

Louvain School of Management

**How much does emotional
intelligence contribute to
transformational leadership
behaviours:**

**A study conducted in a hybrid
workplace environment**

Author: LACOSTE Arthur
Supervisor: GLINNE-DEMARET Harmony
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Master in People Management
Daytime schedule

Abstract:

This study investigates the intersection between emotional intelligence (EI) and transformational leadership (TFL) behaviours in the hybrid work environment. While EI and TFL have received considerable attention individually, their integration in the current evolving hybrid workplaces receives less attention. With the use of Goleman's Emotional Competence Framework and Bass and Avolio's four "I"s of transformational leadership, the present study presents how specific emotional competences influence key TFL behaviour such as idealised influence, inspirational motivation, and individualised consideration.

A qualitative design was utilised, including ten semi-structured interviews with leaders and their subordinates, who were all employed in a hybrid work context. The outcome identifies subtle yet meaningful correlations between EI components and TFL behaviours. The study also highlights how hybrid work mediates the expression of emotionally intelligent leadership, and how face-to-face communication supports some of these competencies like empathy and relationship building.

Overall, the study confirms that emotional intelligence plays a critical role in enabling transformational leadership to be effective, especially when adapted for the unique issues of hybrid work. The thesis concludes with practical implications for leadership development.

UNIVERSITÉ CATHOLIQUE DE LOUVAIN
Louvain School of Management

Place des Doyens, 1 bte L2.01.01, 1348 Louvain-la-Neuve
Boulevard Emile Devreux 6, 6000 Charleroi, Belgique
Chaussée de Binche 151, 7000 Mons, Belgique
www.uclouvain.be/lsm

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After using ChatGPT, and Microsoft Teams Facilitator the author diligently reviewed and edited the content produced by the tool. He takes full responsibility for the final content presented in this thesis. By signing this declaration, we affirm that the content of this master's thesis reflects our original work, facilitated by the responsible use of AI.



Alacoste

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Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations	vi
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: Transformational leadership.....	3
Definition:	3
Transformational compared to transactional leadership	3
The pitfall of dishonest transformational leaders.....	5
Intuitive thinking of transformational leader	5
Leader-member relationship	6
Relationship between culture and leadership.....	7
Chapter 2: Emotional intelligence.....	8
Definition	8
Three models of emotional intelligence.....	9
The ability models of emotional intelligence.....	9
The mixed models of emotional intelligence.....	10
The trait model of emotional intelligence	11
Chapter 3: The relationship between EI and TFL.....	13
Cascading nature of emotional abilities	13
Emotional Competence Framework and the link with the four “I”s.....	14
Criticism.....	16
3. 1 Theoretical postulate	18
Hybrid workplace environment	18
Key focus point of hybrid work	19
Key focus point of EI and TFL	20
Chapter 4: Methodology	22
Research design	22
Data Collection and analysis.....	22
Methodological limitation.....	23
Interview guide	23
Chapter 5: Findings.....	25
1. Self-Awareness (SA) and Idealised Influence (II)	25
2. Self-Management (SM) and Idealized Influence (II) and Inspirational Motivation (IM).....	26
3. Social Awareness (SocA) and Individualised Consideration (IC) and Inspirational Motivation (IM).....	28
4. Relationship Management (RM) and Idealized Influence (II) and Inspirational Motivation (IM).....	31
5. Empathy and Individualised Consideration (IC).....	33
6. Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale (SEIS).....	35

Chapter 6: Discussion	36
1. Findings to Theoretical postulate	36
2. Hybrid Work Context.....	38
3. Limitation and Implications for Future Research	39
Chapter 7: Conclusion.....	40
Reference	41
Appendix:.....	47
1. The structural model from author Görgens-Ekermans & Roux.....	47
2. Summary Table: EI–TFL Relationships and Interview Support.....	47
3. Figure 1 : SEIS Score for leaders.....	48
4. Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT)	49
5. Interview Guide: Managers.....	52
6. Interview Guide: Subordinate/Follower.....	54

List of Abbreviations

EI	Emotional intelligence
TFL	Transformational leadership
LMX	Leader-member exchange
ESCI	Emotional and social competency inventory
SA	Self-awareness
SM	Self-management
SocA	Social awareness
RM	Relationship management
II	Idealised Influence
IM	Inspirational Motivation
IC	Individualized Consideration

Introduction

Humans drive and excel under good leadership and they suffocate or rebel under bad leadership. The ability to lead people and guide them has always been regarded as a highly valuable asset in the world, regardless of cultural differences and time period. The theory of transformational leadership present an interesting view on leadership.

Indeed, there is a positive relationship between the display of transformational leadership behaviours and effective work (Görgens-Ekermans & Roux, 2021). Therefore, companies are looking for good leaders who can motivate and inspire their employees to increase employee effectiveness and satisfaction. The theory of transformational leadership was first pitched by sociologist James V. Downton in 1973 and was developed by James MacGregor Burns in 1978 in his book *Leadership*. Since then, authors like John Mayer & Peter Salovey (1990) and Daniel Goleman (1995) have dedicated a significant proportion of their research to improving and further developing this theory. Transformational leadership is still very relevant today; we can point out the research of Kim & Kim (2017) or Hajncl & Vučenović (2020). Even more interesting is its relevance with today's new hybrid work environments. Transformational leadership can be further explored by new studies and utilized address new relevant matters or issues that come with hybrid work.

Research is important and when applied to real life cases it benefits practitioners, such as managers for companies. Understanding and applying transformational leadership helps to create improved work environments. Görgens-Ekermans & Roux (2021) have discovered that transformational leadership drives more effective leadership in the long run. A manager who displays such qualities and behaviours will in the long term generate more job satisfaction among their employees. Perceived supervisor support will also increase just like the quality of the relationship that a manager has with their subordinates. Overall, followers will be more committed to their organisation.

There is a real lack of research exploring transformational leadership and emotional intelligence in the context of hybrid work. Therefore, this study aims to investigate and identify how hybrid work environment influences the relationships between leaders and followers. Also, it will tackle how transformational behaviours of managers and the presence or absence of emotional intelligence resonate with employees in this new work context.

Overall, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of transformational leadership and emotional intelligence. This research seeks to answer the following question: *“To what extent does emotional intelligence contribute to transformational leadership behaviours: A study conducted in a hybrid workplace environment”* For this study we have conducted 10 interviews with 4 managers and 6 subordinates that were working in a hybrid work environment.

This research is divided into several chapters. The first three chapters focus on the scientific literature. There we investigate relevant studies that are useful to our research question. Hence, we explore multiple definitions of emotional intelligence. We choose to concentrate on the one most suitable definition of emotional intelligence.

The subsequent chapters focus on the presentation of our theoretical postulate our methodology and findings. There, we gather information from the interviews in order to compare it with the literature review of the first chapters.

Finally, in the last chapter we develop a discussion of our findings and complete this research with a general conclusion.

Chapter 1: Transformational leadership

Definition:

According to Ashkanasy & Tse (1999), a transformational leader is a charismatic leader who has a major and unusual impact on his followers. It is a leader accepted without question and to whom followers have a strong emotional affiliation. This emotional connection makes adherents obey willingly and believe that they can play a role in the mission given by the leader or the organisation. Thus, followers are setting themselves high performance goals and are more motivated to achieve them. Fiske et al. (1996) explain that transformational leadership is fundamentally a matter about the control of one's own emotions and those of others. In other words: the key asset for a leader is to have control over oneself and influence over other's emotions.

Bass & Avolio (1993) explain that there is another important element to transformational leadership. They call it the four "I"s, which are: idealised influence (following the leader's vision), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. These four factors are showing that it takes more than just charisma or emotional affiliation in order to be a transformational leader. In this characterisation the emphasis is placed on adherent's human and personal needs. The authors continue by stating that leaders need to build a culture on norms where people are seen as purposeful and trustworthy; or in short: every employee has a unique contribution to make. Transformational leaders have a broad vision over the organisation, and they know how to allocate the natural endowment of each and every employee. They foster constant improvement and creativity since there is always room for enhancement, which more importantly avoids falling into a static organisational self-satisfaction.

Transformational compared to transactional leadership

Even though the focus here is transformational leadership it is important to analyse transactional leadership, since transactional leadership does not take into account emotions it will better put into perception what transformational leadership is all about. Antoniou (2005) explains that we can highlight a major difference in both leadership styles, because the way of motivating and guiding followers towards a chosen goal is quite different. Transactional leadership theory was built on two specific behaviours: passive management and contingent rewards. Here leaders are setting standards of acceptable performance and an agreed upon

reward is the real motivation to achieve this task. If for instance the performance standard is not met, then a punishment or no reward will be distributed.

Bass & Avolio (1993) are saying that a “pure” transactional culture is where everything is contractually planned out. So, the duties of employees are all well-defined with strict rules and a given desired behaviour and a benefit structure. This environment is putting a price on every task. Thus, the organisation becomes a marketplace where motivation, commitment and executed tasks all are exchanged for a contingent reward (Bass & Avolio, 1993). This means that managers have a role of negotiators, who’s task is to define a price on people’s performance. The ability of the organisation to reward productive performance mirrors the level of commitment of employees. Hence, there is no intrinsic need or incentive for employees to identify themselves with the organisation, its vision or goals. (Bass & Avolio, 1993) Employees are more enticed to work independently and to be self-interested. Leadership styles in such environments are either laissez-faire or management by exception (Antoniou, 2005).

Laissez-faire management is when leaders are avoiding intervening or even influencing their followers during their work execution. They are adopting a passive leader position, and they even delegate their decision-making responsibilities to the members of the organisation. In an extreme case it could be seen as an absence of leadership (Silva & Mendis, 2017).

Hence, management by exception is when there is a given day-to-day workflow norm, and the leaders is there to help deal with complaints, errors or failures. There is no continuous feedback because the leader adopts a more reactive role. Which leads the leader to interact with followers only when there is an unplanned situation or when members deviate from the given work assignment (Hasija et al., 2019).

According to Hasija et al., (2019) transactional leadership is a top down management approach whereas transformational leadership focuses on stimulating organisational learning. Transformational leadership is about creating an environment where leaders explore their followers because their opinion counts for decision making. Thus, all employees are encouraged to speak plainly, but also to listen carefully to others. Hasija et al., (2019) say that it is a managerial responsibility for transformational leaders to understand the expectations of employees in order to clarify with them their role in the organisation.

On the other hand, transactional leadership could make members feel neglected because the leader focuses primarily on explaining job requirements and organisational goals and does not deal with the member’s expectations (Hasija et al., 2019).

The pitfall of dishonest transformational leaders

However, we should also talk about one side/aspect of transformational leadership that can be extensively harmful to followers and pursue immoral goals if used in a bad way. Ashkanasy & Tse (1999) argue that since followers are emotionally connected to the transformational leader, he has by extension also the ability to manipulate those people towards objectively bad goals. If a leader is obsessed with his vision and follows narcissistic goals, he may make use of his charisma to encourage his followers to an undesirable goal. Bryman (1993) explains that charismatic leaders, such as the founder of Apple, Steve Jobs, was known to be manipulative, insubordinate and a mesmerising leader. To sum up, charismatic leadership can have detrimental effects when it is marked by self-serving motives, authoritarian tendencies, impulsive behaviour, and actions that cause harm to both the leader and their followers (Ashkanasy & Tse, 1999).

Such dysfunctional leaders also called “pseudo-transformational” should not be confused with the true transformational leader. In fact, they are using the same processes and they demonstrate similar behaviours, however they do not follow the same objective at all. A pseudo-transformational leader ultimately wants to fulfil only personal achievement and take personal gain (Ashkanasy & Tse, 1999). So, if both types of leaders are using the same means but for different ends, how can we distinguish one from another? It is quite simple, because at the end, true transformational leaders will be more effective at attaining goals. They are also positively contributing to the organisation’s vision and the mindset of the employees. They challenge the industry standards and contribute at thinking critically in order to break the current norm.

Intuitive thinking of transformational leader

Transformational leaders need to have a thorough understanding of their organisation in order to lead it. They need to have an intuitive feeling of all the interplays and complex interactions that are happening in their organisation (Ashkanasy & Tse, 1999). In order to deal with various problems, transformational leaders need to have a “sixth sense” in order to solve several problems and make effective decisions.

The duty of a leader is to have a vision, to know his followers well and through mutual agreement with his employer, achieve the set goals (Hasija et al., 2019). This means that he needs to know the ins and outs of the organisation and be effective at communicating his vision to his followers. Transformational leaders therefore need to be able to embody the role of a

captain that has an innate skill of how to navigate through peaceful and difficult seasons with his crew.

Leader-member relationship

Leaders and followers will have numerous interactions between each other in the course of their relationship. Some exchanges are going to be of high-quality others of less good quality. The quality of this relationship does not only depend on the leader but also on how followers perceive their leader (Ashkanasy & Tse, 1999). According to a study from Engle and Lord (1997) resemblance between the leader and the follower is a factor that promotes higher affective reactions from the follower towards the leader. Hence, resemblance predicts a higher quality of leader-member exchange (LMX). This can go as far as leader labelling their follower into 'in-groups' or 'out-groups' category based on demographic and psychological similarity (Steiner, 1997). Thus, the 'out-groups' members will get less intimate or insightful information from the leader than 'in-groups'. The 'in-group' members form more easily a close relationship with the leader, who will then share more easily meaningful and personal experience (Steiner, 1997).

This shows us that transformational leaders do not necessarily have close relationship or are accepted by every member around them. It depends on the follower's traits and mindset too. Each follower is responding differently to a specific leader and leader-member relationship should be defined as a 'matching game' (Ashkanasy & Tse, 1999).

If the leader is seen as someone close by the follower, it is a promoting positive component on how the leader is perceived overall. Shamir (1995) explains that leaders with a close leader-member relationship are more often described as open, sociable, considerate, with a sense of humour and high expertise. They are perceived as dynamic, setting high standards for members and are more considered towards subordinates.

Followers or 'in-group' members that in fact describe their leaders with all those positive traits have in general a more fluid and effective working relationship with their leader (Ashkanasy & Tse, 1999). They have less frictions and are more efficient in performing tasks. Both leaders and followers will share common expectations on the work to be done by the follower.

To sum up, we can say that this description of a close leader with great LMX aligns well with the definition of a transformational leader. Especially the aspects of individualized consideration, setting high standards and being able to persuade followers to believing in his ideas and vision.

Relationship between culture and leadership

Bass & Avolio (1993) have identified that culture and leadership have a relationship that goes both ways. This means for example if we have a strong organisational culture then the leadership will have to be as strong in order to ensure the consistency with the culture. So, there is a constant interplay between leadership and culture (Bass & Avolio, 1993).

Often, the founders of an organisation are the ones that create the culture. Bass & Avolio (1993) explain that they use preconceived “cultural schemes” in order to set the first stones of the organisation’s culture. Accordingly, the founders’ personal beliefs and leadership style, and the ones of their successors, will guide and shape the culture and shared values of the organisation.

Hence, culture and leadership styles are prone to evolve over time. If leaders feel the need to change some norms or values from the company’s culture, for example as a reaction to a crisis, then leaders will have to define the ‘new’ culture and accompany the organisation through this change (Bass & Avolio, 1993). Hence, specific organisational culture arises because leaders are focused on a particular vision or a certain role model and a way of working. Nevertheless, each vision or new standard will be processed by the employees and it may or may not be adopted fully by the company. The employees and the people that the company attracts are also a key influencer of the company’s culture (Bass & Avolio, 1993).

Chapter 2: Emotional intelligence

Definition

There is no universally accepted definition of emotional intelligence (EI). Multiple authors like Salovey and Mayer, Goleman, Bar-On and Petrides have worked on it. Each one of them has a distinctive definition. The first to speak about EI however, were Salovey and Mayer in 1990, which they defined as follows:

“The ability to monitor one’s own and other’s emotions, to discriminate among them and to use the information to guide one’s thinking and actions” (p. 189)

In this first definition, the idea of emotional intelligence was composed of two parts. The first component was “emotions” (affective) and the second component “intelligence” (cognitive). Salovey and Mayer also make a distinction between personal intelligence and intrapersonal intelligence. So, in other words EI is someone’s ability to perceive, understand, express, manage and use his emotions in oneself (personal) and in other’s (social).

The 2 other approaches of EI, treated in this thesis, take a different point of view regarding the cognitive aspect of EI since they - All of the afterwards significant authors that worked on this topic - specified in their own definition that EI was a non-cognitive intelligence (Kanesan & Fauzan, 2019).

Thus, it is in 1995 with Goleman’s book about emotional intelligence that this topic gained notoriety (Pirsoul et al., 2023) and since then, some practitioners started to use it in the workplace (Kanesan & Fauzan, 2019).

Goleman’s claim in his book is that 80% of success at work is determined by emotional intelligence and only 20% by ordinary intelligence.

Kanesan & Fauzan (2019) highlight that EI is a form of intelligence that can be learned, enhanced and trained. Thus, effort is necessary to develop and acquire adaptive emotional skills, but it naturally grows with time. Pirsoul et al., (2023) explain that the age of an individual also plays a determining role. Consequently, a mind is more malleable to emotional intelligence from late childhood (age 10–11) to emerging adulthood (age 24–25). Starting from emerging adulthood (age 17–25) to middle age (mean an average age of 34.5) the mind is becoming less available to EI enrichment (Pirsoul et al., 2023). But as stated before EI is a form of intelligence that can still be learned during adulthood (Pirsoul et al., 2023).

Three models of emotional intelligence

In the literature we can find three major models of emotional intelligence known as (1) ability model, (2) mixed model and (3) trait model. Here is a table with the different model and the matching authors.

Ability Model	Mixed Model	Trait Model
Mayer and Salovey (1997)	Bar-On, (1997) and Goleman (2001)	Petrides and Furnham (2001)

The ability models of emotional intelligence

Mayer and Salovey (1997) have divided the ability model in four emotions processing mental abilities. Those skills can be ranked from very basic emotional abilities to advanced emotional abilities. Thus, Mayer and Salovey's (1997) ability model include specific (1) perception, appraisal and expression of emotion, (2) emotional facilitation of thinking, (3) understanding and analysing emotions, and (4) reflective regulation of emotions. Each skill set can be divided into four emotional abilities, which they level from very elementary emotional abilities to advanced emotional abilities.

Mayer and Salovey (1997) explain that the first skill set (1) perception, appraisal and expression of emotion is the ability to distinguish personal emotions and those of others. This ability starts by being able to recognise one's own emotions through feelings coming from the inner self, body cues and personal thoughts. Learning to identify one's own emotions through self-experience helps also to develop the ability to recognise the other's emotions. This self-learning will make an person able to clearly express his feelings to fellow friends. At the end, a person should be able to distinguish between accurate and inaccurate expressions of feelings, as well as being able to sense if it is an honest or dishonest expression of feelings.

The second dimension of the ability model is (2) emotional facilitation of thinking dimension (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). This skill set is responsible to assist an individual for good reason, for interpersonal communication and solving problems by mobilizing emotions and hence ease the thinking process. By using emotions, a person can channel his focus on specific tasks. For example, in an emergency situation a person can generate vivid emotions in order to accelerate the judgment and memory process. Emotional mood swings will also channel a person's thought. If this person is in a bad mood, then thoughts are naturally going to be more pessimistic

and, on the contrary, if a person is in a good mood, it will foster optimistic thoughts. Henceforth for Kanesan & Fauzan (2019) an emotional intelligent person will be able to recognise mood swings and will know to use them accordingly. Positive thoughts promote creative thinking and negative thoughts are helping deductive reasoning. This means that the ability of emotional facilitation of thinking is using emotions in a clever way in order to channel one's reasoning according to current mood swings.

Another aspect of this model is the (3) understanding and analysing emotions. This refers to the ability to label emotions and to differentiate them from one another. (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). This skill set is fundamental for understanding and reading one's emotion and tracking them down. For example, unhappiness comes from loss as joy comes from gain. A person that has the ability to understand and analyse emotions will be able to identify transitions between emotions. For instance, anger, which can come from a situation of shame, can more surprising too come from a situation where one expresses satisfaction.

The last dimension is the (4) reflective regulation of emotion. This ability enables a person to reduce, modify, enhance, or prevent one's own and other's emotion (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). This ability stimulates emotional and cognitive development of a person. Indeed, the thinking process of an individual is favoured when well emotionally regulated. Such a person is more inclined to tolerate both unpleasant and pleasant feelings. He is more aware of his emotions, and he learns how to use or not a positive or negative emotion, according to the situation. To sum up, reflective regulation of emotion is about managing one's own and other's emotion in order to favour pleasant emotions and temperate unpleasant emotions.

The mixed models of emotional intelligence

In 1997, Bar-On's mixed model is define with five dimensions and fifteen components in total. The two first dimensions are about intra- and interpersonal skills. They consist of emotional self-awareness, self-regard, assertiveness, self-actualisation, and independence for the interpersonal dimension. Furthermore, skills such as empathy, social responsibility and interpersonal relationship are assigned to the intrapersonal dimension.

The three last dimensions of this model is adaptability (problem-solving, flexibility), stress management and general mood.

Intrapersonal Self-regard, emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, self-actualisation; independence		Interpersonal Empathy, social responsibility, interpersonal relationships
Adaptability Problem-solving, flexibility, reality testing	Stress Management Stress tolerance, impulse control	General Mood Happiness, optimism

From author : (Kanesan & Fauzan, 2019)

In 2001, Goleman redefines his mixed model, which he originally developed in 1995 (Kanesan & Fauzan, 2019). Here is the Emotional Competence Framework by Goleman. It is divided into four different dimensions:

<i>Emotional intelligence</i>	Self (Personal Competence)	Others (Social Competence)
Awareness	Self-awareness	Social awareness
Action	Self-management	Relationship management

Adapted from report: (Hay Group, 2011)

In the continuity of this model, Boyatzis and Goleman in 2006 have designed a model to embrace the full scale of emotional competencies. They call it the emotional and social competency inventory (ESCI). The measurement of the ESCI is done by making a 360° survey, which ranks competencies from average performance to outstanding. This tool considers self-behavioural evaluation as those of their peers. The ESCI is composed of 68 items and 12 competency scales that enable to analyse and understand specific behaviours. The ESCI focuses on recognizable, observable and distinct behaviours with a high psychometric standard. Hay Group, the company that uses ESCI, explains that they are more interested in using ESCI to focus on understanding behaviours at work, performance and organisational context rather than to make clinical measures. (Hay Group, 2011)

The trait model of emotional intelligence

In 2001, the two authors of this model, Petrides and Furnham, developed the trait model of emotional intelligence. They see EI as a set of behavioural disposition and tendencies to behave (Pirsoul et al., 2023). Thus, the authors of this model argue that personality dimensions are essential to measure emotional intelligence and this is why they came up with the trait model. This model comprises a total of four big factors, which are: well-being, self-control, emotionality, and sociability (Kanesan & Fauzan, 2019). This model has also fifteen emotion-related facets that are scattered across the spectrum of the four main dimensions. The

importance of traits and personality factors are quite significant in this model, but they are different from the well-known Big Five personality theories. Petrides and Furnham argue that the trait of emotional intelligence are situated in the deeper levels of personality (Kanesan & Fauzan, 2019).

Chapter 3: The relationship between EI and TFL

To start, we can say that there are a lot of arguments that speak for a positive relationship between EI and TFL. Harms and Credé (2010) give four theoretical reasons. First, in order to make individualized consideration, a leader needs to be empathetic. Second, being able to control and manage one's emotion is helpful to foster positive affect and confidence in followers. Third, leaders with self-awareness may express a greater sense of purpose and meaning than the average. Fourth, people with high emotional management capabilities may be more likely to put the needs of others ahead of their own.

Multiple researchers have explored connections between a leader's EI and effective leadership. According to Görgens-Ekermans & Roux (2021) people that happen to be more emotionally intelligent, tend also to be more successful and committed in the workplace. After having used an EI measure, Gardner and Stough (2002) have established a robust positive relationship between TFL and EI. The strongest relationship, in their results, was between individualised consideration of TFL and understanding external emotions, which is an EI dimension. Hence, Rahman, Ferdousy and Uddin (2012) likewise, have found that people with a high EI are more inclined to become transformational leaders.

More and more we see that transformational leadership is being associated with effective leadership in organisations (Antoniou, 2005). The question now is to know if TFL is closely related to emotional intelligence. According to Goleman (2001), emotional intelligent leadership is a facilitator for building a working climate that encourages employees to grow and give their best at work.

It is easy to comprehend why emotional intelligent people are more apt to exhibit transformational leadership behaviours. Antoniou (2005) explains that people with more empathy can more easily understand and interact effectively with people. Emotionally intelligent people who can manage their own emotions and those of others will also be more disposed to create a stable and reassuring work environment.

Cascading nature of emotional abilities

Görgens-Ekermans & Roux (2021) explain that EI abilities may have a natural hierarchical order. They say that basic EI abilities would drive higher-order EI abilities. Let's explain this with an example by using the Emotional Competence Framework from Goleman.

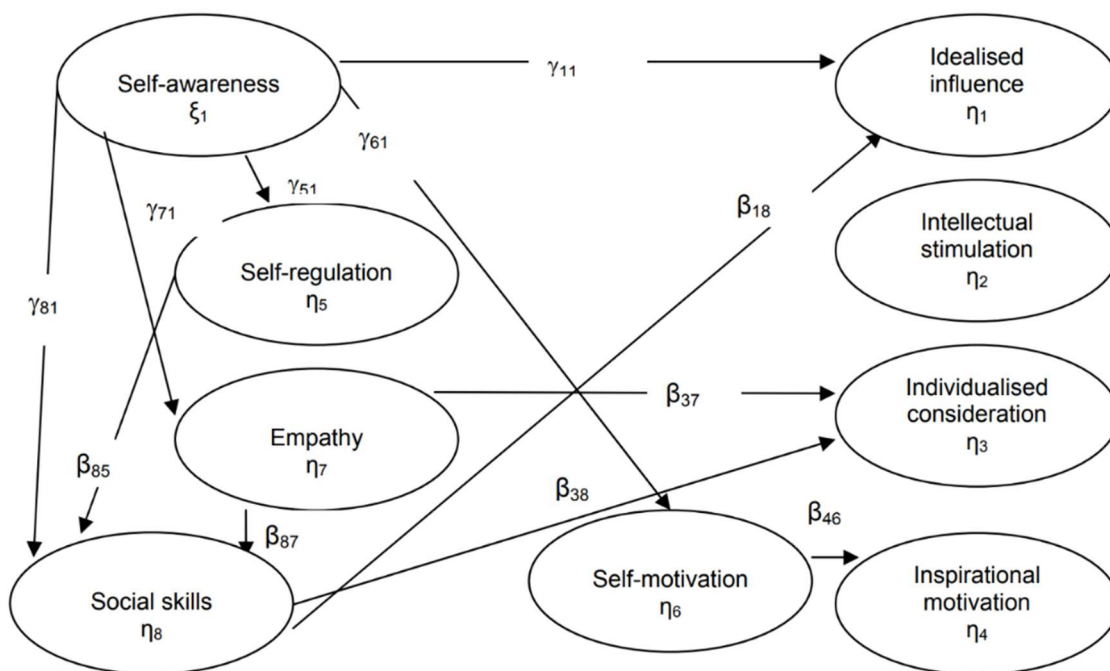
A person can handle basic emotional competencies such as being aware of his emotions. The competence of self-awareness (SA) helps people manage their emotional behaviours and actions. Thus, deeply self-aware people are better at handling their emotions, which is a prerequisite for exhibiting empathy and be aware of emotions of other people. The capability of reading others' emotions is a skill that is attributed to the social-awareness competency (Görgens-Ekermans & Roux, 2021).

We can see now that the different emotional competencies are linked to each other, and that they reinforce each other positively. This phenomenon is described as the cascading nature of EI, construct by Beyers (2006). This shows too that basic emotional competencies like SA are facilitators for demonstrating other emotional competencies.

Emotional Competence Framework and the link with the four “I”s

The emotional competence framework from Goleman will be used here in order to analyse the relationship between EI and transformational leadership behaviours

Beyers (2006) developed a model that shows the links between the emotional competence framework and the four “I”s that we consider here to be key indicators of a TFL behaviours.



Structural model from author (Beyers, 2006)

Beyers (2006) starts by saying that self-awareness 2006 is considered to be the cornerstone on which all the other emotional competencies can be built upon (Cherniss & Goleman, cited in Beyers, 2006, p.46). The author argues that before someone can build successful relationships,

a person first needs to recognize and understand his own feelings and the impact it has on others.

The author starts by explaining that self-awareness is a prerequisite for a leader to be able to put other's need before his own needs. Leaders who are putting the needs of their followers before their own are generating more trust, respect, and admiration from them. A leader that earns trust, respect, and admiration from his followers, will see them buy more into his vision. It is called 'idealised influence'. Beyers (2006) explains that there is a positive relationship between self-awareness and idealised influence.

Görgens-Ekermans & Roux (2021) confirmed to have found three positives relationship between the EI competencies and the four "I"s. They start by saying that the social awareness competency is substantially linked to the individualised consideration. Watching out carefully over every follower and, in addition, being interested in their emotional and personal development is the very definition of individualised consideration. According to the authors this is a trait that is more prevailing with leaders that naturally display empathy and awareness of others' feelings and desires. Therefore, we can say that a leader that is socially aware and who puts a priority on the needs of his followers on an emotional and developmental level is a leader displaying TFL behaviour.

Secondly, Görgens-Ekermans & Roux (2021) explain that there is a strong relationship between relationship management and idealised influence. The ability to manage relationship well is when someone can deal positively with people's reactions and emotions. This ability also includes mentoring, influencing and coaching others as well as conflict management. The authors conclude by saying that leaders who display this EI competency are seen most often as role models.

Furthermore, Görgens-Ekermans & Roux (2021) argue that self-management promotes positively leaders to display inspirational motivation behaviours of TFL. The competency of self-management is to have control over the impulses and internal states of oneself. This includes to be adaptable, stay positive, to find the silver lining whenever needed and to have emotional management. All this influences subordinates to buy more into the leader's vision and to commit more to their work. This suggests that self-management is facilitating leaders to display inspirational motivation for their followers.

Moreover the author Naznin (2013) has found other positive relationships between EI competencies and the four "I"s than the one exposed previously. She argues that the

relationship between transformational behaviours and emotional intelligence is implicit, even on a theoretical level. First, she explains that it is very sound to state that self-management facilitates idealised influence behaviours. She says that leaders who are emotionally close and supportive are leaders who can understand their own emotions and those of others, since it is a prerequisite for the latter. Naznin (2013) explains that a leader who displays both self-awareness and self-management has a high chance to increase the feeling of motivation, trust, and commitment from his followers, since he displays qualities of a role model for them. Another element she established is the link between what she calls emotional appeal, which we could translate with social awareness, and inspirational motivation. The author explains that building a relationship and inspiring followers is done, among others, through recognising the emotions and expectations of one's followers. Hence, a TFL behaviour is when leaders use followers' emotions for inspirational motivation. Lastly, Naznin (2013) argues that empathy drives leaders to display behaviours of individualised consideration towards followers. The author explains that empathy is a prerequisite to be able to put the needs of others before one's own personal needs. Thus, this behaviour drives positively human interaction. Emotional intelligent leaders are more inclined to display individualised consideration to followers.

To sum up, we can perceive a positive relationship between the emotional competence framework from Goleman and the four "I's of transformational leadership behaviours. The various authors explained to have established very precise links between EI competency and TFL behaviours. Nevertheless, these authors don't always agree on which EI competency drives which TFL behaviour precisely. However, it is fair to say with what has been discussed that there are evidently links and interdependencies in this complex EI and TFL behaviour network. Even though it is difficult to state what is the exact relationship between the EI competency and TFL behaviour, there is ultimately a relationship. Everything is somehow linked in this complex mesh network.

Criticism

As there is no unanimous definition of emotional intelligence and as there are 3 different approaches to understand EI it has made some researchers question the scientific rigor of EI-based assumptions, which points out the conceptual inconsistency between the different definitions (Kim & Kim, 2017).

In 2004, Zeidner, Robert & Matthews wrote a book called "Emotional Intelligence: Science and Myth" in which they criticise the theory of emotional intelligence because of the lack of

theoretical clarity, the measurement issues, and the absence of predictive validity (as cited in Geher & White, 2005). In fact, the authors of the book argue that EI theory in his form and shape, at that time, was too close to the “Big Five” personality traits. Thus, it looked like an unnecessary reframing. If it wanted to stand out, it should show more distinct results that are uncorrelated with indices of these five personality traits (Matthews et al., 2004).

In fact, the debate around the positive relationship between EI on TFL is large (Hajnci & Vučenović, 2020). A couple of academics are arguing over the validity of EI measures in various studies. For example, Kim & Kim (2017) are sceptical about the validity of measures of EI and point out that it would need more robust assessment tools. Harms & Credé (2010) are indicating that there are not enough studies that are using a large pool of different EI measures to make a scientific statement about this issue.

Nevertheless, more recent researches indicate a more nuanced point of view on EI. Most importantly academics have established that several EI components play a role of influence in transformational leadership attitudes (Görgens-Ekermans & Roux, 2021).

3. 1 Theoretical postulate

Since we already extensively discussed the relationship between EI and TFL, the first postulate in this thesis is that emotional intelligence is a fundamental driver of transformational leadership behaviours.

Nowadays we see a clear shift in the manner in which employees interact with each other since hybrid work has become globally standardized. Recognizing this shift, we aim to analyse how hybrid work impacts transformational leadership and by extension its relationship with emotional intelligence.

Hybrid workplace environment

According to the Cambridge dictionary (2025) hybrid work is: *“Methods of working that involve employees sometimes being present in an office or other place owned by their employer, and sometimes working using the internet from home or another place”* (2025). According to ResourceQueue (2025) 62% of companies have implemented a hybrid work model on a global scale. This way of working has profoundly impacted the modes of working and thus also how leadership is conducted. Hybrid work requires employees to use ICT tools, such as email, video conferencing and project management tools to work and communicate with their colleagues and supervisors (Walk, 2024). This model also gives the employees the ability to arrange their schedule themselves and to choose between working from home or in the office.

The 2020 Covid pandemic gave a major push to make the hybrid model of working a universally accepted way of working. Meanwhile, management and leadership strategies still need to adapt and catch up to this new standard of the hybrid model (Walk, 2024). With this model, managers have the feeling to have less control over employee’s progress and in general they are less informed of the actual work of subordinates (Walk, 2024). The fact that employees work from home also decreases the opportunities of creating in-person camaraderie and social connections between colleagues. Thus, this detachment from the office can make it more difficult for leaders to create a feeling of belonging to the company (Walk, 2024).

According to Wiatr and Skowron-Mielnik (2023) the shift toward a hybrid mode of working requires leaders to change how they manage teams. The authors explain that leaders need to rely even more on communication and trust as well as treating employees in a more individualized way. Antonakis and Atwater (2002) warned about hybrid work because employees are more likely to perceive their leaders as less close. Due to the distance, the

authors argue leaders tend to give less often rewards or recognition to their employees. On top there is still a lot that remains unknown as research has not yet had the time to address this new issue in depth

Sjögren Nyberg (2023) explains that the relationship between a leader and his follower is blurrier in a hybrid working mode. Therefore, leaders need to pay more attention on their individual relationship with each employee and use more relational skills, since hierarchical ranks become less noticeable in a hybrid working mode Sjögren Nyberg (2023). Erskine (2012) explains for example that a mandatory contact via video conferencing can maintain this leader-follower relationship, as both will mimic their respective roles from the office and communication will be more evident.

Starting a manager-employee relationship in face to face gives a valuable first advantage for later remote leadership because the level of trust in a work relationship depends on previous experiences, which will define how followers perceive their leaders. A first good on-site experience of working together will build trust and be beneficial for understanding each other (Kelley & Kelloway, 2012). It is also of paramount importance that leaders encourage and support their employees as well as pay particular attention to the individual perception and feelings of their followers regardless of the on-site or remote context, (Erskine, 2012).

According to Wiatr & Skowron-Mielnik (2023) transformational leadership should encourage employees to take ownership and be responsible in their daily work. Thus, the authors claim that hybrid work is more suited for employees that are autonomous and know how to organise their work. In addition, Sjögren Nyberg (2023) explains that effective hybrid leadership is when leaders understand that they must make ‘individualized consideration’ for each employee. He explains that employees need to feel involved in their work by being included in the decision-making and being asked for their feedback or input.

Key focus point of hybrid work

In this research we are condensing the new leadership challenges for hybrid work in solely a few key points, in order to assure an achievable analysis. The thesis focuses on points that were seen as indicators of successful leadership in a hybrid model while addressing new challenges that come with hybrid work. The following points of hybrid work leadership are being analysed:

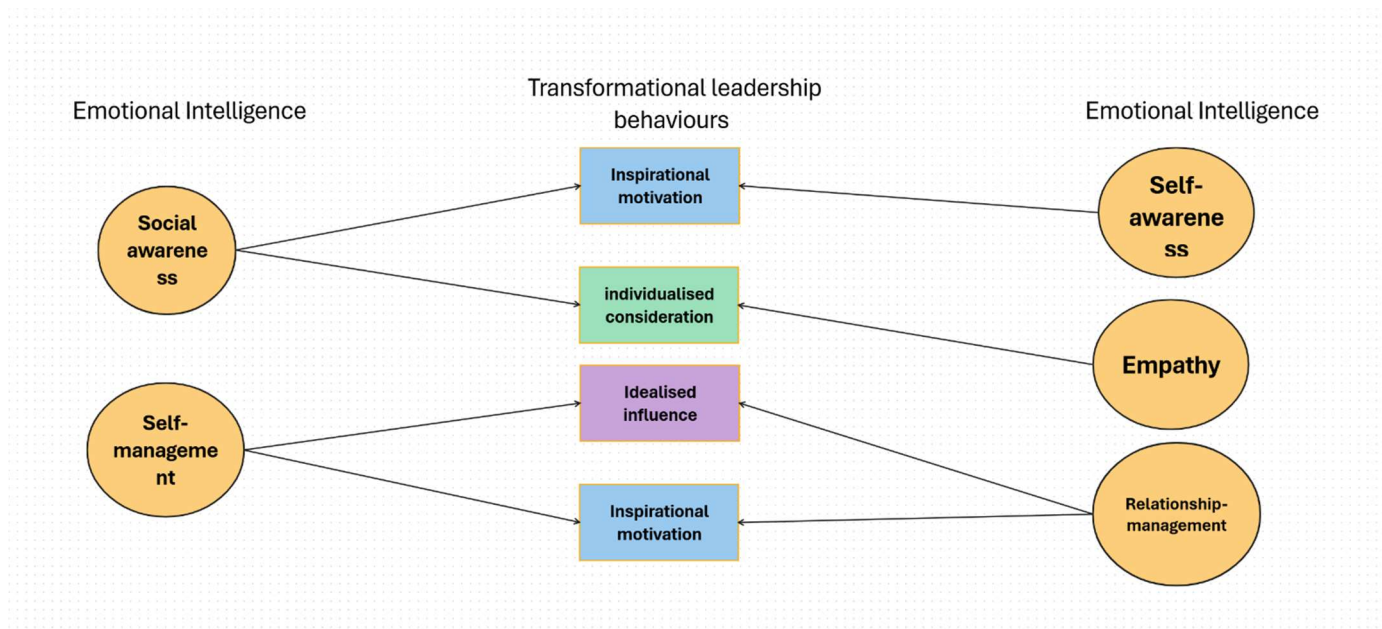
- Trust
- Relationship between leader and follower
- Communication

(Sjögren Nyberg, 2023; Wiatr & Skowron-Mielnik, 2023)

Since hybrid work has not been thoroughly studied yet, there is not enough data to state solid correlations. However, the studies mentioned above have shown that those three elements are making a bigger impact on leadership in a hybrid work environment. Therefore, we assume that those five elements have a significant impact on transformational leadership in a context of hybrid work environment.

Key focus point of EI and TFL

The previous chapter examined the relationships between EI competencies and TFL behaviours. Our findings revealed that certain EI competencies play a meaningful role in driving specific TFL behaviours. Those elements are the theoretical foundation of this thesis. Considering the relationship between transformational leadership and emotional intelligence we are going to analyse the following:



(source: own graphic)

Our chart shows five EI competencies that are correlated to one or two TFL behaviours. We expect that for example a manager that has a high social awareness score, shows behaviours of inspirational motivation and individualised consideration, or for an empathetic/empathic leader

we are expecting individualised consideration towards followers. This goes on for the rest of the five emotional intelligence competencies..

Chapter 4: Methodology

In this chapter we are going to conduct qualitative research to compare theoretical findings from the above discussed research with data obtained from interviews. The interviews were conducted with leaders and respective followers that work in a hybrid work environment.

Research design

This exploratory study tries to give an answer to the following questions: *"How much does emotional intelligence contribute to transformational leadership behaviours: A study conducted in a hybrid workplace environment"*

Through our analysis of the scientific literature, in order to understand and comprehend best what emotional intelligence and transformational leadership is, we found multiple relationships between EI and TFL behaviours. We assume that each of the five emotional intelligence skills (trust; relationship between leader and follower; communication; personal involvement of the employee/follower; sense of responsibility) drive to one or two TFL behaviour. We then concluded the theoretical postulate by placing our theoretical findings in the context of hybrid work, for which we defined several key focus points. The objective of this study is to test this knowledge and verify the theoretical postulate in a real case scenario with semi-directive interviews. The goal of the interviews was to harvest as much information as possible to support our analysis with as much data as possible. Next, we will compare the theoretical findings with the ones from the interviews. This will inevitably lead to an in-debt reflexion of the research question and define the significance of our findings. Finally, we will make recommendations, if relevant, and discuss implications for future research.

Data Collection and analysis

Data has been collected in one-on-one interviews. Each interview followed a semi-directive guide that was designed specifically for this research. The interviewees are all employees from the same company, Deloitte. In total, we conducted ten interviews that lasted between 25 and 55 minutes. We interviewed four people in a leadership position, from which three were women and one was a man. The range of leadership experience went from leaders that just recently were put in a leadership role to leaders that had already more than six years of experience in leadership. The six other interviewees were employees that are or have been under the leadership of one of the interviewed leaders. This enabled a cross-data perspective, since the leadership style of the leaders was evaluated by themselves and one or two followers. The six followers were on average younger and less experienced employees as the four leaders.

In this pool of interviewees, cultural diversity was present, since two of the 6 follower's stems from an Indian or African origin. One manager is Romanian and all the others are Belgians.

Face-to-face interviews were always highly encouraged nevertheless 3 of the interviews were done online. Recordings of the interviews and informed consent was obtained from all.

After the interviews, we created an excel document and gathered all the information at one place and discriminated according to EI and TFL behaviour and the work context for each of the interviews. In our results we took into consideration whether the information came from a leader or followers and always utilised verbatims to motivate our analysis. The results were then compared with existing research to see how our findings fit into the literature. During the process, we were aware of our own biases and tried to stay aware from them, knowing it would harm the scientific analysis.

Methodological limitation

While ten conducted interviews allow to obtain a substantial amount of data, a larger and more varied sample might have brought additional insights and nuances.

Another limitation is related to the differences in leadership experience among the participants. While one interviewed leader had just recently taken on leadership responsibilities, the others had already been in such roles for many years. This variation might have influenced the way they talked about their leadership behaviours and use of emotional intelligence.

Even if the interviewees have different jobs and carry out diverse tasks, they all come from the same consulting company. This means that they are all part of the same company culture, which can have an impact on how leadership and emotional intelligence are perceived. While this shared context supports consistency in the data, it may also limit how much the findings can be generalised to other types of industries, organisations or cultural environments.

Interview guide

The interview guide ([appendix 5 & 6](#)) contains a set of key open questions designed to encourage in-dept discussions. This structure gives flexibility and leaves room for spontaneous ideas or follow-up questions based on the natural flow of the conversation. This approach enabled the collection of rich, detailed, and authentic data. Two versions of the interview guide were developed: one for leaders ([Appendix 5](#)) and one for followers ([Appendix 6](#)). The two interview guides did not differ a lot in structure and content. However, in the leader -guide, participants were asked to self-assess their own leadership behaviours and emotional

intelligence, whereas in the follower version, participants were asked to describe their perceptions of their leader's behaviours and emotional intelligence. Another content in the follower-guide is one question where followers are asked to choose between five pictures to best describe their leaders ([Appendix 6](#)).

Given the specific topic of emotional intelligence and the more or less vague knowledge of people on this matter, a short introduction on EI was made before each interview. This ensured that field specific questions were correctly understood in order to get relevant and exploitable answers.

After each of the four leader interviews, the same interviewees were asked to complete the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale (SEIS) (Schutte et al., 1998), also known as the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) ([Appendix 4](#)). The SEIS is based on the EI model by Salovey and Mayer (1990) and its validity has been supported by Jonker and Vosloo (2008), which they recommend using on candidates with a higher education degree, a criterion met by all participants in this study. This self-assessment tool is a 33-item questionnaire that assesses emotional intelligence using a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) scale. Some questions are also reversed-scored (where 1 is equal to 5 and 5 equals to 1) for more robustness and reduced response bias. This enables to get a first idea of the level of emotional intelligence of each candidate.

Chapter 5: Findings

This section presents the main findings from the ten interviews. The results concentrate on the relationships that were the most supported by our candidate throughout all the interviews. It is important to keep in mind as well, that in our findings we are analysing a hybrid type of work, which differs from the theoretical foundation of our study.

1. Self-Awareness (SA) and Idealised Influence (II)

Moderately supported for SA → II: 5 out of 10 interviews

Key interviewees: Jules (leader), Matilda (leader), Marion (leader), and their followers

Leaders who demonstrated high levels of self-awareness were perceived as authentic, open, and with qualities aligned with idealised influence.

Three of the four leaders categorised themselves and their follower as being highly self-aware of their inner feelings and mood swings. Here the main criteria to determine if someone is self-aware or not was whether they communicate and express well how they felt at all times.

"It's really him that comes to you and says: 'OK. No, I've had, like a stressful moment. Please like don't reach out for 5 minutes.' " – Follower Axel about Jules

The ability to openly communicate the level of current stress by leaders was frequently cited by followers as a sign of trust and inclusion in the team.

"Yes because you feel that they trust you and you feel a bit like part of the team. She's open of communication and then when there is something wrong for you or there is an issue or something like this, you also feel more, not proud, but you feel more like trigger to speak up."

" – Follower Karl about Matilda

Followers mentioned that they felt encouraged by their leaders' example to speak up at any time, knowing their leaders were approachable. They knew that they could come to their leader for any issue. This openness and availability motivate followers to work better for the team while fostering team spirit and trust.

Some leaders also intentionally communicated just the right level of stress or urgency in order to drive team motivation and productivity toward achieving higher goals:

"You have kind of a bit of positive stress to be motivated. So depending on deliverables and timelines, I can have a bit of stress indeed that's quite positive" - Jules (Leader)

However, one follower found that his leader was a bit too close and too transparent with her emotions, which does not align well with the perception of a tough leader.

“On the other side, I also think that maybe leaders should also sometimes just don't say all their emotions.” – Follower Benoît about Matilda

Hence, he explains that communication is fine but overcommunication is harmful for the leader-follower dynamic, since an adequate distance between both should be respected.

Remote vs. onsite workspace:

Self-awareness was particularly visible and impactful in onsite settings where non-verbal communication and emotional signs were easier for leaders to observe and to communicate.

“When you compare both, on site is always better because the person is next to you. You can ask a doubt or clarify a quick thing because the person is physically near you” – Mithresh

In remote contexts, leaders needed to make extra efforts, such as making additional calls or virtual meetings, to express their emotional state more explicitly and achieve similar results.

2. Self-Management (SM) and Idealized Influence (II) and Inspirational Motivation (IM)

Moderately supported for SM → II: 6 out of 10 interviews

Moderately supported for SM → IM: 6 out of 10 interviews

We have mixed results from our four leaders regarding their self-management skill. One leader described herself as highly restraining, two described themselves as average and one explained having difficulties to contain her emotions in front of others.

Marion, the leader with high self-management skills, explained that she can turn on and off her emotions according to the situation. Here is her rationale behind it :

“I'm very selective of how I portray them (emotions) to the people, especially as a leader because when the ship is sinking, you don't want to see your captain panicking.” – Marion (leader)

“She's someone that can disconnect her own emotions. Basically, she puts on a different hat, let's say, and then you have a kind of different person in front of you in terms of how closed off she is.” – Follower Jolene about Marion

In fact, Marion's control over her emotions was validated by her follower Jollene.

Idealized Influence

Self-management was considered essential to project stillness, authority, and reliability traits closely linked to idealised influence. Leaders who were able to control their emotions during high-pressure situations gained more endorsement from their followers. Such leaders had more followers who perceived them as role model:

"That is something that I envy from that regard. The way that she can like be in one meeting she can be that person and then 20 minutes later, she can be another person." -Follower Jolene about Marion

Jules indicated that it is not always easy to manage one's own emotion:

" But if the emotions are bad and you are sharing them to your team, it can be hard to set the clear target to achieve. (...) I mean, how can you motivate your troops yourself if you don't even believe in it, right? Need to balance of course." – Jules (leader)

Jules expresses that the leader has the duty to stay optimistic and share a positive and compelling vision.

Inspirational Motivation

Leaders described that they used their ability to self-manage their emotions to establish a stable and structured working environment for their team.

"(...) people there where actually non-stop bullying and interrupting the work of my team. So, my role was to get in between to ensure that all of the requests are streamlined through me. It provided structure and relieved some of the pressure for the team"– Marion (leader)

The motivation of followers grows when stress from outside is relieved and the team is in a place where they feel appreciated:

"If your team leader is giving the impression that everything is under control, that will also help the team members to feel energetic and to feel also appreciation for what they are doing on a daily basis. " –Elise (leader)

A follower stated how his leader was dedicated to putting a positive work environment into his team:

“Yes, I mean, in general, in my perception, when you have a motivated team around you with positive vibes, you always want to give more. It is the case with Jules. He really puts that positive vibes into the team.” – Follower Alex about Jules

The result of a positive work environment showed increased dedication to exert work by followers.

Remote vs. onsite workspace:

The context of work environment did not play a important role for followers for this emotional skill, except that more misunderstandings were reported in remote. Communication is more challenging in a remote context, as it lacks non-verbal communication and emotional connection. Leaders and their followers were more inclined to adopt a functional role and show less people-oriented behaviours, since proximity and human interactions were limited:

“When she's online, it's much harder to get her people posture let's say her nonverbal signs across because it's like me and you. We are talking now. You don't see that she has a compassionate composure.” –Follower Jolene about Marion

Apart from that, the leader’s emotional response to daily operations has been more or less comparable.

3. Social Awareness (SocA) and Individualised Consideration (IC) and Inspirational Motivation (IM)

Strongly supported for SocA → IC: 10 out of 10 interviews

Support for SocA → IM: 7 out of 10 interviews

All the leaders were aware that checking in with their followers regularly (even daily) is a prerequisite to do a good job as a leader. Hence, leaders with high social awareness skills were more disposed to interpret better and faster nonverbal signs as red flags whenever it was the case. They showed more honest interest and care for followers that had issues. They actively investigated their team members’ states of mind and created individual safe spaces, for their followers to express their emotions freely. Leaders were also conscious not to become too invasive with their followers’ emotion, therefore most of them said to leave a door open to followers. These leaders were seen as considerate and caring. *“I dare to ask questions and try to really be as transparent as open as I can be. When it's privates, I just ask a question once like, do you want to talk about it ? My door is open if you want to exchange.”* – Julien (leader)

For followers sharing challenges and being understood in their feelings by a leader was important and it made a real difference.

“... she actually tried to understand the team to really feel the team and yeah, it's super I feel super great that yeah, my manager really tries to understand how I feel.” – Follower Benoît about Marion

Here we see that emotional understanding enhanced the follower-leader relationship.

Individualised Consideration

We found a strong link between (1) leaders who are socially aware of others also make individualised considerations to followers and (2) followers that felt listened to and understood by leaders felt considered.

“... the manager comes to me and say, hey, I really have the impression that you're tired today. It really feels super good. It's super nice to see that.” -Follower Benoît about Matilda

This shows that some leaders acted as mentors who really cared about how followers were doing. They explained how they provided support to their followers to resolve issues. Leaders did not give general advice and one-size-fits-all type of solutions to not be bothered too long by it, on the contrary, they all adopted a problem-solving attitude to make their subordinate grow and learn from their experiences. Leaders really tried to help their followers by shaping together a personalised solution.

“I said at the moment, something's happening in your private life, I assume because I cannot identify anything in the work life that would impact you so heavy tell me how I can help and tell me how we can find a solution.” – Marion (leader)

Marion has a proactive and individualised attitude towards followers to make help them with work or private issues.

Inspirational Motivation

Attentive leaders who demonstrated behaviours of active listening and communication with their followers about professional or private issues generated more sentiments of recognition by them. and momentum in their future tasks:

“So I feel it is a kind of acknowledgement that leaders should have. Also, it will kind of motivate us if our leader asks such questions because you know they are taking the next step forward to understand us. So I feel it motivates us to put more effort into our work.”

–Follower Mithresh about Elise

Speaking to one’s leader, which is an authority figure, was experienced as relieving, especially when there had been pressure coming from higher instances.

“the fact that he could express his frustration and I could answer in a calm and rational way. Then he could go back to work without the frustration, and that was more comfortable for him, and he finished it.” – Matilda(leader) about a former follower

Followers felt relieved after speaking to leaders. They expressed that it removed some pressure, helped to put things into perspective and they were more available to continue to work.

Remote vs. onsite workspace:

SocA was noticeably more effective in onsite contexts, where leaders could perceive the body language, the attitude and the daily mood of each follower more in depth. Leaders were more spontaneous too and felt better whenever they had to reach out to a followers that appeared to be in trouble.

“Even now about the project how is it going, but of course you will not have a deep conversation over text. But still, we try to have some kind of overtake when on site. If you're going to the office we know that we'll see each other and we can have these conversations.”- Follower Karl about Matilda

Remote settings required arranged meetings and added communication effort to get to a similar level of SocA. Deeper conversations were avoided remotely and often important talks were transferred to onsite meetings.

Only one of the followers explained that for him it was easier to have deep conversations while on a remote setting.

“At work you always have people running around and asking you questions. ” & “More on remote when we have a one-to-one meeting, it's easier remote. Definitely. ” -Follower Nick

Nick explained that onsite there would always be a lot of people and noise that disturbed him from speaking about important matters.

4. Relationship Management (RM) and Idealized Influence (II) and Inspirational Motivation (IM)

Moderate Supported for RM → II : 6 out of 10 interviews

Strongly Supported for RM → IM: 9 out of 10 interviews

Leaders with high relationship management skills were described as reliable and capable in their fields of expertise. As we have seen, equal treatment between all followers was important for the followers, as in general it fosters respect and emotional affiliation in the leader-follower relationship. Leaders who made personalised guidance to followers for the sake of personal development were generating more trust on the part of followers. Adapting one's leadership or management approach to fit each and every follower is also a quality that is beneficial to the relationships:

"She said, OK we need to change something. So, then I really felt that she took the time to explain to me and that improved our relationship tremendously because in the beginning I didn't like her. I can tell you that." -Follower Jolene about Marion

The four leaders seemed to possess the necessary skills and take their relationship with followers fairly seriously.

Idealized Influence

Where we observed that followers admired their leaders when they were not too unattainable. Having some small flaws and recognising them even improved the leader-follower relationship.

"I got an e-mail that, ah shit. Oh, you messed up too. Like, yeah, OK, I messed up at my level as well, OK. We both messed up. Let's go back to work. It helps when you see someone having flaws than when you don't see the flaws of someone."– Marion (leader)

Successful RM from a leadership point of view was described as somebody that enables every single person from a team to grow and develop their capabilities. The leader is there to show his followers how to attain a given target with a team, while considering everyone's strengths and weaknesses.

"So, if she's able to be available without consequence, she drops everything (...) I was hyperventilating and she was for two hours on the phone trying to calm me down." -Follower Jolene about Marion

Loyalty and commitment from leaders was also seen as an important matter and inspired followers to mimic those behaviours.

Inspirational Motivation

We found out that maintaining a continuous contact with followers and communicating about up to day progress is necessary for managing expectations and followers' commitment. One-to-one talks were mentioned to be essential to discuss potential concerns and improvement for individual team members. We discovered that leaders that complimented their followers and celebrated progress had a positive effect in maintaining persistent work effort:

"I send out an e-mail to everyone to thank everyone and make sure they got energized to continue to proceed in the same way as they were. As everything was going well and we had that first milestone that we that kind of celebrated"- Elise (leader)

Leader Matilda's approach was to combine work with friendship. She said that it is required to also connect outside of work to establish a real relationship. *"But you need to be able to connect, outside of work[...] if you are only talking when you are working, you are never really actually establishing a relationship."* – Matilda (leader)

This way followers had less pressure on their shoulders and were less afraid to discuss difficult or personal problems with their manager. *"Now she's really a friend. So, she's one of the persons that I'm really getting along"-Follower Benoît about Matilda*

Supportive leaders were as much appreciated as leaders who were present and who took their followers defence in times of crises. *"But then, she stood up and she told them no. This person's vacation was already approved and you have to allow him to leave."* -Follower Mithresh about Elise

Finally, the role of a leader was described as a motivator.

"You have to believe in it and you also have to make sure that all the others in the team believe in it, and then together you can also make it. Sometimes you also have to jump"- Elise (leader)

Here, we explain that a leader is someone who knows how to persuade the whole team in believing in the feasibility of the set target.

Remote vs. onsite workspace:

In-person interactions were generally more favoured for developing RM. Some physical barriers could not be overcome, like after works or onsite celebrations. This constituted an issue for people on remote, who did not get as much recognition or celebration for their work as people on premise. Thus, employees on remote miss out on moments where you can easily bond with colleagues and leaders and create complicity. This inequality in treatment widens even more the gap between employees onsite and remote. *“Like for the “go life” that we did last year, I planned a dinner. But then of course, with the remoting that’s not possible”* –Elsie (leader)

Leaders attempted to create extra occasions where they could connect with people remote : *“Yeah, we were organizing, for example, teams, you know. What was it called? Musical Friday. So, we will nominate someone in the team and you’ll ask the person to choose one song that you would like to share with the rest of the team.”* -Follower Benoît

However, we have to conclude that those attempts did not always have the desired outcome:

“For me I couldn’t care less about that but I guess that gives a sense of connection to the team that’s working on remote.” -Follower Benoît

A lot of interviewees felt that people on remote were more task oriented, had a different tone and had less opportunities to interact on a personal level.

“Remotely it’s like “this and this needs to be done and then I reach out for help. So maybe on that end, yes could be different, but I wouldn’t blame her for it because working remotely it’s not easy.” -Follower Karl about Matilde

Not seeing the body language of the person that one is talking to or other emotional cues, makes it more difficult to feel or guess what the other one thinks and therefore pushes the importance of exchanges on functional aspects.

5. Empathy and Individualised Consideration (IC)

Strongly supported for Empathy → IC : 9 out of 10 interviews

Empathy was highlighted by participants as a critical trait of leadership. Being able to put oneself in someone else’s shoes and therefore being on the same emotional level, was seen as an essential leadership asset by the followers. Leaders who encouraged open dialogue, were

perceived as emotionally supportive and leaders who adapted to the personal needs and context of their followers, were seen as empathetic.

"And from a follower perspective, it means that my leader is really understanding what I'm facing, what I'm dealing with, he knows I'm hurt, right." – Jules (leader)

However, Marion's opinion was more balanced, since for her empathy, which relies on emotions, can also be quite misgiving:

"Empathy can be a very strong tool. It also can be very misgiving. Very tricky. If you use only empathy as evaluation technique. Most probably you will end up wrong.(...) . Example I might feel connected with you, I feel camaraderie with you. But for example, I don't have the same with Tom. That does not make you better than Tom or vice versa, but my emotions is saying that you are better than him because I connect better with you. My empathy is already biased towards you" -Marion (leader)

Remote vs. onsite workspace:

Empathy was perceived as easier to transmit and interpret onsite. Elise and Marion were cited as successfully showing empathy in a hybrid setting, reinforcing that consistency and awareness can maintain emotional connection across formats. Empathy was more easily triggered onsite than remote, due to the physical presence, that makes where emotional signs are more readable and relatable.

"It's a bit harder remotely because when you don't know the person, it's just a name on the computer. It's much harder to just be patient and be understanding and to put yourself in their shoes." -Follower Matilda

Leaders like Jules and Marion stood out for their openness and expressive style, which had an even stronger impact during face-to-face interactions. However, several participants noted that empathy could still be effectively communicated remotely, remarkably through considered and caring actions such as extended calls or follow-up messages.

6. Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale (SEIS)

The results from the emotional intelligence questionnaire are displayed in Figure 1. Schutte et al., (1998) indicated that the SEIS has been through a reliability test, that included a testing and retesting with a two-week gap in between, which concluded with fairly stable results, which indicate of the reliability and robustness of the SEIS.

Leader	SEIS Score
Matilda	110
Elise	118
Marion	132
Jules	142

Figure 1. SEIS Score for leaders

The overall mean score for the SEIS, conducted with the leaders, is about 124, with a standard deviation of about 13. This means that scores below 111 or above 137 are significantly low or high. Men have in general a lower score (mean =125) since women perform usually better (mean = 131) (Schutte et al., 1998).

Regarding these results a few points can be underlined:

First, Matilda and Jules are both significantly low or high. Since men tend to score lower than women in general, surprisingly Matilda, a woman, has the lowest score and Jules, a man, has the highest score.

In Matilda's case, we are not too surprised, since she and her followers mentioned her having difficulties to contain her emotions. She is aware of the fact and embraced her emotional transparency very well, explaining not wanting to change her attitude.

For Jules on the other hand, it was less expected that he would arrive at the top of the list. We have identified that even though he was quite aware of his own emotions, sometimes he needed some time alone to process intense or stressful situations at work. His follower Axel also explained that his mood and motivation on Monday morning was reasonably dependable by the outcome of the football game that he had played the day before. On top, Jules did the test the day before the birth of his first child. This future lifechanging event may have influenced his overall self-confidence and self-assessment too.

Marion for instance, who has been praised by her follower(s) for her strong SM and RM, was described by Jolene to be like a chameleon that can switch her emotions on and off from one moment to another and really adapt her leadership style according to each and every follower. Still Jules has a higher score.

Finally, Elise got a score that was more or less expected. Not very high, which can be linked to her functional and task-oriented personality, so less emotional. She mentioned to not always being aware of her own emotions, only recalling them in hindsight, which indicates a low self-awareness. Given the fact that EI skills have a cascading nature (see chapter 3), it would be reasonable to assume that Elise's lower SA makes it more challenging for her to develop high social awareness.

Chapter 6: Discussion

The above-presented findings aim to contribute to the existing literature by providing a better understanding of the relationship between EI and TFL in the context of hybrid work.

The qualitative approach provided new insights on how emotional competencies contribute to transformational leadership. Although certain findings from the study coincide with prior research, other unique data, especially from the hybrid work context data, has been unveiled and will be presented in this chapter.

1. Findings to Theoretical postulate

The results of this study reinforce the central argument of our theoretical postulate: EI is a foundational asset for transformational leadership. This research confirms part of the relevance of Goleman's (2001) Emotional Competence Framework, Beyers (2006) structural model (2006) and its intersection with Bass & Avolio's (1993) four "I"s of transformational leadership, especially for idealised influence, inspirational motivation and individualised consideration.

Self-awareness and Idealised Influence:

This research echoes Beyers (2006). Our results report a link between SA and II. However, this link is not strong enough to clearly state a meaningful relationship. Out of 10 interviews, only half of them supported this claim. The context of work, on site or remote, did not have a considerable impact on whether interviewees attributed a TFL behaviour to their leaders for SA. Moreover Görgens-Ekermans & Roux's (2021) for example did not find evidence of such a link.

Self-management, Idealised Influence, and Inspirational Motivation:

We obtained moderate support for the relationship between self-management, II and IM. This is surprising, since Görgens-Ekermans & Roux's (2021) find sizable correlations between both

SM and II as well as between SM and IM. We could attribute this to the fact that one of the interviewed leaders had difficulties to contain her emotions and thus not displaying the right attitude or emotional skills to test this relationship. Two of her followers were also interviewed, which already make 3 out of 10 interviews. If, for the reasons mentioned before, we would exclude those three interviews we obtain a much more interesting result. In this case, we would get a positive result, that would confirm both relationships (SM and II; SM and IM), likewise to the scientific literature.

We can highlight that even if it is always more complex to work remotely, it makes not a substantial difference for these relationships.

Social Awareness and Individualised Consideration:

The most compelling relationship drawn by the research is the one between social awareness and individualised consideration. All of the leaders interviewed highlighted the paramount importance of regular and genuine checking in. Followers also confirmed to feel sincerely considered as individuals whenever a leader displays IC behaviours. This is validated by previous research notably by Beyers (2006) and Görgens-Ekermans & Roux's (2021).

Out of the ten positive results in our interviews, 7 interviewees explained to experience this closeness only on an onsite context. This indicates the capital role to have on premise activities for effective IC.

Social Awareness and Inspirational Motivation:

In our results we found a noticeable relationship between SocA and IM. The context of work was not a determining factor, since both onsite and remote context generated positive results. This confirms the link previously established by the research of Naznin (2013).

Relationship Management and Idealised Influence :

Idealised influence behaviours displayed by leaders were just moderately attributed to leaders with relationship management skills in our findings. This validates the prior research of Görgens-Ekermans & Roux (2021) about the relationship between RM and II. No major importance is to be attributed to the work context.

Relationship Management and Inspirational Motivation:

We found out in our research that relationship management was vital for motivating, setting high goals and fostering a good team spirit. The sense of managing good relationship was

important onsite as well as online. The importance was more on the consistency of the relationship rather than the context. We saw that onsite allows to get to know someone better and faster and that it is essential especially at the beginning of a relationship. Leaders who fostered personal relationships, provided personal feedback and acknowledged progress were receiving increased dedication to work from their followers. This claim was not previously supported by academics.

Empathy and Individualised Consideration:

Empathy was a highly valued trait/feature among the followers. The type of leaders who were able to demonstrate understanding and support, were rated as having high individualised consideration levels.

This aligns well with other theoretical statements that empathy is critically important for displaying TFL behaviour of individualised consideration (Naznin, 2013; Görgens-Ekermans & Roux, 2021).

2. Hybrid Work Context

A novel contribution of this study is the exploration of how hybrid work arrangements influence the EI–TFL dynamic. Our findings suggest that while the foundational links between EI competencies and TFL behaviours persist, the effectiveness of these behaviours is mediated by the work context.

Onsite settings provide more opportunities for non-verbal cues, spontaneous check-ins, and the display of empathy and social awareness.

Remote settings require intentional, often more explicit, efforts from leaders to communicate emotional states and maintain relational closeness. Some EI competencies, such as social awareness and empathy, require adaptation to overcome the constraints of digital communication.

Notably, relationship management and the display of empathy are perceived as more challenging in remote contexts, where opportunities for informal interaction are limited. Leaders attempted to compensate with scheduled virtual activities and proactive communication, but the outcomes varied. This underscores the complexity of translating EI-based leadership into digital formats.

Thus, we decided to focus our research on three points that were seen as important in the academic literature (Sjögren Nyberg, 2023; Wiatr & Skowron-Mielnik, 2023). Indeed, we discovered in this research that trust, the relationship between leader and follower, and communication are three factors that play a central role in the hybrid work context. We found that SA and SocA are important to first generate recognition, which leads to trust afterward. We saw that RM helps build trust and a strong relationship between leader and follower, which seems quite obvious. We discovered that communication channels every interaction between leader and follower; this makes it a decisive point for leadership.

3. Limitation and Implications for Future Research

Despite the outcomes of this research, some limitations need to be considered. First of all, even though the theoretical background of EI and TFL is rich in information and validated scientific studies, hybrid work is still a new topic and only a few vague studies are available. It is only since the corona pandemic that hybrid work became globally accepted, which did not leave enough time to make substantial studies on the subject.

Secondly, the sample size and scope were limited. The research is based on ten interviews within a single organisation. This limits us from drawing conclusions about this specific organisation and internal work culture. Leaders in a different work setting may not find the results relevant for their specific work context.

Furthermore, interviews were all conducted in English, which for most of the candidates was not their mother tongue. We can expect that results were influenced due to language and communication limitations from the interviewees.

Moreover, the information relied on self-reporting and perception by both leaders and followers. This is a source of concern with respect to all sorts of subjective biases, which, of course, is inherent in EI and TFL measurement.

Studies conducted over a longer period could concentrate on the question of whether pursuing EI training would increase TFL behaviours. Such a study could also assess the effectiveness of EI in a hybrid work environment. Several SEIS tests at long intervals could check if, as indicated by Pirsoul et al. (2023), EI competencies are something that can be learned throughout adulthood, which, in the long run, would increase TFL behaviours.

Further studies could extend our research by utilizing larger and more representative samples to obtain greater generalizability and comparability. Candidates could come from more diverse companies, whether in terms of size, country, sector, or company culture in which they evolve.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This thesis provides an overall analysis of the relationship between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership behaviours in the context of hybrid work.

We find regardless the context, a constant link between EI competencies and TFL behaviours holds. However, the new hybrid work environment favours or disfavors the display of TFL behaviours depending on whether the work is conducted remotely or on-site.

This study indicates that the four emotional intelligence competencies are enablers for becoming a transformational leader. Moreover, it is important to note that only three of the four “I”s of TFL behaviours have a link with emotional intelligence competencies. Hence, the higher the emotional intelligence, the simpler and the more naturally a leader displays TFL behaviours. For instance, self-management and relationship management were both drivers for motivating subordinates. Additionally, social awareness and empathy were highly beneficial for displaying individualised consideration. High socially aware leaders are more understanding to followers’ issues, which is a source of encouragement in their work. The competency of managing relationships well is useful for motivating followers but we discovered a real gap in this relationship between on site and remote context. We find that building a follower-leader relationship is always better on site than in a remote context. Even afterwards for maintaining the relationship or discussing critical matters, in the vast majority of cases, being face to face is superior.

This all comes down to the point that transformational leadership is interesting for management in general. This type of leadership has been shown to increase work efficiency and well-being at work. It facilitates collaboration among employees and helps build sustainable and successful relationships.

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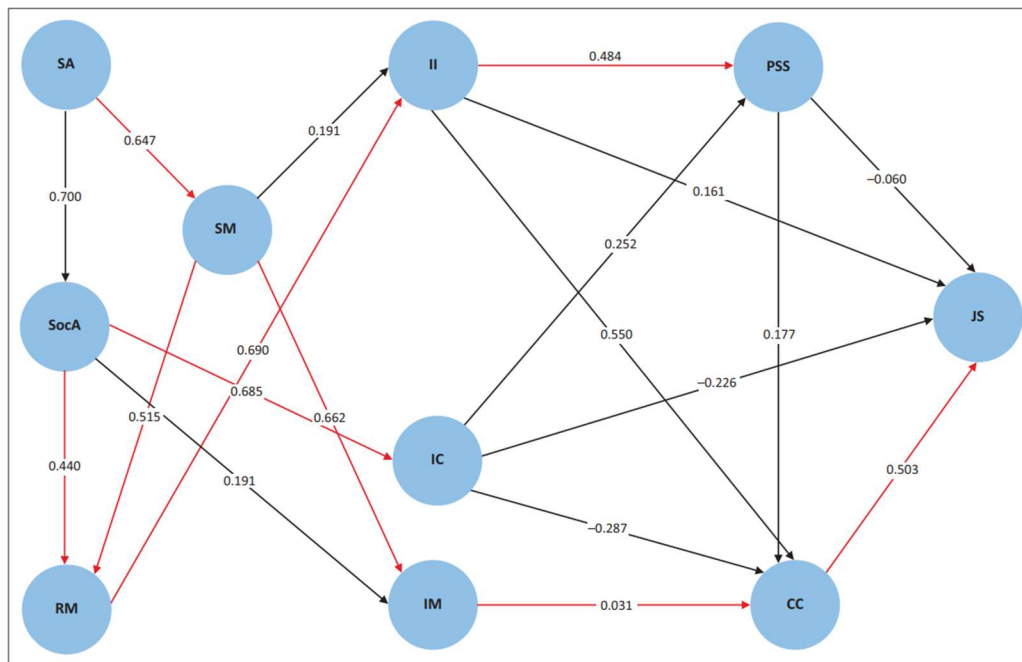
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Appendix:

1. The structural model from author Görgens-Ekermans & Roux



The structural model from author (Görgens-Ekermans & Roux, 2021)

2. Summary Table: EI–TFL Relationships and Interview Support

EI Skill	TFL Behaviour	Supported In Interviews	Remote vs. Onsite Influence
Self-Awareness	Idealised Influence	5 / 10	Stronger impact onsite due to visible emotional cues
Self-Management	Inspirational Motivation	5 / 10	Stronger challenge remotely due to miscommunication risks
Self-Management	Idealised Influence	5 / 10	Less consistent; transparency may hinder influence
Social Awareness	Individualised Consideration	10 / 10	Easier onsite; requires effort remotely
Social Awareness	Inspirational Motivation	7 / 10	Requires adaptability and proactive engagement remotely

EI Skill	TFL Behaviour	Supported Interviews	In Remote vs. Onsite Influence
Relationship Management	Idealised Influence	6 / 10	Informal trust-building easier onsite/remotely
Relationship Management	Inspirational Motivation	9 / 10	Informal trust-building easier onsite/remotely
Empathy	Individualised Consideration	9 / 10	Strong in all formats if expressed clearly and sincerely

3. Figure 1 : SEIS Score for leaders

Leader	SEIS Score
Matilda	110
Elise	118
Marion	132
Jules	142

4. Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT)

1st page



Educational
Resources

The Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT)

Emotional intelligence, interpersonal relationships, soft skills

What is this?

The Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) is a method of measuring general Emotional Intelligence (EI). It was created in 1998 by Dr. Nicola Schutte and her colleagues¹ and is widely used. This instrument is also known as the Assessing Emotions Scale.

Why is this important?

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to understand and to regulate emotions in oneself and in others.

High EI is associated with more optimism, greater impulse control, better mood, more empathic perspective taking, more closeness and warmth in relationships, more persistence under frustrating circumstances, and other similar outcomes.

In education, EI is increasingly regarded as plus in a teacher's qualifications, both as a self-management tool, a perception enhancement device and the basis for a more balanced rapport with young people and other adults.

What can I use it for?

This self-assessment tool will give you an overall rating of your Emotional Intelligence. Since EI can be improved with appropriate training – e.g. in empathy or in self-regulation of emotions – you may use it as a starting point to work on your EI and to check your progress.

This is a resource you should only use for your own personal and professional development. It is **not intended to be applied to your students**.

How can I use it?

The SSEIT includes a 33-item self-report using a 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) scale for responses.

You can complete the scale yourself – see the following pages. Keep in mind that your responses may be biased by knowing that the scale measures EI.

Once you have completed it, add the scores of the 33 items to obtain your total score.

How to read the results

The mean score across many large samples is about 124, with a standard deviation of about 13. So scores below 111 or above 137 are unusually low or high. Men and women perform differently in this test, with women scoring significantly higher (mean=131) than men (mean=125).

¹ Schutte, N. S., Malouff, J. M., Hall, L. E., Haggerty, D. J., Cooper, J. T., Golden, C. J., & Dornheim, L. (1998). Development and validation of a measure of emotional intelligence. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 25, 167–177.

The Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT)

Instructions: Indicate the extent to which each item applies to you using the scale in the five columns to the right of each item.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I know when to speak about my personal problems to others	1	2	3	4	5
2. When I am faced with obstacles, I remember times I faced similar obstacles and overcame them	1	2	3	4	5
3. I expect that I will do well on most things I try	1	2	3	4	5
4. Other people find it easy to confide in me	1	2	3	4	5
5. I find it hard to understand the non-verbal messages of other people*	5	4	3	2	1
6. Some of the major events of my life have led me to re-evaluate what is important and not important	1	2	3	4	5
7. When my mood changes, I see new possibilities	1	2	3	4	5
8. Emotions are one of the things that make my life worth living	1	2	3	4	5
9. I am aware of my emotions as I experience them	1	2	3	4	5
10. I expect good things to happen	1	2	3	4	5
11. I like to share my emotions with others	1	2	3	4	5
12. When I experience a positive emotion, I know how to make it last	1	2	3	4	5
13. I arrange events others enjoy	1	2	3	4	5
14. I seek out activities that make me happy	1	2	3	4	5
15. I am aware of the non-verbal messages I send to others	1	2	3	4	5
16. I present myself in a way that makes a good impression on others	1	2	3	4	5
17. When I am in a positive mood, solving problems is easy for me	1	2	3	4	5
18. By looking at their facial expressions, I recognize the emotions people are experiencing	1	2	3	4	5
19. I know why my emotions change	1	2	3	4	5
20. When I am in a positive mood, I am able to come up with new ideas	1	2	3	4	5
21. I have control over my emotions	1	2	3	4	5
22. I easily recognize my emotions as I experience them	1	2	3	4	5
23. I motivate myself by imagining a good outcome to tasks I take on	1	2	3	4	5
24. I compliment others when they have done something well	1	2	3	4	5
25. I am aware of the non-verbal messages other people send	1	2	3	4	5
26. When another person tells me about an important event in his or her life, I almost feel as though I have experienced this event myself	1	2	3	4	5
Subtotal p. 2					

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree
27. When I feel a change in emotions, I tend to come up with new ideas	1	2	3	4	5
28. When I am faced with a challenge, I give up because I believe I will fail*	5	4	3	2	1
29. I know what other people are feeling just by looking at them	1	2	3	4	5
30. I help other people feel better when they are down	1	2	3	4	5
31. I use good moods to help myself keep trying in the face of obstacles	1	2	3	4	5
32. I can tell how people are feeling by listening to the tone of their voice	1	2	3	4	5
33. It is difficult for me to understand why people feel the way they do*	5	4	3	2	1
Subtotal p. 3					
Total score					

Please note that items 5, 28, and 33 feature a reverse scale (it's not a mistake!), where "Strongly disagree" = 5 and "Strongly agree" = 1.

5. Interview Guide: Managers

Semi-directive interview guide:

- He can be anonymized if she/he wants in the transcript.
- Interview in English ask if native or not.
- Ask for permission for recording the interview.

Introduction

Welcome and thank you for participating in this interview. My name is Arthur, and I am currently doing my master thesis about EI and TFL Leadership in the context of hybrid work. Today we will be discussing your experiences and observations related to emotional intelligence competencies and transformational leadership behaviours.

Identification of the interview person:

- Surname:
- First name:
- Company:
- Position in the company:

Warm up questions:

- Can you describe your general approach to leadership?
 - o How have you adapted your leadership style to fit the hybrid work model?
- What changes have you noticed in your relationships with subordinates since shifting to a hybrid work environment?

Questions Based on Emotional Intelligence Competencies and Transformational Leadership Behaviours

Self-Awareness (SA)

- How would you describe your level of self-awareness?
- How does your self-awareness influence your interactions with your team members?
- Can you share a situation where your self-awareness helped in motivating your team member?

Self-Management (SM)

- How do you perceive the importance of self-management in leadership?
- Can you describe a situation where self-management was crucial in dealing with a subordinate?
- How does self-management help you in motivating your team or aligning them with your vision?

Social Awareness (SocA)

- How much of other colleagues' emotional state and mood swings do you perceive?
 - o How do you approach communicating about this matter to individual subordinate?
- Is your perception or approach to this matter different in a remote context compared to an in-office setting?
- Can you share an example of how understanding and managing others' emotions has helped you encourage or motivate your employee better?

Relationship Management (RM)

- How do you build and maintain effective relationships with your team in a hybrid work setting?
 - o How has hybrid work influenced your role as a leader and your relationships with employees?
- Can you describe how you handle conflicts and provide mentorship in a hybrid work model?
- Has the distance affected your ability to influence and coach your team? Can you provide any examples?

Empathy

- How much is empathy playing a role in your leadership style?
- Can you share any experiences?

Closing

- Is there anything else you would like to add regarding your approach to leadership in a hybrid work environment?

Last word

Thank the interviewee for their valuable time and contribution to the success of the thesis.

6. Interview Guide: Subordinate/Follower

Semi-directive interview guide:

- He can be anonymized if she/he wants in the transcript.
- Interview in English ask if native or not.
- Ask for permission for recording the interview.

Introduction

Welcome and thank you for participating in this interview. My name is Arthur, and I am currently doing my master thesis about EI and TFL Leadership in the context of hybrid work. Today we will be discussing your experiences and observations related to your leader in the workplace. We will concentrate particularly on subject of emotional intelligence competencies and transformational leadership behaviours.

Identification of the interview person:

- Leader of the person:

-Surname:

-First name:

-Company:

-Position in the company:

Warm up questions:

- How would you describe the leadership approach of your leader/mentor?
- How has your leader/mentor adapted their leadership style to fit the hybrid work environment?
- What significant changes have you observed in your relationship with your leader/mentor since shifting to a hybrid work environment?

Questions Based on Emotional Intelligence Competencies and Transformational Leadership Behaviours

Self-Awareness (SA)

- How would you describe your leader/mentor's level of self-awareness?
- How does their self-awareness influence your interactions with them and other team members?
- Can you provide examples of how their self-awareness has contributed to motivating and inspiring you and other team members?

Self-Management (SM)

- How well do you estimate that your leader/mentor can manage himself?
 - o Can you describe a stressful situation your leader/mentor had to deal with? What was his/her behaviour?
 - o Was this situation handled on-site or online?
- How does seeing your leader/mentor manage themselves motivate you or make you want to follow his/her vision (or the company's vision)?

Social Awareness (SocA)

- How does your leader/mentor show that he/she perceives that you have different emotional state or changes in your mood?
 - o How does this differ in a remote context compared to an in-office setting?
- How much do you feel considered when he/she acknowledges your emotional status?
- How does recognizing your emotional status affect your motivation?

Relationship Management (RM)

- How is your relationship with your leader/ mentor? Is it different on site or in a remote context?
 - o How do you perceive your leader? Choose a photo:



- How would you describe your relationship with your leader/mentor? Is it different on-site compared to a remote context?
- How does your leader/mentor set an example for you? Do you want to follow in his/her footsteps?
- How does your leader/mentor motivate you?

Empathy

- How does your leader/mentor show care or support when you are faced with challenges?
- Can you share an example of how your leader/mentor has shown individual interest to help or encourage you in a difficult situation?

Closing

- Is there anything else you would like to add regarding your leader/ mentor?

Last word

Thank the interviewee for their valuable time and contribution to the success of the thesis.

Credits for photo:

-Friend

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/cheerful-man-drinking-beer-and-talking-with-friend-7084533/>

-Boss

<https://pixabay.com/photos/leader-leadership-manager-team-2206099/>

-Manipulative

<https://pixabay.com/vectors/puppet-corporate-business-dictator-6214700/>

-Boss normal

<https://pixabay.com/vectors/businessman-workplace-office-boss-6593090/>

-Spying guy:

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/photography-of-person-peeking-906018/>