

## Trait Emotional Intelligence, Perceived Self-Efficacy and Contextual Performance of Teacher-Leaders: A Research Model

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to develop a research model that establishes causal links between facets of trait emotional intelligence (trait EI) and perceived self-efficacy (PSE) of teacher-leaders as a response to some conceptual and methodological issues plaguing the emotional intelligence (EI) and PSE fields. Scoping review method of knowledge synthesis and Toulmin's Argumentation Model were employed in developing the model. The resultant model establishes trait EI and PSE respectively as distal and proximal antecedents to teacher-leaders' performance. The study contributes a theoretically grounded roadmap for exploring the roles of emotional and behavioural dispositions of teacher-leaders in school leadership.

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## 1. Introduction

Collegiality is one of the bases of leadership in HEIs, diffusing the burden of leadership throughout the institutional hierarchy. Every teacher anywhere in the institutional hierarchy is potentially a leader [1]. However, most teacher-leaders do not hold formal positions of influence. Their influence do not come from "authority, formal role, appointment or hierarchy" [2]. Their influence comes from within themselves, from their personality traits, especially their trait EI and PSE.

Teacher-leader is a teacher who maintains teaching and research responsibilities while playing important leadership roles within and beyond the classroom and institutional boundaries and relies on his/her characteristics to positively impact those around him/her [3]. For this reason, a teacher-leader is expected to exhibit a collaborative spirit, a high level of engagement, a capability to turn stakeholder dissonance into assonance, and be continually attuned to the emergence of shared meaning [4]. Doing these roles demand possession of the relevant personal characteristics and less

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reliance on formal authority. We posit that the relevant personal characteristics required of teacher-leaders include trait EI and PSE.

Trait EI and PSE are two essential pedagogical competencies teacher-leaders in HEIs need to perform successfully [5, 6]. The pedagogical ecology of HEIs is akin to social spaces requiring social competencies to navigate successfully [7]. Švec [8] noticed that these social competencies as tacit pedagogical knowledge that includes EI and PSE. However, the literature on teacher-leadership feature scant reports on these skills [9], and the few studies available are marred in conceptual and methodological ferment. In view of this, this study seeks to develop a research model that could be used in exploring the relationships between teacher-leaders' trait EI, PSE, and performance within the highly relational environment of HEIs.

## 2. Methodology

We used scoping review as research method [10]. Scoping review is “a form of knowledge synthesis ... aimed at mapping key concepts, types of evidence, and gaps in research related to a defined area or field by systematically [or eclectically] searching, selecting and synthesising existing knowledge” [11]. We adopted an eclectic level of scoping to purposefully target the relevant aspects of the trait EI and PSE constructs studied [12]. Our scoping searches of the literature drew from Scopus and Web of Science databases. In doing the review, we followed the scoping schema advanced in Colquhoun *et al.* [11], involving the following: identifying the research question; identifying relevant studies; study selection; charting the data; and collating, summarising, and reporting the results.

The structure of Toulmin's [13] field-invariant argumentation model was followed framing the model. Toulmin [13] holds that scientific arguments consist of a ground (data), a claim (conclusion), and a warrant (mechanism linking ground and claim) [13]. Thus, data (in the form of 15 *field texts* representing the 15 trait EI facets) were extracted from Petrides [14] and used to advance 30 claims (propositions), which are then justified on the bases of established warrants (theoretical and empirical literature). The *restorying* technique [15] was used in transforming the *field texts* into *propositions*. The outcome is our proposed research model.

## 3. Research Gaps

Our scoping review unearths four research gaps related to the main purpose of this study. First, it is settled science that the two models of EI (trait EI and ability EI) are entirely different from one another [16] and “do not measure the same construct” [17]. However, some researchers [18-21] continued to confound the two. Thus, there is need for further clarification.

Second, contradictions and inconsistencies still mar the EI literature. Some scholars [22, 23] claimed EI predicts important performance outcomes. Others [24, 25] denied this altogether, or reported inconclusive results [26, 27]. Thus, there is the need to clarify the association between trait EI and leadership outcomes.

Third, it has been proven that the mixed EI model is “psychometrically untenable” [28]. However, some researchers [18-21] continued to self-report questionnaire to assess ability or mixed research models thereby perpetuating confusion. Thus, there is the need to address this problem.

Finally, while Bandura [29] holded that self-efficacy is foundational to human agency and influences job performance, the direction of such relationship in the empirical literature remains contentious. Some studies reported direct PSE – performance relations [30, 31] while some found the reverse [32, 33]. Yet again, some insisted the relationship is bidirectional [34] while others

claimed “it does not matter who is correct; it just matters what is correct” [35].

#### 4. Trait EI, PSE and Teacher-Leader’s Contextual Performance

The primary function of teacher-leaders is to influence others (colleagues, students, support staff, and external stakeholders) so that every person involved with the school system works towards delivering improved teaching and learning experiences [36, 37]. For this reason, the “performance” of teacher-leaders is defined by how effectively they influence those “others” in ways that generate the desired institutional outcomes. Trait EI and PSE are critical skills in this influence process.

Teacher-leaders are those who maintain teaching and research responsibilities while playing important leadership roles within and beyond the classroom and institutional boundaries [3]. Teacher-leaders are defined by their primary function which includes influencing others (colleagues, students, support staff, and external stakeholders) in a complex educational ecosystem so that every person involved works towards delivering improved teaching and learning experiences [36, 37]. For this reason, the “performance” of teacher-leaders is defined by how effectively they influence those “others” in ways that generate the desired institutional outcomes.

Trait EI refers to teacher-leaders’ perception of their own behavioural dispositions and self-perceived emotional abilities, especially the consistencies in behaviour which they exhibit in most situations most of the time [38, 39]. It differs from ability EI which describes the “ability to reason validly with emotions and with emotion-related information and to use emotions to enhance thought” [40]. The two models “do not measure the same construct” [17]. Table 1 highlights the differences between the two models.

**Table 1**  
Differences Between Trait and Ability Models of EI

| EI Model                       | Measurement                  | Conceptualisation |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Trait Emotional Intelligence   | Self-Report Questionnaire    | Personality Trait |
| Ability Emotional Intelligence | Maximum Performance Measures | Cognitive Ability |

PSE of teacher-leaders refers to “the conviction that one can successfully execute the behaviour required to produce the outcomes” [41]. It described teacher-leaders' confidence in their ability to utilise personal characteristics in pursuit of sustainable performance across leadership roles, demands, and contexts [42]. For this study, therefore, PSE is considered a positive influence process which impacts not directly but indirectly on teacher-leaders performance via its effects on others [43].

The theory of self-efficacy holds that leader PSE is dependent on their mastery of the relevant emotional capabilities, among others [41]. Bandura [41] presented self-efficacy as an explanatory mechanism accounting for people engaging or not engaging in some specific behaviour based on their social and emotional competences. On their part, Petrides *et al.*, [44] presented trait EI as a proximal antecedent to social competences including PSE. We extend these thinking by suggesting that trait EI is a necessary antecedent to PSE of teacher-leaders. This study, therefore, proposes a framework by which researchers may investigate the mediating influence of PSE in the relationship between trait EI and teacher-leader performance.

Contextual performance refers to the extra-role, cross-occupational behaviours teacher-leaders exhibit which do not form part of their individual job description but which nevertheless indirectly contributes to institutional goal attainment through its effects on the psychological, social, and organisational context of work [45, 46]. Teacher-leaders’ contextual performance is operationalized

as a unidimensional construct in line with its operationalization given in Pradhan, Jena and Bhattacharyya [47].

## 5. Research Model

Our research framework is built on the theoretical fulcra of the Trait Emotional Intelligence Theory [48], the Self-Efficacy Theory [49], and the Job Performance Theory [50]. The Trait EI Theory holds that a person's subjective appreciation of their own and others' emotional experiences provides important mechanisms for explaining their behaviour (or performance) in any relational situation [51]. Thus, trait EI describes what people's "emotional dispositions are and how good they believe they are in terms of understanding, managing, and utilizing their own and other people's emotions" [52]. Trait EI is also termed *perceived emotional intelligence* because it is a person's self-perception of their emotions and the emotions of their interlocutors [53]. Trait EI predispose individuals to "to behave, think, or feel in some conceptually related ways, across a variety of relevant situations and across some fairly long period of time" [54]. Petrides, Mason and Sevdalis [44] presented trait EI as a proximal antecedent to social competences including PSE.

Bandura [49] presented self-efficacy as an explanatory mechanism accounting for people engaging or not engaging in some specific behaviours based on their "social, emotional and behavioural" competences [49]. The self-efficacy theory proposes that people are motivated by their expectations about what they can do as well as by their expectations about the likely consequences of their actions [41]. Self-efficacy is treated from perceptual perspective because it is what a person perceives it to be, and not what is objectively true [32]. Thus, this perceptual quality is rooted in the person's personality. In this study, we propose trait EI as the personality-related antecedent of PSE.

Motowidlo, Borman and Schmit [50] advanced the theory of job performance which posits that it is the inherent differences among individual employees with regards to their personality traits and cognitive abilities that explains the different approaches to challenges the employees exhibit and which mediates the effects of their personality-related dispositions on their job performance. The job performance theory bifurcates performance into task (technical) and contextual (social) spheres. This paper focusses on the latter form, which is defined as "a set of interpersonal and volitional behaviours that support the social and motivational context in which organisational work is accomplished" [55].

We, therefore, propose associations between trait EI, PSE and contextual performance, and accordingly develop a research framework as a guide for investigating the hypothesised relationships within the context of HEIs. Empirically, a number of meta-analyses [56, 57] underscore the relationships between trait EI and PSE and between PSE and contextual performance. Based on these theoretical and meta-analytic evidences, we posit that trait EI is a stable predictor of human behaviour, and, accordingly, develop a model (see Figure 1) with trait EI as predictor variable, PSE as mediating variable, and performance as the outcome variable. These relationships were fleshed out in a series of thirty hypotheses (see Table 2), fifteen on the direct relationship between trait EI and contextual performance, and fifteen on the mediating influences of PSE in these relationships.

The hypotheses follow the structure of the adult trait EI sampling domain advanced in Petrides [14], Petrides [58]. It should be noted that we do not hypothesise at factor or global levels of the trait EI construct because: it was designed to be analysed at the facet level and not at the item level [14], and the global trait EI cannot reasonably capture the whole spectrum of the 15 facets [59]. In order words, the trait-EI construct "warrants assessment as specific facets rather than a global construct" [60].

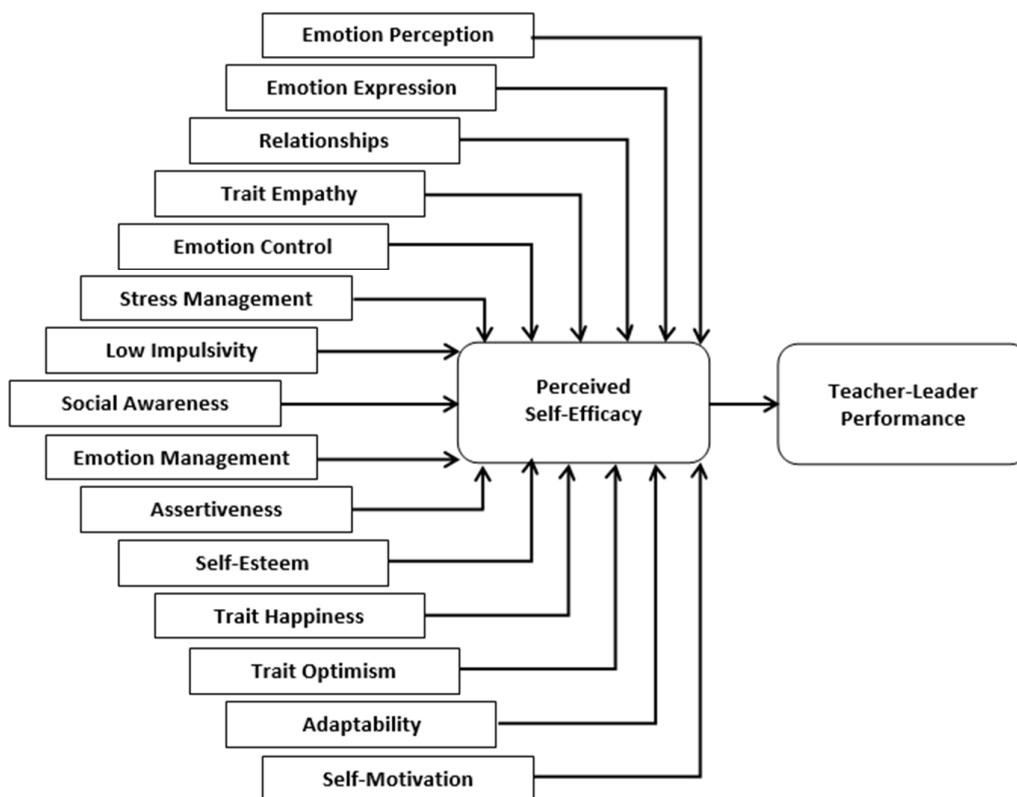


Fig. 1. Research Model

Table 2

Propositions on PSE as Mediator Between Facets of Trait EI and Teacher-Leader Performance Based on the Adult Sampling Domain of the Trait EI Reported in Petrides [14], Petrides [58]

| Factors      | Facets                               | High scorers view themselves as...  | Propositions on PSE Mediating Between Facets of Trait EI and Teacher-Leaders' Performance                   | Propositions Relating Facets of Trait EI to Teacher-Leader Performance       |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Emotionality | Emotion Perception (Self and Others) | "Clear about what they feel and able to decode other people's emotional expressions" [14].  | PSE mediates the relations between teacher-leaders' self/other emotion perception and their performance.    | Teacher-leaders' self/other emotion perception influences their performance. |
|              | Emotion Expression                   | "Fluent in communicating their emotions to others, and in expressing their feelings accurately and unambiguously" [14].                       | PSE mediates the relations between teacher-emotion expression and their performance.                        | Teacher-leaders' emotion expression significantly impacts their performance. |
|              | Relationships                        | "Start and maintain emotional bonds with others, build fulfilling personal relationships,, are good listeners and responsive to others" [58]. | PSE mediates the relations between teacher-leaders' relationship building capability and their performance. | Teacher-leaders' relational abilities largely determine their performance.   |

|              |                       |  |  |  |
|--------------|-----------------------|--|--|--|
|              | Trait Empathy         | "They seeing the world from someone else's point of view, and understand other people's needs and desires" [14].   | PSE mediates the relations between teacher-leaders' trait empathy and their performance.     | Teacher-leaders' trait empathy correlates with their performance.                            |
| Self-Control | Emotion Control       | "Control their emotions, change unpleasant moods to pleasant moods; are psychologically stable, and recover quickly from emotional setbacks" [58].                                 | PSE mediates the relations between teacher-leaders' emotion control and their performance.   | Teacher-leaders' self-regulation contributes positively to their performance.                |
|              | Stress Management     | "Handle pressure calmly and effectively because they have developed successful coping mechanisms" [58].  | PSE mediates the relations between teacher-leaders' stress management and their performance. | Teacher-leaders' stress management ability relates to their performance.                     |
|              | Low Impulsivity       | "They think before acting, and reflect carefully before making decisions, weigh all the information before they make up their mind, without, however, being overly cautious" [14]. | PSE mediates the relations between teacher-leaders' low impulsivity and their performance.   | Teacher-leaders' low impulsivity enhances their performance potentials.                      |
| Sociability  | Social Awareness      | Have excellent social skills, are socially sensitive, adaptable, and perceptive; good at negotiating, brokering deals, and influencing others" [14].                               | PSE mediates the relations between teacher-leaders' social awareness and their performance.  | Socially aware teacher-leaders perform better than their counterparts not so socially aware. |
|              | Emotion Mgt. (Others) | "Manage other people's emotional states well, influence other people's feelings (e.g., calm them down, console them, motivate them)" [58].   | PSE mediates the relations between teacher-leaders' sociability and their performance.       | A teacher-leader's ability to manage emotional others well contributes to their performance. |
|              | Assertiveness         | "Forthright and frank, they know how to ask for things, give and receive compliments, and confront others when necessary" [58].  | PSE mediates the relations between teacher-leaders' assertiveness and their performance.     | Assertive teacher-leaders potentially perform better than their non-assertive counterparts.  |
| Well-Being   | Self-Esteem           | "Have a positive view of themselves and their achievements; they are confident, positive, and satisfied with most aspects of their life" [14].                                     | PSE mediates the relations between teacher-leaders' self-esteem and their performance.       | Teacher-leaders' self-esteem determines their success at work.                               |
|              | Trait Happiness       | "Their emotional states attunes to the present rather than the past or the future; they are cheerful and feel good about themselves" [58].   | PSE mediates the relations between teacher-leaders' trait happiness and their performance.   | Teacher-leaders' trait happiness predispose them to higher performance levels.               |
|              | Trait Optimism        | "Looks on the bright side and expects positive things to happen in their life" [14].   | PSE mediates the relations between teacher-leaders' trait optimism and their performance.    | Teacher-leaders' trait optimism positively relates to their performance.                     |

|                  |                 |   |  |  |
|------------------|-----------------|---|--|--|
| Auxiliary Facets | Adaptability    | “Flexible in their approach to work and life, willing and able to adapt to new environments and conditions” [14].             | PSE mediates the relations between teacher-leaders’ adaptability and their performance.    | Teacher-leaders’ adaptability significantly determines their performance potentials.     |
|                  | Self-Motivation | “Strive for high-quality work, are determined and persevering, are self-driven, and have a strong sense of achievement” [58]. | PSE mediates the relations between teacher-leaders’ self-motivation and their performance. | Self-motivated teacher-leaders perform better than externally-motivated teacher-leaders. |

Table 2 reflects the adult sampling domain of the trait EI construct given in trait EI’s technical manual [14] and in an earlier explanatory notes [58]. The field text defining facets of trait EI were also extracted from the same documents. The field texts were then *restoried* into a set of 30 propositions (15 on the mediating role of PSE in the trait EI—performance relations, and 15 on direct relations between trait EI and performance). Figure 1 is a relational illustration of the propositions.

## 6. Measurement Tools

We suggest self-report questionnaires as instruments for data collection. Self-report questionnaires are widely used in evaluating individual differences in personality [61].

### 6.1 Trait EI Measures

There are two groups of trait EI measures [62]: general-domain trait EI measures, and domain-specific trait EI measures. The generic nature of this study suggests we use a general-domain measure. Accordingly, we selected the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue) which is described as the benchmark measure of trait EI [63]. Our selection was informed by the fact that the TEIQue "is the only instrument that is explicitly based on trait EI theory and that covers the sampling domain of the construct comprehensively" [38]. The TEIQue comes in two primary variants: short (TEIQue–SF) and long (TEIQue–LF) forms. This study is based on the TEIQue–SF. The TEIQue–SF evinced excellent psychometric properties [64].

### 6.2 PSE Measures

There are two sets of PSE measures: general self-efficacy tests, and task-specific self-efficacy tests. The former set seems to be an anomaly as PSE is said to be a context-dependent construct [65]. Therefore, we suggest a torsion of the Leader Self and Means Efficacy (LSME) model [66] with items from existing teacher and leader efficacy inventories [e.g., 67, 68] to develop a PSE instrument sensitive to the contextual peculiarities of educational leadership.

### 6.3 Contextual Performance Measures

Most of the widely used measures of contextual performance were developed based on Borman and Motowidlo’s [69] five-dimensional model with their constituent items ranging from 8 to 16. Later, Motowidlo and Van Scotter [45] refined the five-dimensional model into a 16-item two-dimensional model consisting of job dedication and interpersonal facilitation. A similar 16-item conceptualisation was developed in Koopmans *et al.*’s [70], which the authors further refined with better internal consistency statistics into an 8-item unidimensional measure. The latest research reflecting this trend

is that of Pradhan, Jena and Bhattacharyya [47] who also returned a unidimensional 15-item scale. Researchers may adapt or adopt any of these measures depending on the referent defining the criterion space of their studies.

## 7. Conclusion

Leadership is intimately relational, and this makes trait EI and PSE two determining skills in leader performance. In the highly service-oriented higher education industry, it is imperative to correctly understand the mechanisms by which trait EI and PSE of teacher-leaders impact critical institutional outcomes. While there abounds empirics in the field of educational leadership on higher order constructs such as motivation, EI, leadership, etc., the literature evinces surprising neglect of the facets to these higher-order constructs as distal correlates of crucial organisational outcomes. The model developed in this study shed light on this neglected area by using PSE to unravel the black box of the teacher-leader trait EI—performance nexus.

## 8. Limitation and Suggestion for Further Studies

The model developed in this study contains a set of fifteen predictor variables. Testing the model as is in a single field work may prove unwieldy. Therefore, researchers interested in the relationships highlighted in the model may parcel out one, two, three or four predictor variables of interest (based, for instance, on the factor structure of the trait EI) and investigate its/their impact on the criterion variable in a direct relationship or through the mediating agency of PSE.

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