. This shift allowed discussions to concentrate on institutional goals instead of personal power dynamics, utilizing quantitative data like student success metrics to ground conversations. However, this approach presented challenges; some participants noted that while data systems enhanced clarity, they risked alienating those in artistic or qualitative disciplines, who felt that strict metrics failed to capture the complexity of their work. Leaders recognized the need for careful resource allocation to ensure that transparency did not inadvertently expose disparities, calling for a balance between standardization and respect for diverse disciplinary contexts.

"Establishing shared governance mechanisms involving all departments is my approach. Territorial behavior is lessened when all disciplines have a say in important decisions. In order to prevent someone from feeling marginalized or in control, I also rotate leadership positions."

"Having uniform metrics within departments facilitates the resolution of disputes about the distribution of resources. It compels lucidity. ... The system itself acts as a

check and balance when powerful voices attempt to influence decisions on an emotional or personal level."

Theme 2. Calibration of Relationships and Ego Control

In order to support the psychological requirements of high-performing professors, participants stressed the significance of addressing relational dynamics in addition to structural adjustments. A crucial tactic that helped leaders match the goals of the institution with the aspirations of the dominating faculty was one-on-one coaching. It was observed that faculty members who are alpha-oriented frequently see teamwork for a challenge to their independence. Effective leaders reframed collaboration as a way to increase impact rather than reduce authority in order to counter this impression. Furthermore, it was found that many alpha faculty members choose influence over control. By translating aggressive features into mentorship positions, establishing them as thought leaders rather than managers not only gives them the recognition they desire but also lessens power clashes. On the other hand, ignoring these dynamics—especially by avoiding conflict—was seen as a serious leadership shortcoming. Participants concurred that trying to keep the peace by avoiding conflict with dominating personalities only results in poisonous behaviors that demoralize teams. Therefore, genuine harmony requires addressing conflict head-on rather than dismissing it.

"Interdisciplinary collaboration may seem like a challenge to alpha academics, who frequently associate their identity with their status and level of competence. ... It all depends on how the invitation is presented. I've found success by portraying cooperation as prestige-building rather than compromise."

"I've discovered that a lot of alpha faculty members just desire influence rather than control. They can impart their knowledge without controlling operational choices if they are positioned as mentors or thought leaders rather than managers."

"One of the hardest lessons I learned was that harmony doesn't mean silence, it means healthy tension, honestly managed."

Theme 3. Handling Ideological and Disciplinary Conflicts

Participants stated that basic disparities in academic epistemology, which impact how different fields define knowledge and proof, frequently disturb work harmony in multidisciplinary settings. Faculty members from positivist domains like STEM and those from interpretivist fields like the humanities sometimes clash. Despite their seeming intimacy, these disputes are the result of profound disciplinary training disparities. Participants noted that in this context, alpha behaviors take the form of intellectual domination, as one discipline tries to force its methodological norms on another. In order to resolve these problems, good leaders settle disputes by creating a common language before working together. A disagreement between a philosophy colleague and an engineering professor who insisted on empirical evidence for theoretical assertions was one of the examples given. The results suggest that in order to prevent intellectual domination and preserve team cohesion, leadership in interdisciplinary teams must go beyond simple dispute resolution to incorporate epistemic translation, which facilitates comprehension of disparate academic paradigms.

"We frequently deal with fierce ideological conflicts, particularly when STEM and the humanities collide. Alpha faculty members in various professions have essentially diverse perspectives on the world."

"Rather than providing actual facts, the philosopher was providing theoretical context and nuance. Although they were both esteemed professors, their disciplinary languages were incompatible. Before they even acknowledged each other's legitimacy, it required multiple mediated conversation sessions."

Research Objective 2. to investigate how educational leadership techniques affect the output of multidisciplinary, alpha-oriented professors in higher education.

Theme 1. High-Trust and Bounded Autonomy Models

According to the participants, high-trust, high-expectation environments with servant leadership within clear boundaries are the most productive for alpha-oriented professors. This paradigm calls on leaders to give faculty members significant operational freedom while establishing clear deliverables and timelines. Alpha faculty are thought to suffer from micromanagement, which frequently results in resistance or disengagement. Faculty, on the other hand, are more likely to hold themselves to higher standards than those established by administration when autonomy is respected. But it's important to understand that autonomy shouldn't be equated with a lack of structure; unchecked autonomy has risks and could allow strong personalities to undermine group goals. Therefore, bounded autonomy—where expectations are jointly set at the beginning of

the term, allowing leaders to take a back seat during implementation—is the source of optimal productivity.

"When faculty members perceive that their boss works with them rather than over them, they react more favorably. I define deadlines and institutional priorities clearly, yet I present myself as a facilitator rather than a micromanager."

"Until the contrary is demonstrated, faculty members are regarded as professionals under my 'trust first, check later' approach. I mean... Confusion results from a lack of clarity in trust. Deliverables are jointly defined at the beginning of each term. I take a step back after that."

Theme 2. Maintaining Momentum through Distributed Leadership

Leaders used distributed leadership techniques, such as task force leadership changes and chair position rotations, to maintain productivity while avoiding the concentration of authority. By disrupting the formation of powerful silos and limiting entrenched authority among dominant professors, this strategy helps to reduce burnout among single leaders. According to observations, role rotations diminish territoriality and increase faculty empathy for administrative difficulties, which promotes long-term cooperation. However, there were issues with consistency since certain faculty members lacked the necessary skills or willingness to take the lead, which resulted in instances of disengagement during rotations. There was general agreement that distributed leadership models successfully prevent the stagnation that comes with inflexible hierarchies, notwithstanding these risks. This approach fosters equity by giving early-career academics leadership mentorship opportunities while including senior faculty in new roles.

"I switch up my leadership duties across task forces or subgroups. It gives each team ownership for results and flattens the hierarchy. ... Power is frequently concentrated in the hands of those in fixed leadership positions. We break that loop by switching around the coordinators and chairs."

Theme 3. Emotional Intelligence as a Barrier to Productivity

Lastly, the research showed that sustaining productivity in alpha-dominant teams requires emotional intelligence (EQ). Participants emphasized that unmanaged alpha tendencies frequently stifle more subdued, creative voices, resulting in silos that obstruct different viewpoints and reduce the group's potential for productivity. Effective leaders addressed this by integrating EQ-focused techniques into their processes, like "story circles" for group storytelling to promote interpersonal trust. Aggressive behaviors were lessened as a result of the team members' humanization. Leaders also used formal feedback tools, such as EQ tests and 360-degree reviews, to help dominant members understand how they affected the team. Participants noticed that alpha professors frequently changed their behavior, going from being disruptors to productive collaborators, after receiving anonymous criticism on their behavior.

"When there is unbridled power, I have witnessed quieter people entirely shut down. And eventually, that results in a decline in talent and morale. ... I've witnessed this lead to thought silos in humanities STEM cooperation."

"We instituted 'story circles,' which are monthly 45-minute meetings when coworkers share real experiences rather than theories or strategies. It helps dominating voices connect emotionally as well as academically and rehumanizes faculty."

"Depending on how emotionally intelligent the environment is, I've witnessed alpha types either thrive or disintegrate. Change is possible when powerful faculty members finally understand how others perceive their leadership."

DISCUSSION

In the context of higher education, this study expands on Trait Activation Theory. According to Serenko^[14], personality traits are dormant until they are activated by situational stimuli. This study reveals particular leadership mechanisms that might de-activate negative alpha behaviors like entitlement and territoriality without impairing productivity, despite previous research suggesting that these behaviors are triggered by competitive contexts. According to research on data-driven decision-making, alpha faculty members oppose subjective authority rather than actual authority. By eliminating the social dominance trigger through the use of objective dashboards, leaders successfully transform a possible interpersonal conflict into an impartial evaluation of measurements. This suggests that when structural rigidity is applied explicitly in academic leadership, it protects autonomy by neutralizing personality conflicts rather than stifling it.

Additionally, the results provide a nuanced viewpoint on distributed leadership. This study indicates that distributed leadership serves primarily as a containment tactic for alpha-oriented teams, whereas Spillane^[20]

and Zhang et al. ^[24] view it as a tool for empowerment and capacity building. Administrators keep influence silos from solidifying by switching up leadership positions. However, this study reveals a crucial limitation: emotional exhaustion, which runs counter to Zhang's model's optimism. High-performing teachers may see the service component of distributed leadership as a diversion from their primary competencies rather than as empowerment, according to the resistance rotating leadership reported in this study. This is consistent with the caution about job addiction made by Morkevi Čūtė and Endriulaitienė ^[15]; in order to prevent burnout, it is necessary to carefully calibrate highly specialized alphas into generic administrative roles.

The understanding of conflict transformation in interdisciplinary teams is expanded by this study. Affective conflict and cognitive conflict are different, according to Wang and Duan ^[30]. The study's findings demonstrate the epistemic translation mechanism that allows leaders to switch between these two states. A lot of what seems to be alpha dominance is actually a clash of disciplinary paradigms, as evidenced by the conflict between STEM and humanities teachers. Leaders successfully remove the affective component of the dispute, leaving only the cognitive argument, by employing interventions like story circles and moderated shared language sessions. This supports the claim made by Bensouda et al. ^[26] that proactive dispute settlement maintains motivation, but it also adds the particular realization that conflict resolution in interdisciplinary contexts needs to be both intellectual and emotional.

A three-tiered implementation structure for academic leaders overseeing alpha-oriented interdisciplinary teams is suggested by this study based on its findings. First, leaders should use impersonal data structures to perform systematized de-escalation in order to manage the territoriality and entitlement highlighted by Serenko ^[14]. Administrators should use dashboard systems that show objective measures, including student success rates and publication counts, to aid decision-making instead of depending on hierarchical authority, which frequently causes resistance in high-status teachers. By changing the topic of discussion from "who has more status" to "what does the data say," the leader neutralizes the alpha trigger of social dominance. This supports the conclusion that when authority is grounded in facts rather than hierarchy, alpha faculty embrace it. However, as Wang and Duan have cautioned, leaders must actively re-humanize this data for Humanities faculty in order to prevent the cognitive conflict from becoming successful ^[30].

Second, leaders need to use Bounded Autonomy Charters to operationalize the servant leadership with boundaries paradigm in order to enhance productivity without creating chaos. At the onset of any multidisciplinary project, teams should be required to co-author a Project Charter that defines deliverables, role rotation schedules, and conflict resolution protocols. This mechanism establishes the positive interdependence suggested by Johnson and Johnson ^[31], giving alpha faculty members the autonomy they desire and lowering the risks of work addiction noted by Morkevi Čūtė and Endriulaitienė ^[15] while incorporating the structural safeguards required to keep them from superseding group objectives.

Lastly, leaders need to institutionalize structural empathy mechanisms instead of depending on random interactions because distributed leadership might result in emotional exhaustion. The study suggests holding monthly story circles, which are non-strategic gatherings devoted to discussing personal stories or work-related issues unrelated to current assignments. By establishing a structured space for vulnerability and dismantling the invulnerability mask that alpha faculty members frequently wear, this intervention directly targets the silencing effect of dominant conduct. This is consistent with the result of Bensouda et al. ^[26] that proactive dispute resolution avoids hostile situations and transforms a group of competing individuals into a cohesive unit that can withstand high-performance pressure.

LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The study has many limitations even if it offers a thorough framework for handling alpha-oriented faculty. The purposive sample of 25 academic leaders used in the exploratory qualitative design restricts statistical generalization and does not capture the subtleties of leadership in various institutional kinds, such as research-intensive universities or vocational colleges. In order to improve future research, correlations between the proposed leadership tactics and faculty productivity indicators across a larger population should be empirically tested using quantitative techniques like structural equation modeling. Effective containment may be misinterpreted as bureaucratic repression because the study mostly records leader opinions while ignoring the firsthand experiences of alpha-oriented teachers. In order to close perceptual gaps, future research should take a dyadic approach, interviewing both leaders and teachers. The study mainly focuses on competitive qualities, although using Trait Activation Theory. Future research should examine how leadership techniques could trigger other latent qualities, such fear or withdrawal, especially in high-intensity teams with non-alpha faculty. Furthermore, researching the long-term effects of emotional intelligence interventions, such "story

circles," on faculty retention would provide insightful information for the creation of institutional policies.

CONCLUSION

This study analyzes educational leadership techniques that encourage work harmony and productivity among alpha-oriented multidisciplinary professors in higher education. Instead than focusing on general leadership techniques, it stresses a dual strategy of relational empowerment and structural control. Critical results demonstrate that impersonal mechanisms, such as data-driven dashboards and shared governance, reduce territorial behavior by transferring authority from hierarchy to objective metrics, reducing interpersonal conflicts, and mitigating competitive triggers identified in Trait Activation Theory.

The study presents the concept of bounded autonomy, arguing that optimal productivity results from explicitly defined autonomy under collaborative project charters, while alpha-oriented faculty perform best in high-trust situations. Furthermore, distributed leadership appears as a crucial tactic to avoid influence silos as well as an empowerment tactic, however it runs the danger of producing emotional exhaustion in the absence of structural empathy initiatives like "story circles."

In conclusion, the ability to transform affective conflict into cognitive conflict—rather than the absence of conflict—is what defines labor harmony in multidisciplinary environments. Educational leaders may leverage the disruptive potential of alpha faculty to propel institutional innovation by skillfully negotiating epistemic translation and fostering a culture of high-trust accountability.

AI Use Statement

The authors claim that they were the only ones who planned and carried out the entire research process, from study design to results. In order to improve readability and clarity, artificial intelligence methods were only used for grammatical checks, language enhancements, and consistency improvement. These AI systems made no contributions to the creation of data, the development of themes, interpretations, or academic debates. As a result, the authors retain all intellectual rights to the content.

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