

# TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE OF GRADUATE MANAGERS

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**ABSTRACT**

Leadership of graduate managers has become a focal point of many employers worldwide. Leadership development is in high demand and leadership initiatives are an effective tool for career development in the corporate environment. The objectives of the study were to assess the Transformational Leadership (TL) and Emotional Intelligence (EI) level of graduate managers, and to analyse the relationship between their EI and TL performances at work. The role of gender in leadership was examined. Sixty three graduate managers (33 men, and 30 women) who are following the masters' degree programme were randomly selected from a Sri Lankan university. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire of Bass and Avolio, was used to assess the leadership style performances of the respondents. Genos EI Inventory was used to measure their EI level. Descriptive and inferential analyses of data were conducted using SPSS software. Respondents recorded higher scores for TL performances at work. Respondents' EI levels and TL styles reflected a difference with regard to their gender. Respondents have scored slightly lower scores for the EI sub-constructs in comparison to the normative figures of Genos EI. The higher fluctuation of Mean values of respondents indicated the volatility of the reasoning ability of respondents. The fact that graduate managers depicted higher scores for progressive leadership styles and lower scores for passive leadership styles augurs well for their career development. Emotional Intelligence of men significantly related with their Transformational leadership style. Study concludes that high Transformational leadership of Sri Lankan graduates managers and manageresses, and the relationship of Transformational Leadership with managers EI as well, could enhance management and production performances in corporate environments.

**KEYWORDS**

Transformational Leadership, Emotional Intelligence, Graduate Managers.

## Introduction

Leadership has become a sine qua non for executive development and corporate success. It is viewed as a social interaction process. This research article has focused on the Leadership styles of middle level graduate managers in an Asian context. Research has also attempted to examine the relationship between Leadership and Emotional Intelligence. This article consists of an overview of empirical literature, followed by Methodology, Findings, and Conclusions to enhance the work practices.

## Transformational Leadership

There have been a number of leadership theories, and with the increased focus they will continue to emerge. The contingency theory for leadership effectiveness [1] has tested the leadership effectiveness under situational contexts, and concluded that the 'task directed' leadership style is the most effective in 'highly favourable', and 'highly unfavourable' situations. 'People oriented' (democratic) leadership style is more effective in 'moderately favourable, and unfavourable' situations. In practice it is those moderately unfavourable/ favourable situations, which are

commonly experienced by the supervisors and managers. Burns [2] defined the two leadership types, namely; transactional and transformational. Transformational leadership (TL) has focused on a paradigm shift of the followers, i.e. shifting their values, beliefs, and needs. Transactional leadership is more traditional. It involves an exchange relationship between leaders and followers'. Luthans [3] sum up the difference between the transformational leadership and charismatic leadership as follows; 'The major differentiators are how followers are treated. Key to transformational leaders is that they seek to empower and elevate followers (i.e. develop followers into leaders) while charismatic leaders may try to keep followers weak and dependent on them (i.e. instill personal loyalty to the leader rather than developing them to attain ideals)'. Avolio [4] noted that transformational leadership is characterized by idealized leadership, inspiring leadership, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Further, he stated that the above leads to a cluster of interrelated styles focused on improvement of situations, developing leadership capabilities of members, overhauling organizations by providing strategic directions, and inspiring people through vision, and high ideal for moral and ethical conduct. Bass [5] affirmed transformational leadership (unlike transactional leadership) results in superior performances of organizations. He concluded that facilitating transformational leadership in organizations will lead to effective performances.

### **Leadership and Emotional Intelligence**

Leadership appears to be closely connected to the topic of Emotional Intelligence (EI). Brackett, Mayer, and Warner [6] have described EI as a competency or 'ability to perceive and accurately express emotion to facilitate thought, to understand emotions, and to manage emotions for emotional growth'. Personality, coping, and EI seemed to be conceptually intertwined when individuals manage stress. Mayer and Salovey [7] has defined EI to involve 'the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion, the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought, the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge, and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth'. EI encompasses four interrelated abilities that are found to be indispensable in social interaction. Salovey and team believe that emotion regulation could be the most important ability for social interaction as it directly influences emotional expression and behavior. Jim Collins [8] in 'good to great' discuss of a 'Level 5 Leadership' and the 5<sup>th</sup>

level executive is the best if not ideal. Collins has given many examples from the leadership of great global companies. He has put the relationship between leadership and EI to perspective as follows. 'Level 5 leaders are a study in duality: modest and willful, humble and fearless'. Further, he elaborates on the ability to perceive, and appraise the emotions of employees accurately and, especially on the ability of the leaders to regulate their emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth. Different approaches have interlinked EI to leadership. Jensen et al. [9] sum up as follows. 'It can then be argued that, if IQ is held constant, EI abilities will be helpful in distinguishing leaders that are more effective'. This is also in unison with Fred Fielder's 'contingency model of leadership effectiveness' [3]. Therein Fielder has identified three empirically derived dimensions, and of which he identify 'The leader-member relationship' as the most critical variable in determining the situation's favourableness. There is a plethora of descriptions of what an emotionally intelligent leader should possess in order to be effective. The conceptual works of Goleman [10], Boyatzis [11], and Boyatzis, Smith & Blaize [12] have identified the 'emotional competencies' that may be associated with effective leadership. Several links had been found between emotional intelligence of respondents and their transformational leadership style [13] in examining their relationship. Sanchez et al. [14] observed that intelligence alone was not enough for individuals to experience success. Emotional Stability and Conscientiousness, has made a significant contribution to an individual's success in a working environment.

### **Scope of the Study**

The role of EI for Transformational leadership is the central focus of this article. The research question of the study posits; "Is there a relationship between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership?" Research on this topic among graduate managers in Asian region, focussing on gender differences, has been rare. The overall objective of the study was to examine the graduate managers' EI level and transformational leadership styles. The specific objectives of research were to assess the TL and EI levels of graduate managers, to analyze the relationship between their EI and Transformational leadership styles, and to examine the relationship between TL style and EI level based on gender of graduate managers.

Conceptual framework of the study is shown in Fig. 1. Independent variable of the study was the Emotional Intelligence of graduate managers. Transformational leadership style (of respondents) was the

dependent variable. The hypothesis focused on testing the (existence of a) relationship between EI and TL of graduate managers. Bass and Avilo's Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), and Genos EI Inventory were employed for the survey. Graduates, who are holding middle level managerial positions in three sectors, viz. marketing sector, manufacturing sector, and public sector were targeted for the study. By conducting the study in Sri Lanka, an attempt was made to extend the theory to a culture that is more collectivist in nature than that of the west.

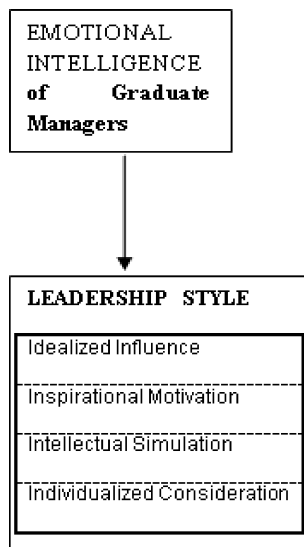


Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework of the study.

## Methodology

### The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire

The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) [15] measures the leadership on seven factors related to the respondents' leadership styles. The first four leadership style factors of the questionnaire (cumulatively) measure the transformational leadership style. These four factors are defined as follows: "Factor 1. *Idealized Influence*: indicates the subordinates' trust, maintaining their faith and respect, showing them dedication, appealing to their hopes, dreams, and acting as their role model" "Factor 2. *Inspirational Motivation*: that measures the degree to which you provide a vision, use appropriate symbols and images to help others focus on work, and try to make others feel their work is significant". "Factor 3. *Intellectual Stimulation*: that shows the degree to which you encourage others to be creative in looking at old problems in new ways, create an environment that is tolerant of seemingly extreme positions, and nurture people to question

their own values and beliefs and those of the organization". "Factor 4. *Individualized Consideration*: which indicates the degree to which you show interest in others' wellbeing, assign projects individually, and pay attention to those seemingly less involved in the group". Scores of above four factors; viz. Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration form the composite index (transformational leadership style) of respondents.

### Genos EI Inventory

Genos EI Inventory (Genos EI) was employed for the study. Genos EI is the successor to the Swinburne University Emotional Intelligence Test, and is a self-report measure, designed with items of minimal personality saturation [16]. It focuses upon the EI ability dimensions, and measures them from a typical performance perspective. The Genos EI self-report inventory (comprehensive version) consists of 70 items designed to measure the frequency with which an individual displays emotionally intelligent behaviours across seven dimensions, for individuals of age 18 to 76. Genos EI Inventory items are scored on a five-point Likert scale, and it can produce a total EI score, and seven subscale scores.

### Operationalisation of the study

Ninety graduates (holding middle level managerial positions) reading for the postgraduate degrees in the Commerce and Management Faculty of Kelaniya University, Sri Lanka, were randomly selected for the study. However, only sixty three respondents, (thirty three men, and thirty women) completed the survey. Statements of MLQ, and Genos EI Inventory were translated into Sinhala language to compile the questionnaire, and were modified after pre-testing for clarity. Two native Sinhala language speakers were available for clarifications. Respondents were briefed of the purpose of research, and confidentiality of their responses was assured. Questionnaires were administered in groups for self-responses on the basis of anonymity. SPSS computer software was used for the descriptive and inferential data analysis. ANOVA and Correlation analysis were conducted to test the relationship among the study variables.

## Findings

Respondents' age varied from 50 to 20. The Mean (M) value of men was 28.27 years and for women it was 31.27 years. The Standard Deviation (SD) values were 7.74 and 4.58 respectively. According-

ly, there was a wider dispersion of age amongst men that varied from 50 years to 20 years. The age variation amongst women varied from 43 to 20 years.

### Leadership Styles of the respondents

Respondents indicated Leadership Style (LS) values as depicted in Table 1. The maximum possible score for each LS is 15, and the minimum is 0. The maximum possible score for the Transformational LS is 60, which is the cumulative score of first 4 LS factors; viz. Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualised Consideration. Respondents have recorded higher values for the Transformational LS, and women (45.90) have scored slightly higher than men (45.18). Respondents have scored higher values for the Management – by-exception and, Individualised consideration styles. Laissez-faire Leadership has recorded the lowest scores among the respondents.

### Emotional Intelligence of Graduate Managers

The maximum score for each sub construct of EI is 50, and 350 for (cumulative score) the EI construct. As depicted in Table 2 men recorded a cumulative M value of 244.97, and women had a cumulative M value of 253.13 indicating a slightly superior value for EI over men. SD's suggest that there is a consider-

able deviation of the EI especially among women. It was note-worthy that there was a significant correlation (at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)) between the EI and Age of men, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.370. However, there was no significant correlation between the Age and EI of women. The internal reliability value recorded was a Cronbach Alpha score of 0.630.

#### Emotional Self-Awareness

Mean value of 37.87 of women indicated a superior frequency (over men) of consciously identifying their emotions (and become aware of the impact on their behavior) at work. This indicated that graduate managers (respondents) had been aware of their emotions.

#### Emotional Expression

The relative frequency of expressing their emotions in an appropriate way at work was lower than norm. Mean values of 36.42 (men), and 36.37 (women) by the respondents indicated moderate demonstrations of effective emotional expressions. Mean values suggest that graduate managers have been moderately expressive in emotions such as feelings of happiness, frustration, as well as feedback to colleagues.

Table 1  
Gender wise scores of respondents for Leadership styles through MLQ.

Leadership Style	Mean		Standard Deviation	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
1. Idealized Influence	10.73	11.27	2.05	2.05
2. Inspirational Motivation	11.39	11.53	1.62	1.99
3. Intellectual Stimulation	10.91	10.70	2.18	2.22
4. Individualised Consideration	12.15	12.40	1.35	1.48
5. Contingent Reward	11.97	11.83	2.07	2.53
6. Management – by-exception	12.67	12.03	2.07	1.77
7. Laissez-faire Leadership	9.24	9.60	2.45	1.59
<b>Score for transformational Leadership (1+2+3+4)</b>	<b>45.18</b>	<b>45.90</b>	<b>5.20</b>	<b>5.34</b>

Source: Author (Graduate managers reading for master's degree in University of Kelaniya Sri Lanka).

Table 2  
Gender wise scores of respondents for EI and its sub constructs in Genos EI.

Factor of EI Inventory	Mean Value		Standard Deviation	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
1. Emotional Self-Awareness (ESA)	35.58	37.87	4.39	5.73
2. Emotional Expression (EE)	36.42	36.37	4.16	4.44
3. Emotional Awareness of others (EAO)	34.88	36.30	4.11	4.71
4. Emotional Reasoning (ER)	35.70	36.37	4.03	3.90
5. Emotional Self-Management (ESM)	32.94	35.43	4.26	4.61
6. Emotional Management of others (EMO)	36.55	36.73	5.03	4.71
7. Emotional Self-Control (ESC)	32.91	34.07	4.84	6.48
<b>Total (score) for EI Construct</b>	<b>244.97</b>	<b>253.13</b>	<b>21.83</b>	<b>29.04</b>

Source: Author, (Graduate managers reading for master's degree in University of Kelaniya Sri Lanka).

*Emotional Awareness of others*

Mean value of 36.30 by women indicated a moderate identification of colleagues' emotions and their causes. Men recorded an inferior M value of 34.88 in comparison to women graduates in this respect.

*Emotional Reasoning*

ER measures the relative frequency with which an individual incorporates emotionally relevant information in the process of decision making. Respondents have recorded Mean values of 35.70 (men) and 36.37 (women) for ER, suggesting women were slightly more stable in reasoning and decisions in comparison to men.

*Emotional Self-Management*

ESM measures the relative frequency with which an individual manages their own emotions at work. Women (35.43) showed greater ability over men (32.94), while they were inferior to the normative figures.

*Emotional Management of others*

Measures the relative frequency of managing emotions of others at work, and engagement in creating emotionally positive work environments for others. M values of 36.55 (men) and 36.73 (women) indicated fairly an efficient managing of emotions of their colleagues by respondents.

*Emotional Self-Control*

ESC measures the relative frequency of controlling strong emotions appropriately at work. High scores indicate the capacity to remain focused when anxious or disappointed at work, as well as the ability not to lose temper. Respondents had Mean values of 32.91 (men) and 34.07 (women). This meant they were not in control of them in facing strong emotions. Men seemed the more vulnerable group.

**Emotional Intelligence and Transformational Leadership of respondents**

The Pearson correlation value( $r$ ) between EI and Transformational Leadership (TL) of men was 0.366. The corresponding  $R^2$  value of 0.134 indicated that EI of men contributes to 13.4% of the variation of their TL.  $F$  value of 4.788 confirmed the strength of this model (EI and TL), and the improved prediction of the outcome (TL). The  $B$  value (constant) was 23.82. The corresponding  $t$  value was 2.431, which was significant at 0.021 level (2-tailed). The gradient of the regression line was 0.087, with a corresponding

$t$  value of 2.188 significant at 0.036 level (2-tailed). The relationship between the EI and TL of men can be summarized by the accompanying equation:

$$Y_i = b_0 + b_1 X_i. \quad (1)$$

Here  $Y$  is the TL style, and  $X$  is the EI. Accordingly the TL of men can be quantified with reference to their EI as follows. Transformational Leadership of men =  $23.821 + 0.087 * EI$  of men.

There was no significant correlation or relationship recorded between the EI and transformational leadership of women graduate managers.

**Conclusion**

Graduate managers indicated a higher level of Transformational leadership. The fact that they depicted higher levels of progressive leadership styles and lower levels of passive leadership styles augurs well for their careers. This is expected to enhance the performances of teams, and organizations. Manageresses possessed slightly superior levels of Emotional Intelligence and Transformational leadership styles, which confirm the potential of ladies holding managerial roles in conservative backgrounds (Sri Lanka). The Emotional Intelligence level of graduate managers was below par in comparison to the normative figures of Genos EI Inventory [16]. The fluctuation of Mean values of EI scores also indicate the volatility of the reasoning ability of respondents related to their emotional encounters in work environments. However, it would be prudent to conclude this with a larger sample. The engaging work environments and personal obligations of respondents could have also contributed to this situation. Men's (graduate managers) Emotional Intelligence significantly related with their Transformational leadership style. However, there was no significant relationship between the Emotional Intelligence and Transformational leadership style of women (graduate managers). Study concludes that high Transformational leadership of Sri Lankan graduates managers and manageress's and the positive relationship of Transformational Leadership with the managers EI level as well, could enhance corporate management and production performances. This would enhance the performances of teams in successfully catering to management and production demands at corporate environments.

**Limitations and Further research**

This study focused on an original sample of ninety graduates representing three industrial sectors in equal proportions (30 each), and having similar gen-

der representation (45 managers, and 45 managers). However, the actual data availability of 63 respondents did not warrant intended analysis across industrial sectors. Study was also limited to middle level managers, which can be enhanced to other management levels, especially to the senior management. Further researches are recommended among larger numbers of graduate managers (in diverse disciplines) across varying geo-cultural backgrounds for greater generalization of findings.

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