

**The Role of Leader Emotional Intelligence in Transformational
Leadership, Employee Trust, Change Cynicism and Intention to Leave**

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ABSTRACT

Much has been written in the popular media about the importance of emotional intelligence (EI) in determining exceptional leadership. The present research contributes to the academic literature by studying the direct and indirect effects of leader EI on a number of organisational variables. Study 1 was the main focus of the research and progressed in three stages. The first involved the development of a measurement model of an employee survey. Respondents reported on their leaders' EI and transformational leadership (TL), and self reported on their own attitudes and intentions. Drawing on exploratory (n = 218) and confirmatory factor analysis (n = 230) results, an eight dimensional model was supported. The emergent factors consisted of EI-perception, EI-management, TL-inspiring influence, TL-concern/behaviour, change cynicism and intention to leave. Secondly, a structural model of relationships between the emergent factors was examined then compared to alternative models (n = 448). The best-fitting model showed that leader EI was associated with employees' intentions to leave and change cynicism via TL and trust. Significant relationships between both EI variables and each TL factor were evidenced. At both stages, the results were successfully cross-validated in a sample from a different organisation (n = 339) and controlled for dispositional trust levels and geographic location. Third, the structural relationships were shown to hold longitudinally over a twelve months (n = 210). Study 2 aimed to assess the effects of leader EI from an ability perspective by matching leader scores on EI tests with employee survey responses. Total leader scores on the AO-MEIS (n = 102) and MSCEIT V2 (n = 102) were not significantly correlated with employee perceptions of leader EI. Total scores on both EI tests were significantly yet weakly related to transformational leadership ratings. At the total-test level, there were no significant relationships between leader EI and trust in manager, trust in organisation, change cynicism or intention to leave. At the branch level, leader scores on MSCEIT-emotion perception were positively associated with employees' trust in both the manager and organisation. Leader MSCEIT-emotion management scores were also related to lower change cynicism. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

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Date

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