



Systematic Review of Leadership with Emotional Intelligence in Educational Paradigm

Surekha Lanka^{1*}

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Abstract: Background: This paper investigates leadership and emotional intelligence convergence within educational institutions. Leadership within any organization requires more than just technical expertise and strategic thinking. Addressing the gap in understanding how EI influences leadership styles and outcomes in this complex setting, this review integrates existing compositions to research the relationship between EI and various facets of academic leadership. **Purpose:** The objective is to explore leadership and the emotional intelligence of the leaders. **Methodology:** The researcher used qualitative analysis by using a systematic review of the literature. Employing a systematic literature review methodology encompassing both empirical studies and case studies, this work analyses the key EI competencies—self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills—and their impact on interactions with diverse stakeholders (faculty, staff, and students), institutional performance, and overall organizational climate. **Results:** This study points out the significance of emotional intelligence in modifying leadership, fostering a cooperative mindset, nurturing the growth of students, and empowering lifelong learners in educational institutions. **Conclusion:** The significance implications of these findings for leaders, administrators, and top management are significant, as they can use this knowledge to enhance their leadership practices and improve the overall performance of their institutions. **Recommendations:** Educational leaders and administrators are encouraged to integrate emotional intelligence competency development into leadership training programs, and institutions are encouraged to incorporate EI assessment into leadership selection and evaluation processes. Future research should pursue quantitative and longitudinal designs to test the causal pathways this review identifies.

Keywords: Affective Leadership Competencies; School Administration; Organizational Climate; Literature Synthesis; SDG 4 (Quality Education).

مراجعة منهجية للقيادة والذكاء العاطفي في النموذج التعليمي

سوريخا لانكا^{1*}

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المخلص: الخلفية: تبحث هذه الورقة في تقارب القيادة والذكاء العاطفي داخل المؤسسات التعليمية. تتطلب القيادة داخل أي منظمة أكثر من مجرد الخبرة الفنية والتفكير الاستراتيجي. ومن خلال معالجة الفجوة في فهم كيفية تأثير الذكاء العاطفي في أنماط القيادة ونتائجها في هذا السياق المعقد، تدمج هذه المراجعة الأدبيات القائمة لدراسة العلاقة بين الذكاء العاطفي والجوانب المختلفة للقيادة الأكاديمية. الهدف: يتمثل الهدف في استكشاف القيادة والذكاء العاطفي لدى القادة. المنهجية: استخدم الباحث التحليل النوعي من خلال المراجعة المنهجية للأدبيات. وباستخدام منهجية المراجعة المنهجية للأدبيات التي تشمل الدراسات التجريبية ودراسات الحالة، تحلل هذه الدراسة كفاءات الذكاء العاطفي الأساسية، وهي الوعي الذاتي، والتنظيم الذاتي، والدافعية، والتعاطف، والمهارات الاجتماعية، وتأثيرها في التفاعلات مع أصحاب المصلحة المتنوعين، وهم أعضاء هيئة التدريس والموظفون والطلاب، وكذلك في الأداء المؤسسي والمناخ التنظيمي العام. النتائج: تشير هذه الدراسة إلى أهمية الذكاء العاطفي في تعديل القيادة، وتعزيز العقلية التعاونية، ورعاية نمو الطلاب، وتمكين المتعلمين مدى الحياة في المؤسسات التعليمية. الاستنتاج: إن الآثار المهمة لهذه النتائج بالنسبة للقيادة والإداريين والإدارة العليا كبيرة، إذ يمكنهم استخدام هذه المعرفة لتعزيز ممارساتهم القيادية وتحسين الأداء العام لمؤسساتهم. التوصيات: يُشجّع قادة المؤسسات التعليمية والإداريون على دمج تطوير كفاءات الذكاء العاطفي في برامج تدريب القيادة، كما تُشجّع المؤسسات على إدراج تقييم الذكاء العاطفي ضمن عمليات اختيار القادة وتقييمهم. وينبغي أن تعتمد الأبحاث المستقبلية تصاميم كمية وطولية لاختبار المسارات السببية التي حددها هذا المراجعة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: كفاءات القيادة العاطفية؛ الإدارة المدرسية؛ المناخ التنظيمي؛ التوليف الأدبي؛ الهدف الرابع من أهداف التنمية المستدامة (التعليم الجيد).

1 Educational Administration and Leadership Program, Graduate School, Stamford International University, Building 2, Rama9 Campus, 16-Motor Highway, Prawet, Bangkok, Thailand.

* Corresponding author: surekha.lanka@stamford.edu

ORCID id: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2829-0049>

1 برنامج الإدارة والقيادة التربوية، كلية الدراسات العليا، جامعة ستامفورد الدولية، المبنى 2، حرم رام 9، طريق 16-موتورواي، براويت، بانكوك، تايلاند.

* الباحث المراسل: surekha.lanka@stamford.edu

Introduction

The development of individuals and societies depends greatly on educational institutions during the current twenty-first century. Rapid globalization, changing student profiles, increased responsibilities regarding inclusivity, and the need for enhanced accountability and technological innovation have brought about these complexities. In this context, the nature of leadership is far more complex. Today's leaders need to understand these processes and complexities in detail.

Modern educational leadership requires a suite of essential skills rather than a reliance on specific styles. Drawing on Katz's model, effective leaders must integrate technical skills (expertise and proficiency in their domain), human skills (the ability to work collaboratively, communicate, and demonstrate empathy), and conceptual skills (the capacity for strategic vision and abstract thinking) (Katz, 1955)

Robert Katz's (1955) seminal work laid out three core leadership skills: technical, conceptual, and human skills. Technical skill refers to expertise in specialized activities; conceptual skill is the capacity for strategic thinking and abstract reasoning. Most relevant to educational leadership is human skills, the ability to work effectively with people, build trust, communicate, and foster collaboration. Human skills are essential for leaders navigating the complex interpersonal dynamics of faculties, staff, students, and community stakeholders. In educational settings, these interpersonal competencies closely align with the key domains of emotional intelligence, including empathy, communication, and conflict resolution, enabling leaders to cultivate positive climates where stakeholders thrive.

Among these, human skills are particularly crucial in educational settings, where the well-being and development of diverse stakeholders

are central. Emotional intelligence augments this skill by enabling leaders to manage their own emotions and foster positive emotional climates for staff and students.

Approaches to educational leadership have undergone a dramatic transformation owing to developments in the globalized knowledge economy. (Barker & Rees, 2020) highlights the emerging trend of shifting from one-size-fits-all leadership ideas to an educational leadership focus based on specific expertise. In addition, technological advancement cannot be overlooked in education, as it has altered teaching and learning processes while bringing new educational opportunities and challenges for leadership. (Fios et al., 2024) examine the importance of educational leadership in developing and adopting new technologies for effective teaching and learning in the contemporary world. This requires leaders who are open-minded, innovative, and willing to apply modern technology for constructive learning.

Although the rapidly expanding domains of machine learning, artificial intelligence and data-driven methodologies continue to define the direction of the next steps in educational leadership over the next few years, in this particular review, the focus will be on the emotional intelligence frameworks in the leadership context. Nonetheless, the rapidly growing field of affective computing, as the process of developing systems that engage with the process of detecting, interpreting and responding to human affective states (Picard, 1997), merits serious consideration, as it deals directly with the emotional competencies that are the building blocks of transformational leadership. The consequent implications of affective AI for the praxis of leadership and the concomitant ethical quandaries will be examined in successive sections in this manuscript.

While machine learning, artificial intelligence, and data-informed practices are playing a bigger role in educational leadership, this review looks specifically at emotional intelligence frameworks in schools. Recent progress in AI-based emotion recognition systems offers new directions for research. As an example, (Taru et al., 2025) used AI CNN (convolutional neural networks) to create a real-time emotion recognition system that can identify the emotions of a person, like happiness, sadness, anger, and fear, in an educational setting. (Rastogi et al., 2025) also proposed a model that

Integrates affective computing with instructional planning to create learning environments that are sensitive to students' emotional states. More generally, a systematic review of the literature on affective computing (Vistorte et al., 2024) showed that, by implementing AI-driven strategies such as machine learning, facial recognition, and intelligent tutoring systems, it is possible to capture and analyze the emotional state of students during the learning process in order to improve pedagogical devices and realize adaptive learning environments. These developments have direct implications for transformational leadership in education, which are explored in detail in a further section of this paper.

Lastly, the emerging focus on social-emotional learning and well-being adds a further dimension to the complexity of educational leadership. The implications of EI leadership in the education sector are discussed by (Mendelson & Stabile, 2019; Pellitteri, 2022). They posit that EI is neither necessary nor sufficient; it cannot do the work of good leadership, but it can ensure that leaders work effectively with diverse groups of stakeholders to create "positive academic climates", promoting cooperation and encouraging the emotional well-being of employees and

students. This emphasizes that compassionate and emotionally intelligent leaders can build strong relationships with distinct stakeholders.

The underexplored role of Emotional Intelligence (EI) in educational leadership is a widely acknowledged gap in our understanding of the critical role of EI in shaping leadership practices and outcomes in educational institutions. While there is an increasing body of research on EI in various organizational contexts, the application and impact within educational settings are underexplored. Most studies have looked at different components of EI or leadership styles without offering a holistic and structured analysis of the complex interrelationship between EI and educational leadership.

Research question

Which leadership skills are most desirable and currently being adopted in educational settings?

Methodology

This research employed a qualitative systematic review design to examine leadership and emotional intelligence within educational institutions. No empirical application or original intervention was developed or tested. Peer-reviewed articles and empirical studies published between 2010 and 2024 were identified using databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and Google Scholar, and selected based on relevance to the research questions, inclusion of leadership and emotional intelligence constructs, and methodological rigor.

The review employed a thematic analysis method to analyze the qualitative data. Specifically, the thematic analysis involved systematically analyzing the findings of the studies included in this review, identifying ideas, themes, or patterns across the review to represent them as larger themes of educational leadership and emotional intelligence. This

enabled a clear and rigorous synthesis of qualitative evidence that was transparent and consistent about the way themes or patterns were identified and synthesized. The overall procedure was consistent with established guidelines for thematic synthesis in qualitative research.

Search strategy, inclusion and exclusion criteria

The current investigation involved an extensive systematic search of four electronic bibliographic databases which included Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and Google Scholar in order to find peer-reviewed literature that were at the intersection of emotional intelligence, leadership, and education. The search string contained both controlled vocabulary and free text terms such as this: ("emotional intelligence" OR "EI") AND ("transformational leadership" OR "school leadership") AND (school* OR university* OR "educational institution.") Only English language, peer reviewed journal articles published between 2010 to 2025 were retained.

Studies were considered eligible if they satisfied the following conditions: (a) examined emotional intelligence and leadership in educational institutions; (b) reported empirical results - quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods - or systematic reviews of; (c) they explicitly linked EI constructs with leadership or with leadership

outcomes; and (d) they were published in peer reviewed journal papers in English language within the given time frame. Studies were excluded if they met one (or all) of the following: there was a focus on non-educational organizations; there was a focus on EI or leadership exclusively without consideration of their interrelationship; they were a conceptual paper, opinion piece, thesis, conference abstract or book chapter and there wasn't sufficient methodological detail to determine the quality of the study.

The systematic search line across all Scopus, Web of science, ERIC and Google Scholar databases identified 380 records. After eliminating the duplicates (74 duplicates), 306 unique records were forwarded to the title and abstract screening stage. During this process of critical filtering, 224 records were removed for inability to meet the predetermined inclusion criteria. As a result, 82 articles in full text were retrieved for detailed eligibility assessment. 65 of these were excluded on the grounds of conceptual mismatch, lack of educational context, lack of clear relation to EI leadership or lack of methodological rigor. In the end, 17 studies were considered appropriate for inclusion into the qualitative synthesis. The whole selection process was carried out according to the PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Haddaway et al., 2022), and it is visually summarized following Figure 1.

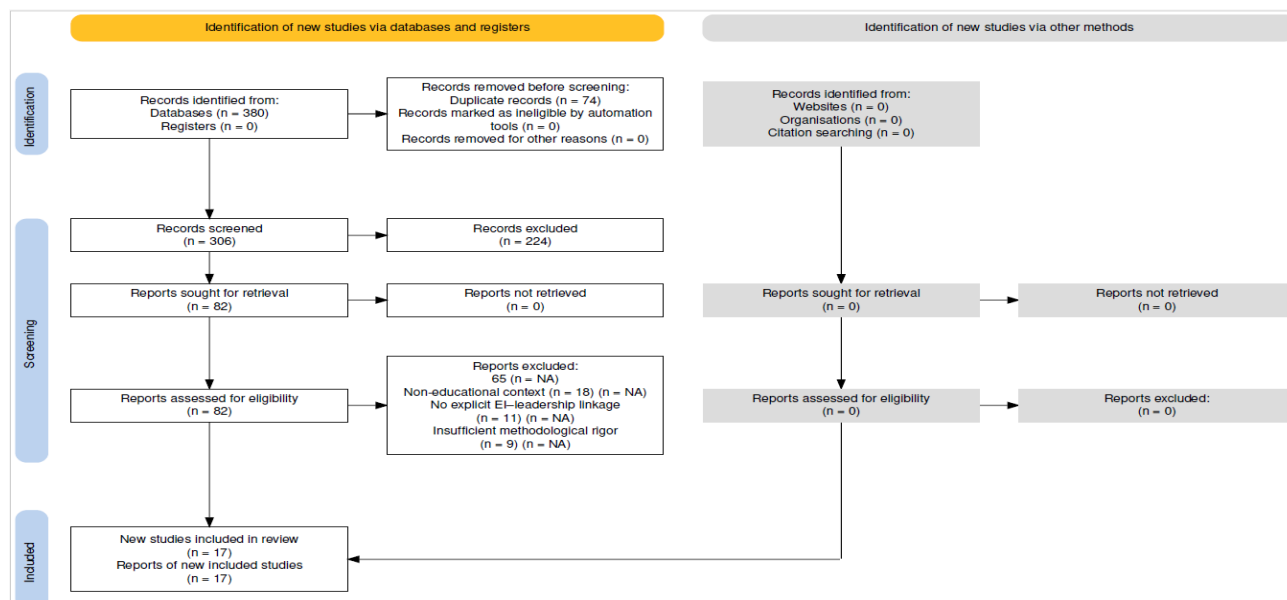


Figure (1): PRISMA 2020 flow diagram of the study selection process.

The framework of the Emotional Intelligence Model

The leader of any educational institution is not only responsible for its functioning, but it is also known that leadership makes all the difference in the organization's culture, performance, and outcome. Thus, emotional intelligence (EI), the capacity to identify, comprehend, and regulate personal and others' emotions, has become a significant predictor of effective leadership (Goleman, 1995).

Salovey and Mayer first introduced the concept of emotional intelligence (EI) in a 1990

academic article, when Salovey was at Yale and Mayer was at the University of New Hampshire (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Later, Harvard University played an important role in developing and sharing research and educational programs about EI, especially in leadership and organizational settings.

The framework of this study, which extends to the intersection between leadership and EI in education, is determined by reviewing existing literature and theories that link leadership and EI.

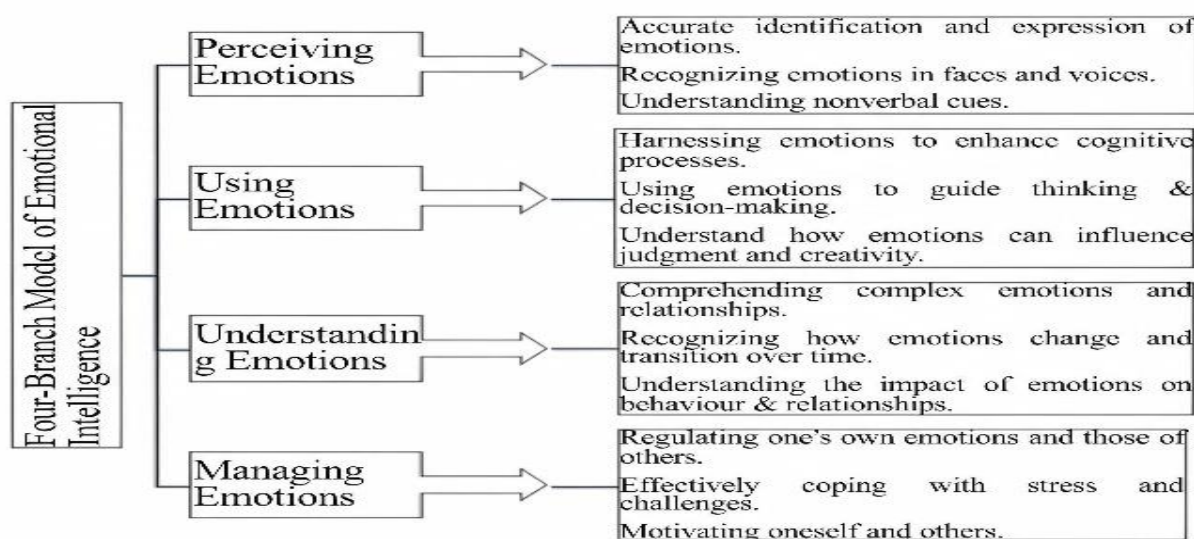


Figure (2): Framework of Four-Branch Model of EI.

This review is based on the Four-Branch Model of Emotional Intelligence, which identifies four essential abilities of Emotional Intelligence, including perceiving emotions, using emotions, understanding emotions, and managing emotions. It presents a holistic view of interpreting how EI is expressed in leadership behaviors and practices. Furthermore, the review will use transformational leadership theory, focusing on leaders' ability to inspire, motivate, and cultivate their followers through intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence.

As per the above diagram, the core concepts of the Four-Branch Model of EI have been clearly stated in the framework. The first key aspect, "Perceiving Emotions," refers to the ability to accurately identify and express self and other's emotions (Mayer et al., 2016). The second aspect, "Using Emotions," involves the capacity to use emotions to facilitate thinking, decision-making, and performance (Brackett et al., 2011). The third branch, "Understanding Emotions," relates to the competency to comprehend emotional information, how emotions combine and progress, and the ability to reason about emotions (MacCann et al., 2020). The fourth and final aspect, "Managing Emotions," encompasses the skill to regulate one's emotions and those of others to promote personal growth and positive outcomes (Joseph & Newman, 2010).

Leadership Theory in the Education Institutions

Bernard Bass defines four components of transformational leadership: intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence. These components help leaders stimulate followers, foster creativity, and build a positive organizational environment (Bass, 1985). However, effective educational

leadership is more than inspiration and motivation. Robert Katz said leadership consists of three essential skills needed in organizations: human, technical, and conceptual skills. Human skills involve the ability to work alongside, communicate with, and have empathy and consideration for others—qualities needed to establish trust and enable productive working relationships in educational environments (Katz, 1955).

Human skills are essential in academic settings where stakeholders are likely to interact and where positive relationships are an essential condition for individual and organizational success. Emotional intelligence also strengthens human skill by allowing leaders to attend to and respond to the needs of others, as well as to create a supportive environment. When Bass's transformational leadership framework is integrated with Katz's human skills framework, the educational leadership literature provides a comprehensive understanding of how leaders support team empowerment, enhance engagement, and develop their organizations.

The leadership of transformational theory, which is based on the leader's ability to inspire, motivate, and develop their followers through intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence, is consistent with the EI framework. Transformational leaders were described as able to define a clear and inspiring vision, exhibit the right behavior, get people to accept the group's goals, give individual attention, and stimulate followers with ideas. These core competencies can be effectively demonstrated by timely transformational leaders with high EI who can positively contribute to their educational institutions.

Leaders with inspirational motivation will convey specific goals to their followers while inspiring them with enthusiasm to pursue high

performance (Harms & Credé, 2010). Intellectually stimulating leaders spark new perspectives while inspiring original thinking and helping solve complex challenges. Through visionary leadership, education benefits from a dynamic teaching environment that promotes innovative curricula and

instructive methods (Nielsen & Daniels, 2016). Leadership grounded on individual consideration understands distinct needs and individual abilities and objectives to help their followers achieve career success and personal advancement (Banks et al., 2016)

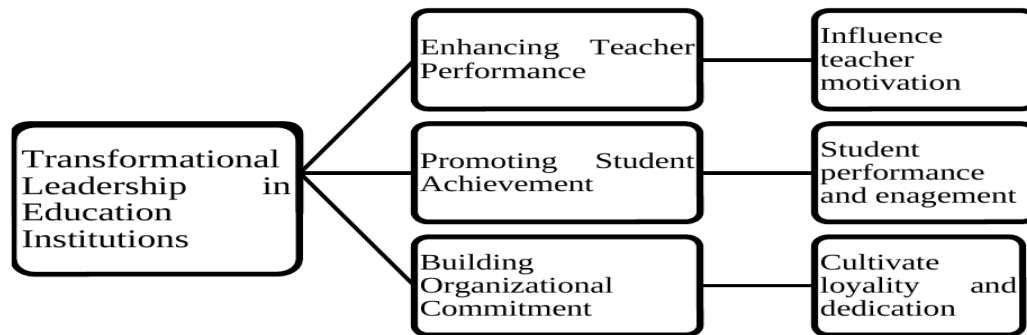


Figure (3): Conceptual theory model of Transformation Leadership in Education institutions

The diagram illustrates that effective leaders in educational institutions with high EI will likely display transformational leadership behaviors. Leaders with high EI can perceive and understand their own emotions and those of their followers.

Enhancing Teacher Performance: Transformational leadership styles positively affect teacher drive, job contentment, and educational achievements in the classroom. (Menon & Ioannou, 2016) **Promoting Student Achievement:** Transformational leaders create environments that boost student performance and engagement through excellence-driven leadership and collaborative practice. (Leithwood & Sun, 2012) **Building Organizational Commitment:** Through goal alignment, transformational leaders build strong company loyalty while inspiring dedicated employee work. (Alamir et al., 2019).

Relationship between EI and Transformational leadership

The existing literature suggests that EI and transformational leadership are closely related,

with EI being a key facet of effective transformational leadership (Chandra, 2023; Pellitteri, 2022; Yusof et al., 2014). Leaders high in EI are more likely to display the behaviors associated with transformational leadership. For instance, leaders who can regulate their own and others' emotions (a core EI competency) are better able to inspire and motivate their followers. Similarly, leaders who can comprehend emotional information are more adept at providing individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation to their followers. Additionally, leaders with EI have the capacity to cultivate a supportive organizational climate characterized by strong interpersonal relationships, empathy, and a shared sense of emotional well-being among followers (Chandra, 2023; Jansen et al., 2014; Pellitteri, 2022)

Therefore, the framework of this systematic review integrates the Four-Branch Model of EI and Transformational Leadership Theory to delineate how emotional intelligence influences and shapes leadership effectiveness in educational institutions. The intersection of

these two frameworks is where the present systematic review lies.

Numerous studies in educational settings have further reinforced this notion, consistently showing that school principals and other educational leaders with higher levels of emotional intelligence are more successful in navigating the complex emotional dynamics that are characteristic of educational environments, such as fostering positive teacher-student relationships, promoting a culture of trust and collaboration, and effectively managing conflicts and crises that may arise in the school community (Coronado-Maldonado & Benítez-Márquez, 2023; Drigas & Papoutsi, 2019; Pellitteri, 2022; Rao, 2006).

Linking EI and Leadership

Transformational leadership mediates the connection between EI and outcomes at the organizational, team, and self-levels. Leadership through Emotional Intelligence enables the better delivery of inspiration and creative stimulus, alongside individual support, which results in an improved organizational

climate, enhanced teacher commitment, and improved student achievement.

Transformational leadership and emotional intelligence are intertwined, with EI being a cornerstone of effective transformational leadership, especially in education. (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Chandra, 2023; Ireland, 2008)

Consistent research studies show that educational leaders with superior EI competencies excel in managing the complex emotional realities present in their educational establishments. Educational leaders should create positive relationships, teach trust, and establish communication networks to resolve conflicts and emergencies among their school community members (Hauserman et al., 2013). Unlike transactional leadership, transformational leadership elevates team members and followers to higher performance levels through the leader-follower relationship. (Ireland, 2008) The core competencies of EI are effectively demonstrated by transformational leaders with high EI, contributing positively to their educational institutions. (Bass & Riggio, 2006)

Table (1): Relationship for Enhancing Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Transformational Leadership (TL) in Education.

Emotional Intelligence Branch	Transformational Leadership Goal	Relationship/Impact	Skills/Actions Required	Author
Perceiving Emotions	Enhancing Teacher Performance	Recognizing emotions in teachers helps leaders detect stress, frustration, or motivation levels, enabling timely intervention and support.	Active listening, observing nonverbal cues, and providing empathetic feedback.	(Kotsou et al., 2019)
	Promoting Student Achievement	Accurately identifying students' emotions (e.g., anxiety or enthusiasm) allows leaders to guide teachers in adjusting methods to address student needs.	Observing classroom dynamics, emotional awareness, and offering actionable suggestions.	(Brackett et al., 2019)
Using Emotions	Enhancing Teacher Performance	Leaders can harness positive emotions to inspire and energize teachers, driving better classroom practices and overall performance.	Motivating through narration, leveraging optimism, and using passion to influence actions.	(Liu & Boyatzis, 2021)

Emotional Intelligence Branch	Transformational Leadership Goal	Relationship/Impact	Skills/Actions Required	Author
	Promoting Student Achievement	Using emotions strategically helps create a motivating and stimulating environment where students are encouraged to think creatively and achieve academic goals.	Companies should establish emotionally connected encounters while building a positive workplace culture, and make empathetic decisions.	(Brackett et al., 2011)
Understanding Emotions	Building Organizational Commitment	Leaders who understand emotional transitions among staff can build trust and a sense of belonging, promoting long-term commitment to the organization's vision.	Emotional insight, providing context-specific solutions, and showing genuine concern for personal well-being.	(Miao et al., 2017)
	Enhancing Teacher Performance	By understanding how emotions influence teacher behaviors, leaders can tailor feedback and professional development to improve performance.	Emotional insight, providing context-specific solutions, and showing genuine concern for personal well-being.	(Brackett et al., 2019)
Managing Emotions	Promoting Student Achievement	Emotional management allows leaders to establish an example of resilience, motivating teachers to keep students engaged through difficult times.	Demonstrating resilience, modeling emotional balance, and motivating adaptive strategies for students and teachers.	(Taylor et al., 2017)
	Building Organizational Commitment	Managers of emotional responses create dedicated followership through steady leadership methods that provide protection to their team members.	Emotional consistency, open communication, and motivational leadership.	(Antonakis et al., 2009)

Emotional Intelligence (EI) plays a crucial role in Transformational Leadership (TL) by enhancing teacher performance, student achievement, and organizational commitment. Perceiving emotions allows leaders to recognize stress or disengagement, ensuring timely intervention and support (Brackett et al., 2019; Kotsou et al., 2019). Using emotions helps leaders inspire and energize teachers, fostering classroom motivation and creativity (Brackett et al., 2011; Liu & Boyatzis, 2021). Understanding emotions strengthens trust and

commitment, enabling personalized support for teachers facing challenges (Brackett et al., 2019; Miao et al., 2017). Managing emotions ensures stability in high-pressure situations, creating a resilient work environment (Gross & Muñoz, 1995; Taylor et al., 2017). Emotionally intelligent leaders promote teacher engagement and student success through proactive strategies. Schools benefit from leaders who model emotional balance and motivation in dynamic environments. Open communication and emotional consistency build strong,

committed educational communities (Antonakis et al., 2009). Organizations experience enhanced effectiveness from EI training because it fosters better teacher well-being, higher student performance, and institutional stability.

Although most research demonstrates positive links between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership outcomes including teacher performance, student achievement, and organizational commitment, there are significant limitations to the field of study. Existing reviews, as well as empirical, point to some conceptual overlap between EI and other personality or leadership constructs and question whether EI can provide unique explanatory power from that offered by existing variables. The majority of cross sectional, self-report survey designs also mean that it is hard to identify whether EI is the driver of transformational behaviors or whether experiences of leadership enhance EI competencies. Furthermore, minor convenience samples, the underuse of objective or multi-Source EI measures of results and an under-representation of non-Western and vocational education contexts are constraining the generalizability of present results. Overall, the literature suggests the need for more rigorous and context-specific research designs, which can explain direction and strength of the EI-leadership relationship.

Affective AI, Transformational Leadership, and Ethical Challenges

Affective artificial intelligence, or Affective AI as it is more commonly called, refers to a range of technologies that have been designed to detect, interpret and react to human affective states through affective cues such as facial micro expressions, vocal prosody, physiological biomarkers, and textual sentiment (Picard, 1997). Within education contexts, such tools provide school leaders with

real-time diagnostics of the emotional environment in the classroom in order to understand patterns of engagement, frustration or disengagement. This capability thus enhances those leadership modalities that rely on emotional intelligence and transformational praxis (Vistorte et al., 2024). For example, dashboards sensitive to affective measures and adaptive learning tools can support the personal development of intellectual stimulation by allowing principals and teachers to recognize when specific groups of pupils or staff may require additional support, encouragement or good challenge.

Concurrently, bringing Affective AI into the realm of leadership practice creates significant and serious ethical and professional quandaries. Emotion-recognition systems rely on the collection and processing of sensitive biometric or behavioral data, posing significant privacy concerns, lack of knowledge about the collection of biometric data and the question of informed consent, as well as the network of surveillance that may become established in the school environment (Sadegh-Zadeh et al., 2026). Moreover, the numerous affective detection models are trained using limited data sets, which could result in the false reading of expressions and behaviors of learners from diverse cultural backgrounds, which may in turn introduce bias in leadership decisions. (Vistorte et al., 2024). Recent regulatory developments - like the European Union's Artificial Intelligence Act, which restricts the use of emotion-inference systems in the educational sector or forbids their use altogether - remind us of the need for leaders to have thoughtful and strong ethical vigilance (Smuha, 2025). Accordingly, transformational leaders need to have not only enhanced emotional intelligence but also a full set of governance protocols and inclusive stakeholder dialogue to ensure that the use of Affective AI strengthens, rather than weakens, trust, dignity

and the collective leadership of purpose in schools (Adams & Thompson, 2025; Alshamsi, 2025).

Research Gaps and Future Directions

The current review outlines several methodological gaps that limit our modern comprehension of the role of emotional intelligence in transformational leadership in the educational setting. To begin with, the empirical corpus is highly dominated with cross sectional, self-reporting studies thus making it difficult to draw any hard causal conclusion as to the directional relationship between EI and leadership outcomes. Intervention studies that track changes in EI and leadership behaviors over time are also the most frequently used types of longitudinal or experimental designs, which are significantly underrepresented in educational studies. Second, there is an endemic dependence on global or trait-based instruments of EI in the field, and no substantive boundary delineation between divergent EI typologies or types of measurement. This conceptual uncertainty hinders comparing findings across studies and makes it more difficult to synthesize evidence. This, therefore, creates an immediate need to conduct research that cautiously discriminates, validates, and harmonizes ability-based, trait, and mixed EI measures with leadership constructs.

Third, the current literature is still disproportionately rooted in contexts of higher education and the conventional school, with relatively little attention given to less explored educational settings including vocational settings, rural schools, and informal or community-based educational settings. Future inquiries should use more context specific methodologies that account systematically for institutional typology, cultural environment and system-level constraints. Fourth, the majority of studies isolate the emotional

intelligence of leaders, so that the workings of EI in multilayered relationships, as in leader-educator-learner relationships (for example) and their interactions within a broader framework of organizational systems, digital change, and policy frameworks, are neglected. Finally, there are a few investigations that have combined the practice of emotional intelligence with the more speculative technological progress such as affective artificial intelligence and data-driven decision-making in school. The deeper research possibilities for exploring the role that EI informed leadership can play in guiding the ethical and effective integration of these technologies, as well as reasons for ensuring the trust and well-being of the educational community, are both timely and enduring.

Practical challenges for educational leaders

Although there are definite advantages of emotional intelligence and transformational leadership from a theoretical perspective, educational leaders often experience significant barriers in their efforts to put these models into practice. Resistance to organizational change is a pervasive phenomenon in schools that are used to hierarchical organizational leadership structures, or to short-lived reform efforts. Constraints such as short time frames, limited resources and competing academic and accountability agendas often prevent sustained EI and leadership training and interfere with the ability of leaders to prioritize relational and emotionally attuned practices. In some situations, there are prevailing cultural norms and expectations about emotional expression that put more restrictions on leaders' attempts to model empathy and open conversation about emotions with staff and students.

Conclusion

Various scientific investigations have demonstrated how emotional intelligence connects to transformational leadership

performance in professional work settings. School leaders with strong emotional intelligence demonstrate better results in team inspiration and motivation, workplace community building, and organizational achievement. Highly emotionally intelligent educational leaders consistently show superior abilities to develop transformational leadership practices in their institutions.

These findings can guide educational leaders and policymakers to leverage emotional intelligence competencies for improving staff collaboration, teacher well-being, and student outcomes, ultimately enhancing overall organizational performance within educational institutions. Transformational leaders who can effectively perceive, understand, utilize, and manage their own emotions and those of others can cultivate strong interpersonal connections, motivate teachers and students, and navigate complex emotional landscapes with greater dexterity. This assessment demonstrates that educational organizations must establish emotional intelligence as their foundational leadership competency because it is vital for achieving better organizational results, superior teacher conduct, and student success. Although not the focus of this review, AI, ML and emerging technologies such as large language models (LLMs) and generative AI have the potential to further personalize learning, automate educational tasks, and support leadership development, and should be considered in future research on emotional intelligence in education.

Thesis/Dissertation Origin Statement

This review is not derived from a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation.

Disclosure Statement

- **Ethical Approval and Consent to Participate:** Not applicable. This study is a systematic literature review and did not involve human or animal participants.

- **Availability of Data and Materials:** The datasets analyzed during this review consist of previously published studies, all of which are cited within the reference list.
- **Author Contributions:** As the sole author, Surekha Lanka conceived the study, conducted the literature search and synthesis, and wrote the manuscript.
- **Conflict of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.
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