

## **Transformational Leadership, Emotional Intelligence, and Innovative work behavior: The role of psychological empowerment**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of study is to examine the mediating role of psychological empowerment between the leader characteristics of transformational leadership and emotional intelligence with employee innovative work behaviour. This study employed partial least square- structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) to examine the mediating role of psychological empowerment. In addition, this study collected data through structured questionnaire and convenience sampling from 185 respondents. The finding of this research shows that psychological empowerment is important mediator between the relationships of emotional intelligence and transformational leadership with innovative work behavior. In addition, the result yield that emotional intelligence does not affect employee innovative work behaviour. However, transformational leadership found to be positively affecting psychological empowerment and innovative work behaviour. This study has wider implications for the business leaders, managers, and consultants. Results of this research imply that the psychological empowerment of employee is sine qua non for the innovative work behaviour. The leader has onerous responsibility to cultivate environment where employee feel motivated and free to embark on creativity and demonstrate innovative behaviour.

**Keywords:** Transformational Leadership, Emotional Intelligence, Innovative Work Behaviour, Psychological Empowerment

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## 1. Introduction

The innovation process reflects a dynamic development and application of ideas nowadays. It is quite different from the earlier time when innovation was only regarded as a linear progression through scientific methods (Parjanen et al., 2011). The rise of competition in the business world has turned organizations towards the cultivation of the employees' innovative abilities (Bate & Johnston, 2013). Farr & Ford (1990) defined innovative work behavior (IWB) as an individual's behavior who goes for initiation and introduction of new ideas, processes, and products or procedures.

Many scholars consider transformational leadership an important factor for innovative work behavior (Bass, 1999; Bednall et al., 2018; Eisenbeiß & Boerner, 2010; Sanders & Shipton, 2012). However, empirical studies yielded mixed results regarding the relationship between transformational leadership and innovative behavior (Pieterse et al., 2009). The concept of transformational leadership was first introduced by James Burns in 1978. In the context of political science, he defined it as the phenomenon of encouraging people to achieve goals with values, fulfilling the needs of followers and leaders (Kessler, 2013). However, Bernard Bass brought the concept of transformational leadership to the management science and leadership literature through its seminal book titled 'Leadership and performance beyond its performance' (Bass, 1985). The interesting and important aspect of transformational leadership was the values and motivation alignment of leaders and followers.

As transformational leadership drew the attention of management science scholars, similarly, the concept of emotional intelligence witnessed a sharp rise in publications. Mayer & Salovey (1999) first formally recognized the term EI and defined it as "the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions." Recent studies examined the relationship of leadership and emotional intelligence with psychological empowerment as a mediator and innovative work behavior or creativity as an organizational outcome (Alotaibi et al., 2020a; Dincer et al., 2011; Javed et al., 2017; Mathew & Gupta, n.d.; S. J. Zhang et al., 2015; X. Zhang, 2020).

These inconclusive findings of past studies suggest that the understanding of transformational leadership, emotional intelligence could be enhanced through the introduction of psychological empowerment as a mediator. Thomas & Velthouse, (1990) consider "Psychological Empowerment" as the practice of inner motivation that rises among employees who distinguish four cognitive areas of impact, competency, meaning, and choice. Hence, this study argues that the relationship between transformational leadership, emotional intelligence, and innovative work behavior is dependent upon the employee's psychological empowerment.

The subsequent part discusses different theories of Emotional Intelligence, Innovative Work Behavior, Transformational Leadership, and Psychological Empowerment. It also explains the relationship between

the role of Emotional Intelligence, Transformational Leadership, Innovative Work Behavior, and Psychological Empowerment. Section three of this paper describes the research design and methodologies employed for this study. Besides, it also describes the questionnaire design, sample design, methods employed for collection, and analysis of data. Section four illustrates the data analysis. It discusses the rationale of descriptive statistics, inferential tests, and the presentation of results. Section five will discuss the result in the light of past studies, and offer insights regarding the various relationships. The last part will present concluding remarks with the recommendations and future areas for studies.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Emotional intelligence and Innovative work Behaviour**

Employee emotional intelligence enables him to develop an understanding of his and other actions. Emotional intelligence as a tool serves to identify and distinguish the right actions out of emotions. Subsequently, the smartness of emotions also leads to having a positive effect on employee innovative behavior. (Mayer et al., 1999). (Wong & Law, 2002) argue that employees having high emotional intelligence score are motivated and perform better at jobs. Additionally, they also enjoy a better relationship with their peers.

According to (Forgas, 1995), Emotions impacts people thinking patterns by the way information is processed. The positive impact of emotions could assist in processing knowledge for creativity (Lyons & Schneider, 2005). (Scott & Bruce, 2020) also argued that employees with higher emotional intelligence are likely to have higher skills on creativity and that the organization's emotional environment tends to impact positively on the innovative work behavior of employees.

### **2.2 Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Empowerment**

(Spreitzer, 1995) considers Psychological empowerment as a process that particularly motivates individuals and creates feeling of accomplishment. Additionally, (Jenkins, 1996) also describes psychological empowerment as a motivating tool that increases people's morale to perform certain tasks which they were unable to perform earlier. It also includes the capability to recognize and manage the emotions of oneself and others. It could also be referred to as emotional intelligence (Howe, 2008).

### **2.3 Psychological Empowerment and Innovative Work Behaviour**

The social cognitive theory provides a premise for the relationship between psychological empowerment and innovative work behavior (Bandura, 1986). According to this theory, relevant circumstances and conditions shape and modify human behavior. (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990a) also studied employees' cognitive state (psychological empowerment) with relation to behavior. Similar studies argue that the cognitive state is a very important factor to motivate people for certain behavior. The relationship was also found to be statistically significant (Spreitzer, 1990). Further, (Javed et al., 2017) using cognitive evaluation theory to the role of psychological empowerment between the relationship of leadership and creativity. The results

identified psychological empowerment as an important mediator between the impact of leadership on creativity.

## **2.4 Transformational Leadership and Innovative Work Behaviour**

Past studies have shown that there is a positive relationship between organizational innovation and transformational leadership. Some studies argued through various mediators that transformational leadership and innovative work behavior does not enjoy a direct relationship (Bass, 1999; Bednall et al., 2018; de Jong & Den Hartog, 2007; Pieterse et al., 2009; Reuvers et al., 2008; Sanders & Shipton, 2012; Weng et al., 2015, 2015). However, the intervening variable play important role in determining the relationship. Transformational leadership comprises vision, motivation, self-confidence, awareness of goals, and inspiration Bass (1985) and Bass & Avolio (1989). The mentioned qualities of a leader ignite intrinsic motivation and create an environment for creativity and innovation (Eisenbeis et al., 2008).

Transformational leaders encourage and task subordinates to think freely to refine their problem-solving and analytical skills which result in creativity. Besides, transformational leaders support employees do not abstain employees from risk-taking for the new improved processes (Afsar et al., 2014).

## **2.5 Transformational Leadership and Psychological Empowerment**

Transformational leadership and psychological empowerment have been subject of interest from researchers in recent times. A number of studies not only examined the direct relationship but also through mediation and moderation (Allameh et al., 2012; Barroso Castro et al., 2008; Dust et al., 2014; Jha, 2014; Özaralli, 2003; Pradhan et al., 2017).

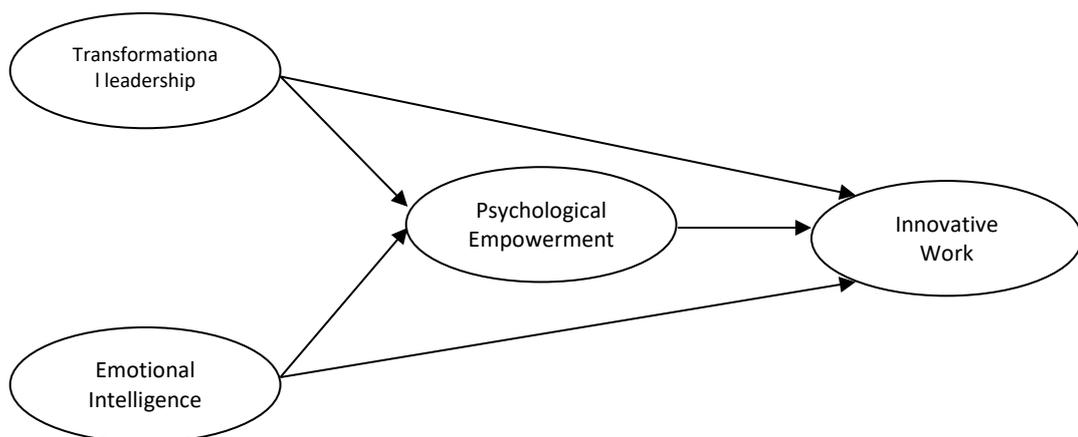
Transformational leader grants employee empowerment and impacts positively on the employees' psychological outcomes (Lee & Nie, 2014). According to them, a great environment could be shaped through psychological empowerment and transformational leadership skills. This invokes employee recognition, employee development, participative decision making, and professional growth. Positive psychological dealing leads to the enhancement of employee sense of psychological empowerment. Transformation leadership deals also with employee stress in a very productive way. Hence, psychological empowerment intervenes positively in the relationship of transformational relationship and employee innovative work behavior (Afsar et al., 2014).

## **2.6 Transformational leadership, emotional intelligence, psychological empowerment, and Innovative work behavior**

The association between employee innovative work behavior, emotional intelligence, and transformational leadership has been endorse by many scholarly works. However, some studies suggest that the mediating role between innovative work behavior and transformational leadership could not be overlooked (Alotaibi et al., 2020b; Pieterse et al., 2009; Reuvers et al., 2008; Weng et al., 2015). Psychological empowerment is

regarded as a strong mediator, which plays important role in the interactions between employee innovative behavior and transformational leadership (Masood & Afsar, 2017).

(Alotaibi et al., 2020b) studied the role of empowering leadership and emotional intelligence in increasing employee psychological empowerment and engagement. They concluded that the employee with higher emotional intelligence and leadership skills exhibited higher psychological empowerment and engagement. In another study of 230 employees, (Pieterse et al., 2009) concluded that psychological empowerment was noticed as essential to the relationship of transformational leadership and innovative work behavior. The conceptual model is given below as figure 1.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Model**

## 2.7 Research Hypotheses

H<sub>1</sub>. Psychological empowerment of the employee is related to the level of transformational leadership of the manager.

H<sub>2</sub>. Innovative work behavior of the employee is related to the level of transformational leadership of the manager.

H<sub>3</sub>. Psychological empowerment of the employee is related to the level of emotional intelligence of the manager.

H<sub>4</sub>. Innovative work behavior of the employee is related to the level of emotional intelligence of the manager.

H<sub>5</sub>. Psychological empowerment of the employee mediates the effect of transformational leadership on innovative work behavior.

H<sub>6</sub>. Psychological empowerment of the employee mediates the effect of emotional intelligence on innovative work behavior.

## 3. Design and Methodology

The study explains the innovative work behavior with the help of independent behavior namely; transformation leadership and emotional intelligence. The deductive approach is being employed in this study, which attempts to elucidate the chosen variables' relationship. Hypotheses were developed to test the theoretical assumption. For this purpose, data were collected to test psychological empowerment between the relationships of transformational leadership, emotional intelligence, and innovative work behavior. A survey strategy is used in this research for the collection of data. This strategy allows the collection of data in a cost-effective, which could be analyzed. Below, this research describes sample size, questionnaire design, and constructs.

### **3.1 Sample Size**

The statistical studies are required to have larger sample sizes. For each construct there must be 30 respondents, so for the current study, the sample size we took was 185 respondents. The table given below shows the demographic distribution of the respondent.

### **3.2 Questionnaire Design**

The questionnaire used in this study consists of two parts. In one part, the respondents are required to provide their demographic and job-related information and in the other part, the respondents were required to provide their rating for the statements intended to measure the constructs used in the study.

### **3.3 Measurement**

This study adopted the scale from past scholarly works. The scale of transformational leadership was adopted (Bass & Avolio, 1997). It included 18 items. The construct of emotional intelligence was measured with the 10 item scale from (Rego et al., 2007). Psychological empowerment was measured through the 12 item scale of (Nestico, 2016). Innovative work behavior was measured with the 10 item scale developed by (de Jong & den Hartog, 2010).

### **3.4 Data Collection Method**

The respondents were managers at medium or large size organizations. The qualified respondents were approached personally and they were given the questionnaire. Besides, respondents were also approached through the internet and they were required to fill a questionnaire on Google Forms. One hundred and thirty-one questionnaires were received from the internet and fifty-four questionnaires were collected physically.

## **4. Data Analysis**

The data analysis was carried out in multiple stages. First of all the codebook was developed and then the data was punched in from the physical questionnaires and imported from Google Forms. Once the data was fully available in SPSS, it was checked for errors. The responses which were not complete were either discarded or missing values were replaced by the average values. As the responses were complete so there was no need for the missing value treatment.

The modeling was done through SMART-PLS-3. The effect of the constructs and the mediation of psychological constructs were evaluated through SMART-PLS-3. For data analysis, first of all, the reliability and validity of the data were checked for the scale employed in the study. Table 4.1 shows the results.

#### 4.1 Validity and Reliability

Table 2 below illustrates the reliability and validity results. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) were examined to comprehend the internal consistency of the constructs. The results reflect that the values of Cronbach's Alpha and Composite reliability is more than 0.70, which shows that all the constructs achieve internal consistency. Similarly, the output of factor-loading values enabled to examine indicator reliability. According to Hair et al (2016), factor loading should be greater than 0.70 to determine indicator reliability.

In this study, the indicators were recorded more the 0.80, which reflects that indicators attain their loading targets for particular constructs.

Moreover, this study examined the constructs' convergent validity by examining the average variance extracted (AVE) values. The values of AVE were noted to be more than the suggested level of 0.50, which shows that all the constructs meet the goal of convergent validity.

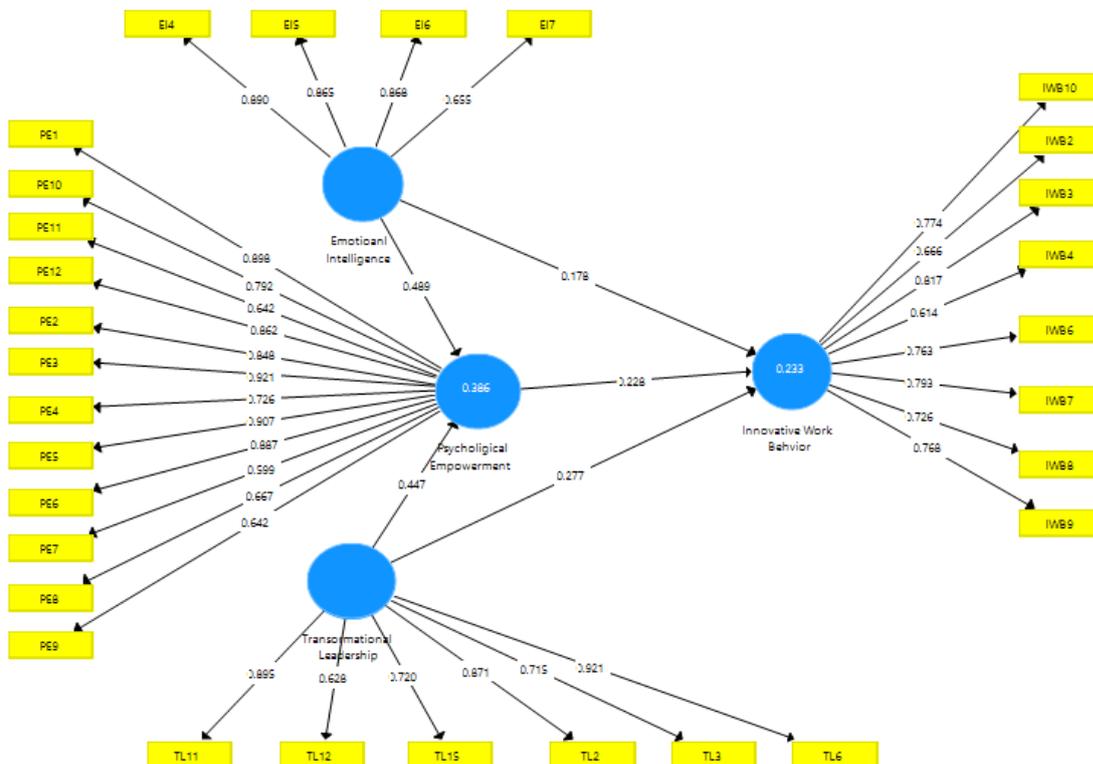
**Table 1: Confirmatory Factor Analysis with Reliability and Validity statistics.**

Construct	Items	Factor Loading	AVE	CR	Cronbach Alpha
Emotional Intelligence	EI4	0.890	0.680	0.894	0.840
	EI5	0.865			
	EI6	0.868			
	EI7	0.655			
Innovative Work Behavior	IWB10	0.774	0.552	0.907	0.892
	IWB2	0.666			
	IWB3	0.817			
	IWB4	0.614			
	IWB6	0.763			
	IWB7	0.793			
	IWB8	0.726			
Psychological Empowerment	PE1	0.898	0.626	0.952	0.945
	PE10	0.792			
	PE11	0.642			
	PE12	0.862			
	PE2	0.848			

	PE3	0.921			
	PE4	0.726			
	PE5	0.907			
	PE6	0.887			
	PE7	0.599			
	PE8	0.667			
	PE9	0.642			
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	TL11	0.895			
	TL12	0.628			
Transformational Leadership	TL15	0.720	0.638	0.912	0.902
	TL2	0.871			
	TL3	0.715			
	TL6	0.921			

## 4.2 Results

Figure 2 reflects the estimated model mentioned underneath. Transformational leadership has six items. The construct of emotional intelligence initially had six items, but the analysis showed lower loading of the items which were removed from the scale, and finally, there were four items, which were retained to measure emotional intelligence. The construct of psychological empowerment is measured through twelve item scale. The construct of innovative work behavior has got 8 items.



**Figure 2: Estimated model**

The hypothesis testing results are displayed in Tables 2 and 3. Transformational leadership (0.277,  $p < 0.000$ ) and psychological empowerment (0.228,  $p < 0.000$ ) have a significant impact on innovative work behavior. However, emotional intelligence ( $p > 0.065$ ) was not found to be a significant estimator of innovative work behavior.

Additionally, the result shows that psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and innovative work behavior as the test is significant at a 5% significance level ( $p = .026$ ). Furthermore, psychological empowerment mediates the relation between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior as the test is significant at a 5% significance level.

**Table 2: Direct impact among Emotional intelligence, Transformational leadership, and Psychological Empowerment.**

Relation	$\beta$	t-test	p-value
EI $\rightarrow$ IWB	0.178	1.85	0.065
EI $\rightarrow$ PE	0.489	8.297	0.000
TL $\rightarrow$ IWB	0.277	3.635	0.000
TL $\rightarrow$ PE	0.447	8.731	0.000
PE $\rightarrow$ IWB	0.228	2.753	0.006

EI: Emotional Intelligence, PE: Psychological empowerment, IWB: Innovative work behavior, TL: Transformational leadership

**Table 3: Mediator role of Psychological Empowerment**

Relation	$\beta$	t-test	p-value
EI $\rightarrow$ PE $\rightarrow$ IWB	0.112	2.228	0.026
TL $\rightarrow$ PE $\rightarrow$ IWB	0.102	2.320	0.021

EI: Emotional Intelligence, PE: Psychological empowerment, IWB: Innovative work behavior, TL: Transformational leadership

## 5. Discussion

The concepts and related issues of innovative work behavior, emotional intelligence, transformational leadership, and psychological empowerment are extensively discussed. This study examined the role of psychological empowerment as a mediator among the relationship of transformational leadership and emotional intelligence with innovative work behavior.

The results support the developed framework and yields similar findings from the previous studies (Eisenbeisset al., 2008; Zhou & George, 200; Afsar et al., 2014). The findings reflect that transformational leadership encourages intrinsic motivation, intellectual stimulation, and creates a

supportive environment for creativity and innovations. As some studies argued through various mediators that transformational leadership and innovative work behavior does not enjoy a direct relationship (Bass, 1999; Bednall et al., 2018; J. P. J. de Jong & Den Hartog, 2007; Pieterse et al., 2009; Reuvers et al., 2008; Sanders & Shipton, 2012; Weng et al., 2015). Similarly, this study mediation model goes well along with the result of past studies as the result found to be significant at 5%.

This study also attempts to examine the relationship between psychological empowerment and emotional intelligence. A previous study by (Spreitzer, 2007) showed a positive relationship between employee emotional intelligence and psychological empowerment. This study also endorses the previous work of Spreitzer as the results yielded similar findings.

The research of (Forgas, 1995; Lyons & Schneider, 2005; Scott & Bruce, 2020) also argued that employees with higher emotional intelligence are likely to have higher skills in creativity and that the organizations' emotional environment tends to impact positively on the innovative work behavior of employees. Conversely, this study does not find a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and innovative work behavior.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study developed hypotheses to examine the mediating role of psychological empowerment with transformational leadership, emotional intelligence, and innovative work behavior. Leaders sit on top of the organogram, they formulate strategies and have a strong impact on employees' actions. This study shows that transformational leadership leads to the psychological empowerment of the employees, which cultivates the employee's innovative behavior.

The results of this research are generally consistent with the previous studies, except for the relationship between emotional intelligence and innovative work behavior. This study concludes that emotional intelligence does not influence an employee's innovative behavior. This result recognizes that the emotional intelligence of the leader is not a predictor of employee behavior particularly when it comes to cultivating innovative abilities.

Organizations are big stages available to the leaders and managers. If the managers are selfless and go a step further than their vested interest to coach, educate, and mentor subordinates. The employee is psychologically empowered to take initiative and determine his work priorities. This leads to the enhancement of innovative work behavior which brings novel ideas in the shape of novel processes, products, and services.

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