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# TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERS AND TURNOVER INTENTION: MODERATING ROLE OF FOLLOWERS' EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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## ABSTRACT

*With the growing OB research in the field of leadership, this study intends to examine the linkage between transformational leadership (TFL) and turnover intention by integrating the effect of follower's emotional intelligence (EI) in the turnover process. The data were obtained from 156 teaching professionals from private schools through survey based method. The PLS based approach on 156 valid questionnaires, confirmed the strongest moderating relationships of emotional intelligence between transformational leadership behavior and turnover intention. More specifically, among the four TFL dimensions, individualized consideration shows significant greater impact with the dimensions of followers EI, while they also reduces turnover intention of teaching professionals. The findings of the study revealed that transformational leadership characteristics of the leader helps to reduce turnover intention of the followers. In addition, the interaction effect of followers EI with leaders TFL style strengthens the negative relationship towards turnover intention. Thus the study explains that followers high on EI under transformational leaders are less likely to experience turn over intention. Further the result of the study add new dimension to the existing leadership literature by integrating followers EI and leaders transformational style which possibly explains more positive organizational outcomes. As a managerial implication, the key findings of the study help the management in realizing the importance of effective leadership style and EI in reducing turnover intention.*

**Keywords:** Transformational Leadership; Followers' Emotional Intelligence; Turnover Intention; PLS based approach.

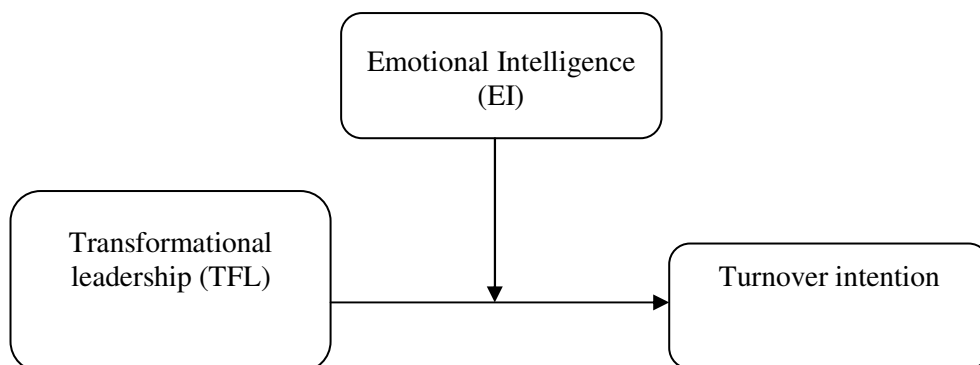
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of education, many countries are experiencing higher rate of teachers' shortage, 2015 (Goldhaber 2015; Source: Organization for economic co-operation and development, 2016). It is appropriate to mention that teachers may likely to take on continual appraisal of their current occupational status in order to determine the choice appropriateness of their job (Handler, 2010). If the appropriateness doesn't match, they may even leave the teaching profession (Goldhaber, 2015; Tiplic et al., 2016). As teachers are considered to be the valuable resource in imparting quality education (Tiplic et al., 2016), it is necessary to address teachers attrition in educational research. Specifically, India has been accounted with more teachers shortages (Source: Performance Statistics of School Education, 2015) and hence this the present study is obvious to research on teachers turnover intention. Many research results highlighted that turnover intention is the foremost reason behind turnover in the organization (Shah and Jumani, 2015). The antecedents of turnover intention particularly among teachers are explored through several studies. Organizational and contextual factors are found to be the strongest predictors of their intention to leave the jobs. Along with this, recent studies emphasize the importance of leaders' style in relation to turnover intention (Pradhan and Pradhan, 2016). In addition to these antecedents specifically this study aims to examine the impact one's emotional intelligence in effect of their leadership behavior towards intention to leave the job. Sequentially the rest of the paper is organized as follows: Initially the paper describes the literature review with theoretical view point. Based on the discussed review hypotheses are formulated. Second, the methodological approach is opted respective to the hypotheses. And finally findings, discussions, limitation and scope for future research are discussed.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this study, turnover intention acts as a dependent variable that denotes the individuals' attitude towards the idea of leaving their jobs (Tiplic et al., 2016). As stated prior more than contextual and organizational factors recent studies described individual difference variable and behavior of the leaders has greater importance towards organizational and individual outcomes ((Dong et al., 2017; Yoke et al., 2015).



**Figure 1** Conceptual frame work

Whilst among the individual difference variable, emotional intelligence gains crucial effect on reducing negative organizational and individual outcomes (Goleman, 1998). In addition with in depth view on leadership literature, transformational leadership style gains more positive outcomes along with EI dimensions (Harms et al., 2010). Thus the impact of individuals' EI and their leaders transformational style over turnover intention the following theoretical perspective are integrated in the framework which are transformational leadership theory (Hater and Bass, 1988); Emotional intelligence theory (Goleman, 1995). With these two major theories as base the conceptual framework for this study is depicted in figure 1.

### **3. RESEARCH GAP AND OBJECTIVE**

Several studies found the positive relationship between EI and TFL (Follesdal and Hagtvet, 2013; Mathew and Gupta, 1998; Spano-Szekely et al., 1999; Yoke et al., 2015). At the same time few studies shows partial and even negative relation of the same (Antonakis, 2003). The studies so far that examines the relationship of EI and TFL gained varied results. In addition the depth view of the prior studies reveals that the relationship between EI and TFL was examined solely based on the EI level of leaders and their leadership style but EI of followers were not considered much.

Emotional intelligence is the ability of an individual towards managing their emotions and deal with it to all kinds of situation. And as similar the transformational leaders by their unique characteristic such as understanding followers' emotions, providing motivation, considering each and every one's effort, and influencing towards creativity and innovation makes their followers to grow and to feel the way they are. With this concept of EI theory and TFL theory thus the dimensions of EI and the dimensions of TFL found to get tangled with each other (Goleman, 2001; Bass, 1985). This theoretical perspective and literature evident shows the interaction of the followers EI and leaders TFL may produce greater variance towards individual and organizational outcome. In order to address this gap this study examines the relationship between transformational leadership behavior and followers turnover intention along with the moderation effect of followers EI.

### **4. LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **4.1. Emotional intelligence, transformational leadership and turnover intention**

The notion of EI was first coined by (Salovey and Mayer, 1990), described that EI as an individual's ability to understand and manage their self-emotions as well as others. With this inception of EI, Goleman (1995) conceptualized EI theory that comprises of four dimensions viz., self-awareness that refers the ability of perceiving one's own emotion, self-management, social management and relationship management of emotions. With the initial development of EI, researchers claim EI as a potential contributor to organizational effectiveness (Appelbaum et al., 2015; Yoke and Panatik, 2015). While the claim have been refused by some of the researchers (Jordan et al., 2002; Zeidner et al., 2004). Thus still it is an essential issue to oversee the contribution of emotional intelligence on employee outcome at work settings.

With regard to turnover intention, literature evidence suggests that EI has an influence on withdrawal cognitions among employees ((Mohammad et al., 2014). Few studies claims the direct negative relationship between followers emotional intelligence and turnover intention (Barling et al., 2013; Meisler, 2013) Employees with higher EI were able to cope negative stress and manage their emotions towards the intention of quitting (Brunetto et al., 2012). There also exhibits the evidence of followers' emotional intelligence and their quality relationships at work. Thus followers with the higher quality relationship between leaders and

colleagues intended them to better engage towards work and thereby reduce their turnover behavior.

Proponents of leadership research also argued that the effective leadership is the critical requirement for promoting successful job environment and employees job performance (Hargreaves and Fink, 2012; Yahaya and Ebrahim, 2016). Earlier research identified leadership style with the main focus on organizational outcomes (Blake and Mounon 1964). Later on with the focus towards leader- follower perspective,(Hater and Bass, 1988) developed two facet of leadership style : transformational and transactional. Among these two major leadership styles, over years transformational leadership style gained major attention in the field of organizational studies due to its effective employee as well as organizational outcomes (Muterera et al., 2012; Wright et al., 2012).With the characteristic of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration and intellectual simulation transformational leaders evokes their followers self-interest to attain extraordinary goals (Bass, 1999; Casida and Parker, 2011). Further, (Bass, 1985) theory of transformational leadership delineates that the transformational leaders act as a role model to the followers; gains trust from the followers; motivates them towards attaining difficult goals; focus on their personal improvement. These characteristics of TFL dimensions paves for building strong emotional connection with the followers (Bernard M Bass and Avolio, 1994).Transformational leadership proved its greater effectiveness than other leadership style in the environment that entails leadership (Meisler, 2013).

Also studies revealed the key characteristics of TFL can create effective organizational and employee outcome such as increased: organizational commitment(Kim, 2014; Yoke et al., 2015), OCB(Carter et al., 2014; Cho and Dansereau, 2010), job performance (Gang Wang et al., 2011; Riaz and Haider, 2010), job satisfaction (Atmojo, 2015) intention to leave(Babalola et al., 2016), self-efficacy(Mittal and Dhar, 2015), occupational commitment (Pradhan and Pradhan, 2016). Whilst the studies showed that TFL characteristic helps to attenuate: turnover rate (Hamstra et al., 2011; Waldman et al., 2015),absent seem(Boerner et al., 2007), job stress (Kelloway et al., 2012; Schmitt et al., 2016). The literature evident thus suggested TFL has the intrinsic characteristic to deter followers from negative intensions such as turnover behavior. Thus based on transformational leadership theory and literature, the following hypothesis is given:

**H1: Leaders transformational leadership characteristic negatively influences followers' turnover intention.**

#### **4.2. Followers' EI and leaders' transformational behavior as a moderator**

Though EI undergoes some debates as it to be considered as an individual's trait or ability, several studies proved its positive impact towards behavior outcomes such as job satisfaction (Hur et al., 2011), well-being(Rey et al., 2011),life satisfaction (Liu et al., 2013). Further, studies also revealed EI as a potential contributor for leadership effectiveness in the organization(Kafetsios et al., 2011; Smollan and Parry, 2011; Karia, 2014). In depth the research studies explained significant correlation with each dimensions of emotional intelligence and transformational leadership characteristics.(Goleman, 1995) explained the key characteristics of emotional intelligence act as a ground for the emergence of transformational leaders. Also(Spano-Szekely et al., 1999), represents transformational leaders has positive influence over followers' emotions. Thus among the various leadership style TFL style indicates the only emotion-based leadership (Deichmann and Stam, 2015; Palmer et al., 2001).

Empirical evidence shows leaders high on EI exhibits more of transformational behavior and has impact towards followers job performance, commitment and job satisfaction(Sony

and Mekoth, 2016; Vratskikh et al., 2016). Meta-analysis results TFL exhibits more variance towards organizational outcomes than that of transactional style (Harms et al., 2010; Spano-Szekely et al., 1999). Since transformational leadership dimensions highly correlated with emotional intelligence, prior studies has its main focus on leaders EI level with their leadership effectiveness. But there are sparse empirical evidence found to examine the relationship between leaders' style with the EI level of followers' (Corona, 2010; Higgs and Dulewicz, 2016). As per the theory of transformational leadership (Avolio and Bass, 2002) and emotional intelligence theory (Goleman, 1995) positive outcomes are possible with respect to individual and organizational level. In accordance to the theoretical viewpoint, when integrating both of these unique individual difference variables EI and TFL may deter negative outcomes in greater variance.

Thus with these theoretical base this study posits followers EI and leaders TFL behavior as a moderator of turnover intention.

**H2: Followers** EI level strengthens the negative relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intention. That is, high level of EI will be more negatively related to turnover intention when followers are working under transformational leaders and less negatively related to turnover intention when their EI is low.

## 5. METHODOLOGY

**5.1 Sample and procedure:** Primary data were collected by distributing questionnaires to teaching professionals (Schools). Around 200 copies of questionnaires were distributed and 167 copies were returned. With the exclusion of 11 copies that are invalid, and finally 156 were taken for the study, which resulted in a response rate of 72.5 percent. Further to reduce the repetition of the responses, demographics information were also collected using ranges. The respondents included 98 females (63%) and 58 males (37%), since all the respondents were teachers they were highly educated, 38% held UG degree, 60% held PG degree and remaining 2% achieved doctorate. The average working experience was 5 years and the average age was 32 years.

**5.2 Measures:** EI is measured using EI scale adopted from (Wong and Law, 2002) which consists of 16 items under 4 dimensions. All the items were measured using five point likert scale ranging from 5=strongly agree to 1=strongly disagree. The sample of scale items were "I understand why I have certain feelings", "I can encourage myself", "I can understand others emotion". The higher score on the items represents high level of EI which indicates those individuals with high score has the greater ability of managing one's own and others emotion. The reliability of the scale was established through Cronbach's alpha which was reported to 0.85 in this study.

Transformational leadership (TFL) is measured using Multi-factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) developed by (Avolio and Bass, 2002). In which the transformational leadership characteristics can be measured under four dimensions with 12 items. The sample of scale items were "My HOD/Principal provides me with new ways of looking at things used to be a puzzle for me"; "My HOD/Principal encourages me to express my ideas and opinions"; "My HOD/Principal finds out what I want and tries to help me get in". Also the reliability of the scale was established through Cronbach's alpha which was reported to 0.89 in this study.

Turnover intention is measured using TIS scale adopted from (Van Schalkwyk et al., 2010) which consists of 6-items aims to measure the "an employee's awareness of leaving an organization (School) in the near future", which is considered to be the greatest predictor of actual turnover. The sample items were, "How often have you considered leaving your job?", "How often are you frustrated when not given the opportunity at work to achieve your

personal work-related goals?" The reliability of the scale was established through Cronbach's alpha which was reported to 0.91 in this study.

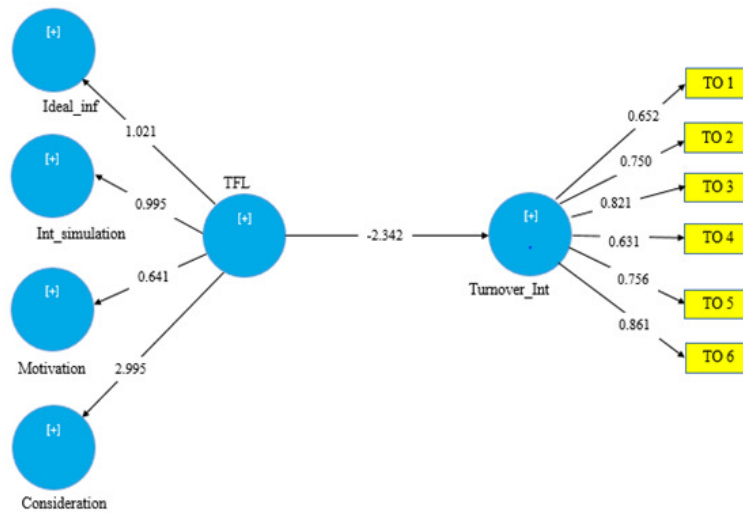
## 6. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

With the collected sample responses initially screening and editing of the data were done followed by descriptive statistics were arrived. In order to test the hypothesized relationship smartPLS3 was used. As the foremost step before testing hypothesized relation the evaluation of measurement model was established with construct, convergent and discriminant validity.

The construct validity can be obtained using composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) values. According to (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988), AVE value greater than 0.50 indicates its acceptable level. In addition the CR value represents the overall reliability of items in a given model as same as alpha coefficient. CR should be greater than 0.60 for acceptance (F. Hair Jr et al., 2014) which was established by the model. Convergent validity is good when items loadings are greater than 0.50 towards its respective factors with the minimum AVE of 0.50 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). In this study the measurement model met the suggested threshold of AVE and CR. Hence the convergent validity was also established for the model. For obtaining discriminant validity, there should exist greater square root of AVE values than that of its correlation of specific constructs with other variables in the model (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The discriminant validity in this study model is found to be good as the square root of EI and TFL constructs are greater than the correlation of other constructs (Hair et al., 2014).

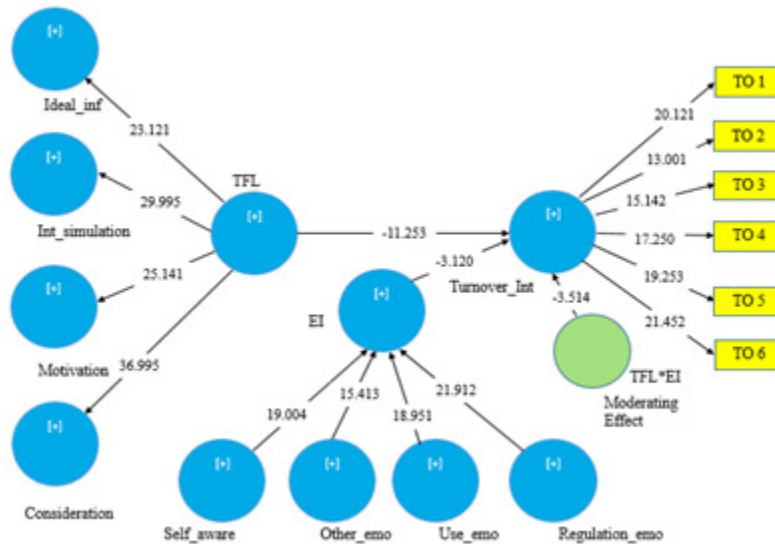
Prior to testing path coefficients, another significant process in analysis involves testing of coefficient of determination i.e.,  $R^2$  which indicates the measure of predictor construct variance that can explain the variance of predictive construct as depicted in the figure (2). The model with less exogenous construct and greater  $R^2$  value represents model as good. The  $R^2$  obtained for transformational leadership (TFL) as an independent variable represents 0.34, which again represents higher value ( $R^2=0.41$ ) when interacted with EI construct. Thus the inclusion of interaction explains more variance which shows relationship between TFL and turnover intention was moderately significant with EI construct. As next step, the path coefficient values are produced, which exhibits the relationship between latent variables in the structural model. The threshold value of path coefficient lies between +1 and -1 and the coefficient value near to zero explains the weakest path. As such the results of path coefficient values and specific dimensions are depicted in table (1) and (1a), which explains the relationship between TFL and turnover shows significant path coefficient value of -2.342.

## Transformational Leaders and Turnover Intention: Moderating Role of Followers' Emotional Intelligence



**Figure 2** Structural Model

**Measurement Model (Path coefficients):** The predictive relevance indicates the ability of predicting the accuracy of data points of endogenous construct indicators (Hair et al., 2014), which was established by measuring the effect size  $Q^2$  using blindfolding procedure ( $Q^2 = 1 - SSE/SSO$  with omission distance  $D=7$ ). The value of  $Q^2$  is positive then the model has obtained predictive validity and has predictive relevance of endogenous latent variable, turnover intention which is established as ( $Q^2 = 0.118$ ). Bootstrapping procedure is applied in order to test the proposed hypotheses using t-values. The t-values greater than critical value (i.e., 1.96) indicates significant acceptance of hypothesized relationship.



**Figure 3** Measurement model (Path coefficient)

Table (1) represents the results of accepted hypothesis, For H1( $\beta=-0.57$ ,  $t =-11.253$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) and for H2 ( $\beta=-0.84$ ,  $t = -3.514$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), where H1 proposed a significant negative

relationship between leaders transformational leadership characteristics and followers' turnover intention and H2 proposed a significant stronger moderating effect (strengthens the negative relationship) of followers emotional intelligence towards the relationship between TFL and turnover intention (figure 3).

**Table 1** Hypothesis testing –results

Hypotheses	Relationship	R square	t-values	p-values	Result	R square Change
H1	TFL → Turnover intention	0.34	-11.253	0.000***	Accepted	0.07
H2	TFL X EI → Turnover intention	0.41	-3.514	0.000***	Accepted	

Note: \*\*\*significant at 0.01 (1-tailed), \*\*significant at 0.05 (1-tailed)

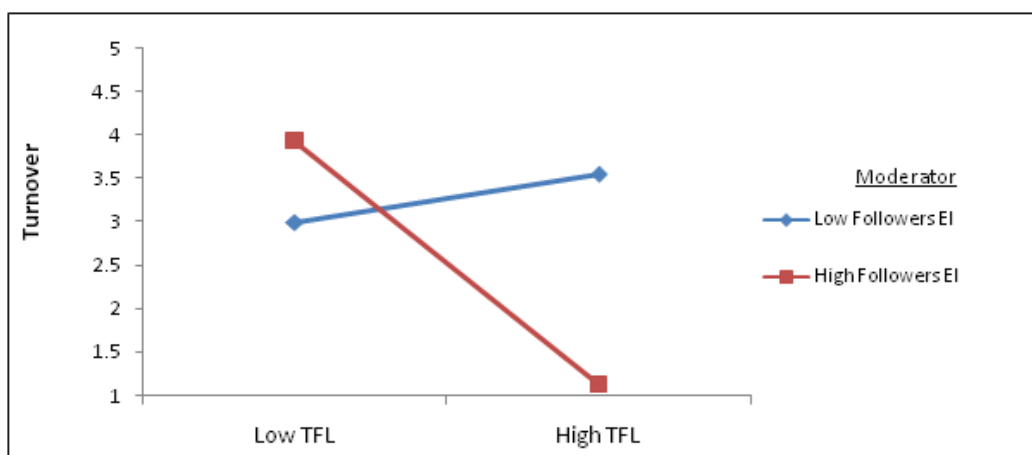
Further as given in Table 1a, among the 4 dimensions of TFL, individualized consideration gains significant strongest coefficient value ( $\beta=6.54$ ). Similarly among the 4 dimensions of Emotional Intelligence, Regulation of emotions gains significant and strongest coefficient value ( $\beta=3.94$ )

**Table 1a** Dimensions of TFL and EI

Dimensions	Beta coefficient values	t-values	p-values
Transformational Leadership (TFL)			
Idealized influence	2.558	23.121	0.001***
Intellectual simulation	2.309	29.995	0.000***
Individualised motivation	2.304	25.141	0.041**
Individualised Consideration	6.548	36.995	0.000***
Emotional Intelligence			
Self-emotion appraisal (SEA)	2.793	19.004	0.021**
Others-emotional appraisal(OEA)	1.875	15.413	0.001***
Regulation of emotions(ROE)	3.641	18.951	0.034**
Use of emotions (UOE)	1.805	21.912	0.000***

Note: \*\*\*significant at 0.01 (1-tailed), \*\*significant at 0.05 (1-tailed)

**Interaction Effect**



**Figure 4** Interaction Plot between turnover intention with EI and TFL as moderators



The result supported the interaction effect as stated in hypothesis 2 as followers' emotional intelligence moderates the relationship between their leaders TFL behavior and turnover intention. As recommended by Marcus et al (2002), the interaction graph in figure 4 further explains the interaction effect plotted based on path coefficients. It shows the stronger interaction from low to high EI of employees (more negative influence towards turnover intention).

## 8. DISCUSSION

This study was directed among academic leaders in private schools, to examine the relationship between transformational leadership behavior and followers turnover intention along with the moderation effect of followers EI.

The unique characteristics of transformational leader lies in the understanding of their followers' emotions and encouraging them to be more creative and innovative even in negative circumstances. Thus TFL characteristics buffers most of the negative outcomes from individual and organizational perspectives. The four major dimensions such as Idealized influence, individualized motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized, constitutes the leaders characteristics as transformational kind. Now with regard to the result of this study's framework shows TFL characteristics negatively influences followers' turnover intention. Though the all the four dimensions of TFL exhibits its significance towards followers turnover intention, among which the individualized consideration reflects greater effect in reducing the intention of turnover. Thus the result of H1 supports the assertions about the significance of TFL behavior in reducing followers' negative outcomes.

With the result of Hypothesis 2, it is proposed that the interaction of followers' emotional intelligence and TFL behavior may further strengthens the negative association between TFL and turnover intention. The association between EI and TFL is quiet innate. The dimensions found in emotional intelligence such as identifying and understanding emotions of self and others to the betterment of individual and group have been explained in TFL studies (Mills, 2009). To be effective in the role, leaders must have to perceive followers emotion in order acknowledge their needs, influence towards change and enhance commitment towards organization. Hence, the H2 result leans to be accepted as high level of followers EI make them to more coordinate with the transformational leader characteristic and thus when interacting strengthens the negative relationship with turnover intention. In bound to this, the interaction of followers EI along with their leader's transformational characteristic effectively buffers their intention towards quitting found to be supported. Among the four dimensions of emotional intelligence (self-emotional appraisal, others emotional appraisal, regulation of emotions and use of emotions), it is found that regulation of emotions shows a greatest effect in reducing turn over intention. That is, the individuals who were better in regulation of their emotions seems to cope up well with their negative emotions, well-adjusted and resilient. Such a kind of teachers high on EI , specifically working under the leader who individually considers them at all sort of circumstances made them to further effectively regulate their negative emotions. That is leaders effectiveness depends mainly how well they understand the followers when they underwent negative experiences at workplace. This can be effectively achieved by the characteristic of transformational leaders. In this way, the components of transformational leadership can be considered entwined with emotional intelligence conception. Further, as the present study anchored with Emotional intelligence theory (EI) and Transformational theory (TFL) also lines up the result of buffering the negative aspect, turnover intention.

## 9. CONCLUSION

The result of the study made to view that, in the field of leadership, transformational leadership has a greater implication in reducing teachers' turnover. As a uniqueness of the study, the findings ensures teachers high on EI level working along with the transformational leader exhibits greater impact in reducing their intention of quitting the job. Thus result of this study benefits both the management and teachers. For teachers it helps to provide better understanding of their own emotions and its positive impact with the transformational leadership behavior. For management, though there are numerous leadership styles, the findings clearly reflects that transformational leadership style helps in addressing the problem of turnover. Thus the management can provide teachers with appropriate leadership training to enhance their transformational behavior. As in the same way emotional intelligence training also makes them to benefit mutually.

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Transformational Leaders and Turnover Intention: Moderating Role of Followers' Emotional Intelligence

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