



EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AS A PREDICTOR OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS AMONG ACADEMIC LEADERS IN PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The present study examines the impact of emotional intelligence on transformational leadership effectiveness among academic leaders in Private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the National Capital Region (NCR), India. A descriptive research design was adopted, and data were collected from 90 academic leaders selected through stratified random sampling using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire. The study employed Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to examine the proposed relationship between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership effectiveness. The findings revealed a statistically significant positive impact of emotional intelligence on transformational leadership effectiveness ($\chi^2 = 34.123$, $df = 9$, $p < 0.001$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. The study concludes that emotionally intelligent academic leaders are more effective in inspiring, motivating, and leading organizational change, thereby contributing to improved leadership effectiveness in private higher education institutions.

KEYWORDS: Emotional Intelligence, Transformational Leadership, Academic Leaders, Private Higher Education Institutions.

INTRODUCTION

Emotions play a fundamental role in shaping individuals' personal and professional lives, influencing their thoughts, behaviors, and interactions. A growing body of research suggests that emotions significantly affect how employees perceive and respond to their work environment. Over the past several years, emotional intelligence (EI) has emerged as an important construct for explaining variations in individual behavior and workplace effectiveness. Contemporary organizations increasingly incorporate emotional intelligence training and development programs to enhance emotional awareness, interpersonal competence, and other critical leadership and workplace skills. As interest in emotional intelligence continues to expand, researchers have made considerable efforts to define its conceptual boundaries and identify its key dimensions. At the same time, increasing attention has been directed toward understanding the organizational conditions and environments that facilitate the effective application and development of emotional intelligence (Broughton, 2017).

Effective leadership has emerged as a fundamental determinant of organizational success and long-term sustainability, especially in higher education institutions where leaders are expected to address academic responsibilities, manage organizational transformation, and respond to the expectations of diverse stakeholders. In such a continuously evolving environment, transformational leadership has gained prominence as an effective leadership approach that focuses on developing a shared vision, inspiring employees, promoting individual growth, and facilitating organizational advancement. The effectiveness of transformational leaders is shaped by several psychological and behavioral factors, with emotional intelligence and personality traits being among the most influential. Emotional intelligence enables leaders to recognize, understand, and regulate emotions while developing strong interpersonal connections, whereas personality traits influence leadership styles, behavioral tendencies, decision-making approaches, and the ability to effectively respond to organizational complexities.

Leaders possessing high levels of emotional intelligence (EI) are more capable of recognizing and managing their own emotions, understanding the feelings of others, and communicating effectively. These competencies enable them to navigate the complexities and challenges of modern organizational environments more successfully (Anderson & Brown 2022). Emotional intelligence strengthens interpersonal relationships, enhances decision-making capabilities, and facilitates effective conflict management, making it an essential leadership competency for fostering innovation, improving employee collaboration, and increasing organizational productivity.



Leadership plays a pivotal role in the successful management of organizational change, as implementing change often requires the establishment of new systems and the institutionalization of revised practices. The leadership style and behavior of managers significantly influence employees' awareness, attitudes, and readiness to embrace change. Employees' responses to organizational transformation whether they choose to support or resist change initiatives are largely shaped by the leader's approach, communication, and ability to model adaptive and sustainable behaviors. Consequently, effective leadership is essential for fostering acceptance of change and ensuring the successful implementation of organizational transformation (Farazja & Khademi, 2010).

In the contemporary and rapidly evolving educational landscape, private higher education institutions are confronted with numerous challenges, including technological transformation, evolving student expectations, globalization, regulatory changes, and the demand for continuous institutional development. Addressing these challenges requires leaders who possess not only academic and administrative competencies but also strong emotional awareness and interpersonal skills to effectively manage human resources, promote innovation, and strengthen organizational commitment. The increasing complexity of higher education systems has created a need to examine the influence of emotional intelligence and personality traits on transformational leadership effectiveness. Leaders with high emotional intelligence are more capable of developing constructive relationships, managing conflicts, supporting faculty growth, and fostering a positive institutional culture, whereas effective personality characteristics contribute to the demonstration of transformational behaviors such as creating a shared vision, motivating employees, adapting to change, and making sound decisions.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Turner (2000) argued that emotional intelligence (EI) represents the “softer” aspect of overall intelligence, influencing both professional and personal success. While traditional intelligence quotient (IQ) reflects the capacity to learn, understand, and reason, it is now considered to account for only about 20% of an individual's success. In contrast, emotional quotient (EQ) the ability to understand oneself and effectively interact with others contributes approximately 80% to success and is essential for effective leadership. Although IQ is associated with job performance and is a major factor in recruitment, EQ plays a critical role in a leader's or manager's ability to sustain their position and achieve long-term success. Turner emphasizes that many organizations hire based on IQ but terminate employees due to deficiencies in EQ, such as attitude and interpersonal skills.

MacKenzie et al. (2001) highlighted that transformational leadership encourages employees to exhibit behavior that exceeds expectations. When employees perceive that their needs and expectations are acknowledged and fulfilled, they become more dedicated to their work. Additionally, they suggested that transactional leadership positively influences both employees' in-role and extra-role performance.

Kark & Shamir (2002) proposed that transformational leaders influence their followers in two ways: by fostering personal identification with the leader and by encouraging social identification with the work unit. These distinct forms of identification can produce different outcomes. According to transformational leadership (TL) theory, such leadership is likely to generate a variety of effects at both the individual level such as increased empowerment and extra effort and the group or organizational level, including enhanced unit cohesion and collective efficacy. These outcomes are primarily achieved by activating followers' relational self-concept and strengthening their identification with the leader.

Bryant (2003) stated that transformational leaders motivate employees to achieve higher levels of innovation and performance. Leaders who possess emotional intelligence (EI) foster an environment that supports knowledge creation, sharing, and exploration. Employees tend to be more productive when they have the autonomy to generate new ideas, collaborate with colleagues, and experiment with innovative solutions. Transformational leaders encourage this by using charisma, promoting intellectual growth, and providing individualized attention to employees, thereby motivating them to create and share knowledge. Additionally, by clearly communicating a compelling vision and strategic objectives, transformational leaders attract talented individuals and stimulate greater innovation across the organization.

Vakola et al. (2004) suggested that emotional intelligence (EI) enhances employees' understanding of the emotional impacts associated with organizational policy changes. Specifically, they noted that employees with limited emotional regulation tend to respond negatively to proposed changes, as they are less able to cope effectively with the demands and emotional challenges of such stressful and emotionally taxing processes.

Rank et al. (2008) suggested that transformational leadership is particularly beneficial for employees who struggle with self-presentation. By reshaping their attitudes and cognitive patterns, such leaders enhance employees' intrinsic motivation, confidence, and engagement with work. As a result, these employees demonstrate improved effort, stronger commitment, and higher levels of job performance.



Clarke (2010) conducted a study with 67 UK project managers to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and transformational leadership. The findings revealed that EI was significantly associated with the transformational leadership components of idealized influence and individualized consideration.

Lam & Higgins (2012) examined the mediating role of transformational leadership (TL) between managers' emotional intelligence (EI) and various employee outcomes in China, using a sample of 323 participants, including both managers and subordinates. The study found that TL mediates the relationship between managers' EI and employee job satisfaction. However, TL did not mediate the relationship between managers' EI and other employee outcomes, such as employee performance, organizational commitment, and job stress. Additionally, the findings highlighted that EI plays a significant role in the development and sustenance of transformational leadership.

Appelbaum et al. (2018) identified a relationship between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership, emphasizing key competencies such as self-awareness and emotional regulation. The study suggests that organizations can strengthen their recruitment and leadership development practices by integrating emotional intelligence assessments and targeted training to promote transformational leadership capabilities.

Aslam et al. (2023) found that transformational leadership and emotional intelligence help mitigate the adverse effects of various forms of team conflict task, relationship, and process on performance. Elevated levels of these factors substantially lessen the negative consequences of conflict, indicating their important role in fostering improved team performance and outcomes.

Esteves et al. (2024) investigated the relationship between entrepreneurs' emotional intelligence and transformational leadership, emphasizing the roles of emotional appraisal and emotional regulation. The study also identified variations in emotional intelligence across gender and generational groups, indicating that higher levels of emotional intelligence are associated with stronger transformational leadership among entrepreneurs, shaped by these demographic factors.

Mbangula (2025) examined the role of emotional intelligence (EI) and leadership practices in enhancing the performance of higher education institutions. The study explored how emotionally intelligent leadership contributes to resilience and sustained institutional success, highlighting the ways leaders with high EI support long-term effectiveness in educational environments. It further emphasized the importance of integrating EI into leadership strategies that foster the well-being of faculty, students, and the broader academic community. Emotional intelligence was identified as a vital leadership capability, enabling leaders to understand how their emotions and behaviors influence others within the institution. The findings indicate that EI is a critical and highly relevant prerequisite for effective academic leadership in higher education institutions.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To examine the impact of emotional intelligence on transformational leadership effectiveness among academic leaders.

RESEARCH DESIGN: The present study adopted a descriptive research design to investigate the influence of emotional intelligence on transformational leadership effectiveness.

POPULATION: The population for the present study consisted of academic leaders employed in Private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) situated in the National Capital Region (NCR). The target population comprised leaders holding senior academic and administrative positions, including Heads of Departments (HoDs), Directors and Deans.

METHOD OF SAMPLING: The present study adopted a stratified random sampling technique to select respondents from the target population.

SAMPLE SIZE: The sample included 90 academic leaders, consisting of Heads of Departments (HoDs), Directors, and Deans.

PRIMARY DATA: The primary data for the present study were obtained from academic leaders and faculty members employed in selected Private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across the National Capital Region (NCR) of India. The study participants comprised academic leaders serving as Heads of Departments (HoDs), Directors, and Deans, together with faculty members working under their leadership in the Management, Engineering, and Law departments. **RESEARCH INSTRUMENT:** In this study, primary data has been acquired through the use of a questionnaire. A structured questionnaire was employed for data collection, with responses to the questions rated using a Likert Scale aligned with the study objectives.

HYPOTHESIS

H0₁: There is no significant impact of **Emotional Intelligence** on **Transformational Leadership Effectiveness** among academic leaders in private HEIs.

ANALYSIS OF RESPONSE OF LEADERS RELATED TO IMPACT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS

Table 1: Table showing the response of leaders related to impact of emotional intelligence on transformational leadership effectiveness

S. No.	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	My leadership positively influences team performance through effective understanding of employee needs.	41 (45.55%)	34 (37.78%)	7 (7.78%)	6 (6.67%)	2 (2.22%)
2	My team consistently achieves organizational goals under my leadership approach.	37 (41.11%)	30 (33.33%)	8 (8.89%)	11 (12.22%)	4 (4.45%)
3	Employees show high commitment and engagement due to my leadership behavior.	43 (47.78%)	28 (31.11%)	9 (10%)	8 (8.89%)	2 (2.22%)
4	My leadership encourages employees to exceed their expected performance levels.	32 (35.55%)	29 (32.22%)	12 (13.33%)	13 (14.45%)	4 (4.45%)
5	I inspire employees by aligning organizational goals with their individual aspirations.	29 (32.22%)	28 (31.11%)	13 (14.45%)	16 (17.77%)	4 (4.45%)
6	My leadership contributes to a positive, emotionally supportive work environment.	42 (45.67%)	28 (31.11%)	7 (7.78%)	10 (11.11%)	3 (3.33%)

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

H0₁: There is no significant impact of emotional intelligence on transformational leadership effectiveness as perceived by the leaders.

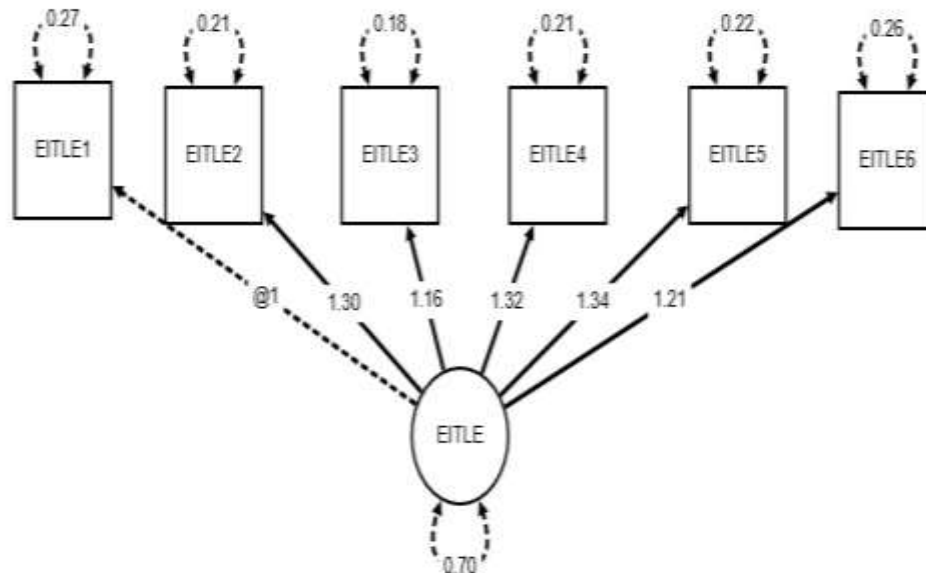


Figure 1: Figure showing the factor loading and residuals values of variables for impact of emotional intelligence on transformational leadership effectiveness as perceived by the leaders

Analysis: The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) measurement model depicted in Figure represents the latent construct Emotional Intelligence and Transformational Leadership Effectiveness (EITL) as perceived by academic leaders of selected private HEIs across the NCR. The construct is operationalized through six observed indicators that capture important dimensions of transformational



leadership associated with emotional intelligence: Understanding Employee Needs (EITLE1), Organizational Goal Achievement (EITLE2), Employee Commitment and Engagement (EITLE3), Enhanced Employee Performance (EITLE4), Goal and Aspiration Alignment (EITLE5), and Positive Supportive Work Environment (EITLE6). The positive factor loadings of all six indicators on the latent construct demonstrate that each dimension significantly contributes to explaining transformational leadership effectiveness, highlighting the pivotal role of emotional intelligence in effective academic leadership.

Among the observed indicators, Enhanced Employee Performance (EITLE4) records the highest factor loading (1.34), indicating that emotionally intelligent leaders are particularly effective in encouraging employees to exceed expected performance standards. This is followed by Organizational Goal Achievement (EITLE2) with a loading of 1.30, Goal and Aspiration Alignment (EITLE5) with 1.21, Positive Supportive Work Environment (EITLE6) with 1.21, and Employee Commitment and Engagement (EITLE3) with 1.16. Understanding Employee Needs (EITLE1) serves as the reference indicator, with its loading fixed at 1.00 to establish the scale of the latent construct. The consistently positive and substantial factor loadings indicate that each observed variable is a reliable measure of transformational leadership effectiveness, thereby providing strong support for the validity of the measurement model.

The residual variances for the observed indicators range from 0.18 to 0.27 and the latent construct reports a variance estimate of 0.70, reflecting sufficient variability in leaders' perceptions. Collectively, these findings indicate that emotional intelligence substantially enhances transformational leadership effectiveness by enabling academic leaders to understand employee needs, promote organizational success, strengthen employee commitment, encourage superior performance, align institutional objectives with individual aspirations and foster a positive and emotionally supportive work environment in private HEIs across the NCR.

Table 2: Table showing test statistics value and p-value for testing hypothesis 1

Model Test User Model

Test Statistic	34.123
Degree of Freedom	9
P- Value	0.000

Result: The SEM results indicate that the proposed model provides a statistically significant fit, with a Chi-square (χ^2) test statistic of 34.123, 9 degrees of freedom, and a p-value of 0.000. Since the obtained p-value is less than the prescribed significance level of 0.05, H_{01} is rejected. This finding confirms that emotional intelligence has a statistically significant positive impact on transformational leadership effectiveness among academic leaders.

FINDINGS

1. Understanding Employee Needs: The findings reveal that 83.33% believed their leadership positively influences team performance by effectively understanding employee needs. However, 7.78% remained neutral, only 8.89% did not perceive this aspect of leadership positively.
2. Organizational Goal Achievement: The findings indicate that 74.44% believed their teams consistently achieve organizational goals under their leadership approach. In contrast, 8.89% expressed a neutral opinion, whereas 16.67% with unfavorable perceptions.
3. Employee Commitment and Engagement: The findings show that 78.89% believing that their leadership behavior promotes high employee commitment and engagement. Meanwhile, 10.00% remained neutral, while 11.11% of respondents with negative opinions.
4. Enhanced Employee Performance: The findings reveal that 67.77% believed their leadership encourages employees to perform beyond expected standards. However, 13.33% remained neutral, whereas 18.90% who did not share this perception.
5. Goal and Aspiration Alignment: The findings indicate that 63.33% believed they inspire employees by aligning organizational goals with individual aspirations. Conversely, 14.45% expressed a neutral opinion, while 22.22% of respondents with negative perceptions.
6. Positive Supportive Work Environment: The findings demonstrate that 76.78% believed their leadership contributes to creating a positive and emotionally supportive work environment. 7.78% remained neutral, whereas 14.44% of respondents did not perceive their leadership in this manner.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that emotional intelligence serves as a crucial factor influencing transformational leadership effectiveness among academic leaders in private HEIs across NCR. Responses establish a robust consent that emotionally intelligent leaders are more skillful of considerate employee needs, achieving organizational goals, raising employee commitment and engagement, motivating employees to beat expected performance standards, support individual aspirations with institutional objectives and develop a positive and best work environment. Furthermore, the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) results validated these relationships through positive factor loadings for all observed indicators, validity of EI as a significant predictor of transformational leadership effectiveness.



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