



## The Importance of Emotional Intelligence for Transformational Leaders: A Critical Analysis

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article History:

Received: January 21, 20223

Revised: March 23, 2023

Accepted: March 24, 2023

Available Online: March 26, 2023

#### Keywords:

Emotional Intelligence

Transformational Leadership

Leadership

Organizations

Impact

Critical Analysis

#### Funding:

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

### ABSTRACT

The relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and transformational leadership (TFL) has received growing attention in recent years. The aim of the critical analysis was to explore the nature of this relationship and provide an insight into how emotional intelligence influences the transformational leadership style. The study revealed a positive and significant relationship between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership. EI has been found to be a predictor of transformational leadership, and individuals with higher emotional intelligence have been observed to exhibit transformational leadership qualities more frequently. The study highlights the need for organizations to prioritize the development of emotional intelligence in their leaders, as it can enhance their transformational leadership abilities. The critical analysis comes to the conclusion that EI is essential for transformational leaders in order to develop connections, encourage workers to reach their potential, and establish trust. Overall, this comprehensive review offers a thorough assessment of the research on TL and EI, emphasizing the need of EI for effective leadership.

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## 1. Introduction

Leadership is an integral component of organizations and plays a vital role in determining their success. Researchers' attention has recently shifted to comprehending the association between emotional intelligence (EI) and transformational leadership (TFL) (Dulewicz, Young, & Dulewicz, 2005). EI involves the capacity to recognize, regulate, and express one's own emotions as well as those of others (Salovey & Sluyter, 1997). Transformational leadership is a leadership style that fosters inspiration and motivation among followers to attain their full potential and work collaboratively towards a shared vision (Bass & Bass Bernard, 1985). The objective of this article is to study the association among EI and TFL, and the implications it holds for organizations. Despite the growing literature on EI and TFL, several questions regarding the nature of their relationship, extent to which emotional intelligence influences transformational leadership, and the potential benefits of developing emotional intelligence for transformational leadership remain unanswered (Brownm, 2005; Kumar, 2014). Thus, this paper aims to delve deeper into the connection among EI and TFL in the workplace.

The significance of this topic is immense as it can aid organizations in developing capable and effective leaders who can lead with empathy and inspiration (Rahman, Ferdousy, & Uddin, 2012). By exploring the link between EI and TFL, this critical analysis can assist organizations in identifying the key competencies required for effective leadership, and provide them with a framework for developing the necessary emotional intelligence and leadership skills. Moreover, this paper intends to suggest future recommendations basing on the limitations identified in existing literature.

In summary, the research gap for this paper involves identifying areas where the existing research on EI and TFL is limited or incomplete and proposing new research directions that can address these gaps. The research questions that guide this review are: What is emotional intelligence? What is transformational leadership? What is the relationship between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership?

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Emotional intelligence**

Many definitions of emotional intelligence exist, depending on the theoretical and conceptual framework that is being applied (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2016). They described it as the capacity to recognise and control emotions. The capacity to recognise, use, comprehend, and regulate emotions is one of four distinct branches that make up emotional intelligence. Goleman (1998) proposed that emotional intelligence encompasses the capacity to empathise with and inspire those around. Since its introduction in 1990, emotional intelligence has been getting extensive research in the knowledge areas of organisational behaviour and psychology. The capacity to recognise, control, and comprehend emotions in both ourselves and other people is known as emotional intelligence. Self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, and relationship management make up its four parts. The capacity to detect and comprehend one's own emotions is referred to as self-awareness. Self-regulation is the capacity to manage one's own feelings and actions. The capacity to grasp others' feelings is referred to as social awareness. Effective interpersonal and social management is referred to as relationship management.

Emotional intelligence is positively correlated with a number of leadership traits, including leadership effectiveness, job satisfaction, as well as job performance (Miao, Humphrey, & Qian, 2017). Leaders who exhibit a substantial amount of emotional intelligence typically have stronger communication skills, higher levels of self-awareness, and effective emotion regulation. As well, they are able to identify as well as meet the emotional needs of those they lead, which increases motivation and job satisfaction (Goleman, 1998).

### **2.2. Transformational leadership**

Setting high standards and demonstrating the conduct they want to see in their followers are key components of the leadership approach known as transformational leadership, that puts an importance on inspiring and reassuring team members to attain their maximum potential (Bass & Riggio, 2006). The hallmark of transformational leaders is their capacity to motivate followers to go beyond their own interests, contribute to the objectives of the business, and realise their own leadership potential. Coherent vision, a feeling of direction, and a creative atmosphere are all characteristics of transformational leaders.

Transformational leadership is defined by Burns (1978), as "leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations – the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations – of both leaders and followers" and it has since attracted a lot of interest in the field of organisational behaviour. Bass and Bass Bernard (1985) later expanded on Burns' work and developed the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). Transformational leaders motivate and enable individuals to achieve their goals by outlining a clear vision, setting high expectations, and creating a positive environment. The four essential traits of transformative leaders are idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration. Idealized influence is the ability of the leader to serve as a role model for their followers. Inspirational motivation is the ability of the leadership to uplift and motivate those who follow them. Intellectual stimulation is the capability of the leader to encourage their followers to think creatively and imaginatively. The capacity of the leader to regard each follower as an individual is referred to as individual consideration.

The importance of transformational leadership in firms cannot be overstated. Since they are better at inspiring and motivating their members of the team, leadership that employ a transformational leadership style see higher levels of performance and productivity. Also, transformational leaders are better able to create a supportive atmosphere, which aids in the growth of productive relationships between leaders and followers.

### **2.3 Studies on Relationship between EI and Transformational Leadership**

Studies on EI and transformational leadership have found that the two are positively correlated. Many studies have found that EI-strong leaders are more likely to exhibit transformational leadership attributes. According to research conducted by Dass and Parker (1999) leaders with high EI are more likely to give support and encouragement as well as to be innovative, motivating, and charismatic. They noted that charismatic and inspirational motivation were far more common in leaders with high levels of emotional intelligence.

Evidence also implies that leaders with high EI are more likely to achieve success in their leadership responsibilities, in addition to the favourable association between EI and transformative leadership. For instance, (Boyatzis, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2005) study revealed that leaders with high EI were more inclined to succeed in their leadership positions and to be able to foster a favourable work environment for their subordinates.

EI may also improve the efficacy of transformative leadership, according to study. According to a study of nurses, transformational leadership had a greater effect on work satisfaction when the leader had higher emotional intelligence (EI) (Avolio, Zhu, Koh, & Bhatia, 2004).

Transformational leadership has been linked to emotional intelligence as a predictor (Miao et al., 2017). Individuals who demonstrate transformational leadership traits are expected to have high levels of emotional intelligence (Tsai, Tsai, & Wang, 2011). This shows that EI is a crucial element of transformational leadership and that it has a big impact on how effective it is in an organization.

A systematic assessment of 25 research paper by (Mayer et al., 2016), established a link between EI and TFL. The authors noted that EI was a strong predictor of transformational leadership behaviour and that having greater emotional intelligence was linked to more successful transformational leadership.

Munir, Junejo, and Rahpoto (2020) using a trait model, researchers looked at the association among emotional intelligence (EI) and transformational leadership (TFL) in the Pakistani telecom industry. EI and TFL, as well as its dimensions, showed a moderate to strong positive association in the data after being subjected to correlation and regression analysis. Moreover, it was determined that the association was statistically significant.

Madanchian, Hussein, Noordin, and Taherdoost (2017) study found that among Malaysian managers in the construction business, emotional intelligence significantly improved transformational leadership behaviours. Particularly, inspiring motivation, idealised influence, and intellectual stimulation were all found to be predicted by emotional intelligence. According to the researchers, emotional intelligence may aid leaders in motivating staff to achieve goals by fostering a culture of trust and confidence.

Jordan and Troth (2002) conducted an investigation of the connection between Australian managers' levels of emotional intelligence and their capacity for successful leadership. They discovered that emotional intelligence had a favourable relationship with both subordinate and superior ratings of leadership effectiveness as well as transformative leadership behaviours. The authors contend that in the setting of complex, quickly evolving work contexts, emotional intelligence may be a significant predictor of leadership effectiveness.

Dass and Parker (1999) undertook a study to examine the association between EI and TFL traits, and discovered that emotional intelligence was associated with these behaviours in a positive way, including individualised consideration and intellectual stimulation. Moreover, they discovered that this association was higher for leaders who worked in high-stress conditions, which may indicate that emotional intelligence is crucial for leaders who must handle demanding circumstances. According to the authors, emotional intelligence can aid leaders in maintaining composure and concentration under pressure as well as in managing and inspiring their staff.

Alam, Farahani, and Sani (2014) investigated the connection between EI and transformational leadership in Iran. The study used correlation as its approach. The results

showed that EI and TFL style in sports managers were significantly positively correlated. Motivating others had a greater role in predicting transformative leadership than any other aspect of emotional intelligence.

Lopez-Zafra, Garcia-Retamero, and Martos (2012) looked at the association between gender stereotypes, EI and TFL in a Spanish context. Findings highlighted significant disparities between disciplines and demonstrated the gender roles and emotional intelligence influence transformative leadership.

An important indicator of transformative leadership has been shown to be emotional intelligence (Görgens-Ekermans & Roux, 2021). To create a great work environment, foster trust, and motivate staff to perform at their highest level, transformational leaders must have the capacity to sense, use, comprehend, and control emotions. Organizations must comprehend the connection among EI and TFL in order to produce sustainable leaders and establish effective leadership strategies.

In many different ways, emotional intelligence has a profound impact on transformational leadership. First off, leaders with greater emotional intelligence may build relationships with their subordinates, generate trust, and foster a feeling of belonging inside the workplace (Cherniss, 2000). Also, they are able to resolve disputes amicably, forge unanimity, and inspire loyalty in others, which increases dedication to the business and work satisfaction. Second, emotional intelligence may improve a leader's capacity to identify and attend to the emotional needs of their followers, increasing motivation and engagement (Goleman, 1998). Emotionally intelligent leaders have the capability to control the emotions of their subordinates as well as fostering an environment that is conducive to creative thinking and innovation inside the organization. Lastly, emotional intelligence may increase leaders' endurance and flexibility by improving their capacity to handle stress and have a positive view (Salovey & Sluyter, 1997). Strong emotional intelligence enables leaders to control their own emotions, which promotes more self-awareness and self-control. This can result in more emotional maturity, tolerance, and agility, which can help people make better decisions and solve problems.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

Emotional intelligence may affect transformative leadership through a variety of theoretical approaches. The emotional contagion effect is one such mechanism (Mindeguia et al., 2021). When emotions are spontaneously and uncontrollably passed from one individual to another, this is known as emotional contagion. Leaders with strong EI may be able to control their emotions well and influence their followers' emotions for the better. As a result, this may boost follower engagement and motivation, eventually supporting transformative leadership.

Understanding and meeting the emotional needs of followers is another important ability. Leaders with strong emotional intelligence are capable of recognizing and address the needs and concerns of their followers (Landry, 2019). As a result, this may promote transformative leadership by fostering more respect and trust between leaders and followers. A leader with strong emotional intelligence may also be better able to foster a supportive environment inside the workplace. In turn, this may improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization (Zeidner, Matthews, & Roberts, 2004).

In accordance with the trait theory of leadership, those with high EI are more likely to have the empathy, self-awareness, and social skills that make good leaders (Cherry, 2018). On the other side, the transformational leadership theory argues that transformational leaders are better at motivating and inspiring their people to accomplish their objectives (Khan, Rehmat, Butt, Farooqi, & Asim, 2020). Consequently, it may be claimed that leaders with high EI may be better able to encourage and motivate others through the transformational leadership style.

### **4. Methodology**

The literature search strategy involved searching electronic databases, including Google Scholar, PsycINFO, and ProQuest. The keywords used in the search included emotional intelligence, transformational leadership, leadership, and emotional quotient. The inclusion criteria for selecting studies were peer-reviewed articles published in the last twenty years, written in English, and focusing on the relationship between EI and TFL.

To categories the chosen studies for data extraction and analysis, factors such as research design, sample size, study population, research questions, and important findings were taken into consideration. Due to the diversity of the papers included in the review, a meta-analysis was not done. Instead, a narrative synthesis was carried out, which involves highlighting the most important results and locating recurring themes in all of the investigations. A total number of 48 research papers were reviewed in this study.

## **5. Key Themes and Patterns in the Literature**

Many recurrent themes and patterns in the literature on the importance of EI for TFL emerged via critical analysis of the chosen studies. Here are these important themes and patterns:

The reviewed studies consistently provide evidence for a positive association between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership. These studies have found that leaders who exhibit transformational leadership qualities generally have higher emotional intelligence than those who do not display such characteristics. Furthermore, emotional intelligence has been identified as a significant predictor of transformational leadership behaviours, including but not limited to inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence. These findings highlight the importance of emotional intelligence in effective leadership. Emotional intelligence empowers leaders to recognize and regulate their emotions, as well as their followers, in a manner that cultivates positive relationships, boosts motivation and engagement, and stimulates performance and innovation.

The research also showed a stronger connection between EI and TFL than between cognitive intelligence, highlighting the significance of EI on effective leadership. Research showed that emotional intelligence improves leaders' capacity to understand and manage their own emotions as well as the feelings of others, hence fostering healthy connections, enhancing communication, and fostering cooperation and collaboration. Emotionally intelligent leaders are better able to share their vision and ideals with their followers because they are more sympathetic, receptive, and supportive.

The existing research in the literature has been undertaken in a variety of settings including healthcare, education, industry, and government. Cross-sectional, longitudinal, and quasi-experimental study designs were used, with sample sizes ranging from 30 to 500 individuals. Although different research utilised different methods to evaluate EI and TFL, the majority of studies employed self-report questionnaires or 360-degree evaluations.

## **6. Implications for Industry**

This paper highlights the significance of EI in enhancing transformational leadership abilities. Organizations can take several steps to promote emotional intelligence and effective transformational leadership, including providing training and coaching to their leaders, using emotional intelligence assessments for selection purposes, and creating a positive emotional climate in the workplace. By prioritizing the development of emotional intelligence and promoting effective transformational leadership, organizations can foster a culture of inspiration, motivation, and success. These practical recommendations can help organizations and their leaders to achieve their goals and drive positive change within their respective contexts.

## **7. Conclusion**

In summary, numerous studies have established a positive correlation among EI and TFL. High EI scores have been linked to an increased likelihood of exhibiting transformational leadership behaviours, and improved emotional intelligence has been shown to enhance the effectiveness of transformational leadership. Organizations can promote successful leadership by fostering a culture that values EI and provides opportunities for leaders to develop their emotional intelligence and transformational leadership skills.

The study underscores the significance of emotional intelligence development in enhancing transformational leadership abilities. Organizations should prioritize the cultivation of emotional intelligence in their leaders by offering training and coaching programs aimed at developing their emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence assessments can be employed to identify and select transformational leaders. A positive emotional climate in the workplace can

also encourage transformational leadership by promoting open communication, providing employee development opportunities, and recognizing and rewarding employee achievements. These findings have practical implications for both individuals and organizations seeking to enhance their emotional intelligence and transformational leadership skills.

### **7.1. Future Recommendations**

Studies studying the connection between emotional intelligence (EI) and transformative leadership have a number of common shortcomings. The following are a few of the limitations and suggestions for the future research:

#### **7.1.1. Measurement Issues**

Researchers disagree about the best technique to evaluate emotional intelligence (EI), with some supporting self-report surveys and others favouring ability-based tests. This can cause measurement problems since the choice of measure may have an impact on the findings of investigations. Multi-method methods would offer a more thorough knowledge of the link between the two variables since they employ several measurements of both EI and transformational leadership.

#### **7.1.2. Sample Selection**

Several research on emotional intelligence and transformational leadership have employed small, homogenous samples, including college students or staff members from a single company. The results might not be indicative of other populations, which can restrict the validity of the results.

#### **7.1.3. Causal Direction**

The link between EI and transformational leadership is challenging to pin down since it might be that high levels of EI cause transformational leadership, transformational leadership causes high levels of EI, or that there's a mutually reinforcing relationship between the two.

#### **7.1.4. Cross-Cultural Differences**

Further cross-cultural research is required to understand how EI and transformational leadership interact in various cultural situations. This would assist to ascertain if there are regional disparities in the significance of EI for transformational leadership or if the link between EI and transformational leadership is constant across cultures.

#### **7.1.5. Single Study Limitations**

The conclusions that may be derived from the results of many research on EI and transformational leadership are constrained by the use of a single study design, such as a cross-sectional survey. The link between EI and transformational leadership would be more strongly supported by longitudinal research, which track people over time. With these investigations, researchers will be able to analyse how EI and transformational leadership evolve over time as well as the relationship's causal direction.

#### **7.1.6. Development and Training Programs**

Further study on the efficacy of EI development and training programmes for developing transformational leadership is required. It would aid in determining if EI development programmes may be utilised to improve transformational leadership, as well as providing practical advice for businesses desiring to grow and training their leaders.

#### **7.1.7. The Role of Context**

Future studies should look at how contextual elements like organisational culture influence the link between EI and transformational leadership. This would aid in determining if the association among EI and transformational leadership is constant across organisational contexts, or if contextual variables must be considered.

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