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Effect of Transformational and Transactional Leadership and Emotional Intelligence on Employee Productivity: Mediating Role of Motivation

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Abstract: This study examines the impact of transformational and transactional leadership styles and emotional intelligence on employee productivity, with an emphasis on the mediating role of employee motivation in service-sector businesses in Afghanistan. Effective leadership and emotional intelligence are increasingly seen as crucial factors influencing employee performance in emerging nations, although employees' motivational moods heavily influence their performance. Using a quantitative research approach, data were collected through a structured questionnaire from employees across various organizations. Regression and mediation analyses were employed to assess the direct and indirect effects of transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and emotional intelligence on employee productivity. The findings revealed that transformational leadership ($\beta = 0.418$, $p < 0.001$), transactional leadership ($\beta = 0.362$, $p < 0.001$), and emotional intelligence ($\beta = 0.401$, $p < 0.001$) each had a significant positive effect on employee productivity. Further results indicated that employee motivation played a critical mediating role in these relationships. Employee motivation fully mediated the effects of transformational leadership and emotional intelligence on employee productivity, while partially mediating the relationship between transactional leadership and productivity. These findings suggest that transformational leadership and emotional intelligence primarily enhance productivity by strengthening employee motivation, whereas transactional leadership influences productivity through both motivational and reward-based mechanisms. The study highlights the importance of adopting a motivation-centered leadership approach to enhance employee productivity in developing organizational contexts and recommends future research to incorporate additional contextual variables and longitudinal designs.

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INTRODUCTION

It is commonly acknowledged that employee productivity is a key factor in determining an organization's competitiveness, long-term capability, and performance. Productivity at the person level includes job quality, flexibility, and ongoing contribution to corporate goals, in

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addition to task completion speed. According to Koopmans et al. (2014), task performance, contextual performance, and adaptive behavior comprise the multidimensional concept of employee productivity. Increasing employee productivity has been a strategic focus for both corporations and policymakers in increasingly complex and dynamic work environments.

Leadership is an important element that affects the work environment, employee attitudes, and employee behaviors related to achieving organizational goals; therefore, it is a significant construct that directly influences employee productivity. Northouse (2021) has suggested that leadership is needed to guide employees' understanding of what is expected of them and to help direct their efforts toward completing their jobs. Transformational and transactional leadership styles have attracted significant research interest relative to other leadership approaches due to their applicability across multiple organizational and cultural contexts. According to Bass and Avolio (1995), these leadership styles are two ways for a leader to use their influence to affect their followers' performance. Characteristics of transformational leadership are an articulate vision, intellectual stimulation to develop new ways of doing things, and personal consideration to know what is most effective for the individual (Bass & Avolio, 1995). This type of leadership, according to Bass (1985), promotes greater employee participation by aligning individual values with business goals. Employees under transformative leaders are more likely to feel a sense of purpose, which increases commitment and productivity. Empirical evidence supports this theoretical viewpoint. Judge and Piccolo (2004) showed that transformative leadership significantly improves employee performance. In a similar vein, Banks et al. (2016) found that this leadership style promotes proactive behavior and consistent results. According to Wang et al. (2011), transformational leadership has a good effect on task and adaptive performance. More recent research indicates that one important way transformative leadership increases productivity is through psychological empowerment (Chaubey et al., 2024).

In contrast, transactional leadership, which emphasizes clear expectations, contingent rewards, and corrective actions, is based on organized interactions between managers and employees. This leadership style is performance-oriented and emphasizes the use of reward systems to reinforce desired behaviors, as described by Bass and Riggio (2006). Under transactional leadership, employees are motivated by clearly defined performance requirements and the possibility of rewards. Podsakoff et al. (2006) provided empirical evidence for a strong association between task performance and contingent-reward behavior. Judge and Piccolo (2004) provided additional evidence of the efficacy of reward-based leadership systems in raising employee outcomes. Furthermore, transactional leadership is particularly effective in environments that require effectiveness and consistency, according to Wang et al. (2011). Transactional leadership remains crucial in performance-driven, well-organized organizational contexts, according to Sharma's (2024) recent research.

In addition to leadership styles, employee productivity is significantly predicted by emotional intelligence. The ability to recognize, comprehend, control, and effectively use emotions in social situations is known as emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence was first established as a fundamental psychological concept by Salovey and Mayer (1990), and Wong and Law (2002) later showed its importance in organizational settings. Employees with higher emotional intelligence are better able to handle stress, settle disputes, and preserve positive interpersonal relationships. Emotional intelligence improves interpersonal effectiveness and overall job success, according to Law et al. (2004). Goleman (1998) went on to say that effective workplace performance requires emotional abilities.

An empirical investigation found a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and employee performance. According to Joseph and Newman (2010), emotional intelligence significantly improves task performance through better emotional regulation. Miao et al. (2017) claim that reducing the negative effects of workplace stress enables emotional intelligence to preserve productivity. When under pressure, employees with emotional intelligence are more likely to maintain their composure and concentration. Emotional intelligence increases productivity under duress, according to recent research (Kour and Ansari, 2025). According to a thorough analysis by San Swe Htun et al. (2025), emotional intelligence consistently leads to improved performance across a range of organizational contexts.

Although emotional intelligence and leadership styles are significant indicators of employee productivity, their effects are frequently indirect. According to Yukl (2013), leadership affects employee outcomes not just through direct control but also through underlying psychological factors. Employee motivation is one of the most important mechanisms that explain how emotional intelligence and leadership translate into performance.

The internal and environmental factors that start, guide, and maintain work-related behavior are referred to as employee motivation. According to Pinder (2014), employee effort and perseverance are significantly influenced by motivation. By distinguishing between intrinsic and extrinsic drive, Self-Determination Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding motivation. According to Deci and Ryan (2000), extrinsic motivation is driven by rewards and recognition from external sources, while intrinsic motivation arises from personal interest and satisfaction. While extrinsic motivation promotes efficiency and goal completion when incentive systems are perceived as equitable, intrinsic motivation is linked to greater creativity and higher-quality performance.

Additionally, Gagné et al. (2015) emphasized that optimal performance requires both internal and external motivation. According to empirical research by Kuvaas et al. (2017), employees are more productive when they get both types of incentives. Leadership behaviors greatly impact these driving processes. By encouraging independence, skill, and fulfilling work, transformational leadership boosts intrinsic motivation. On the other hand, performance-based rewards and preset expectations are the main ways that transactional

leadership affects extrinsic motivation. Van den Broeck et al. (2016) state that knowledge of these motivational pathways is necessary to comprehend how leadership influences employee outcomes. Additionally, Tremblay et al. (2009) showed that motivation is a crucial link between leadership actions and performance.

By empowering people to control their emotions and sustain pleasant psychological states, emotional intelligence further enhances motivation. According to Goleman (1998), emotionally intelligent leaders are better able to identify and meet their employees' emotional needs, thereby increasing engagement. According to Doňru (2022), establishing psychological safety promotes intrinsic drive in emotionally supportive situations. This relationship was empirically supported by Miao et al. (2018), who demonstrated that emotional intelligence boosts motivation, which in turn improves performance outcomes.

Even though the literature is expanding, most studies to date have focused on transformational leadership, transactional leadership, emotional intelligence, and employee motivation, alone or in small combinations. Few studies have examined how these variables interact within a complete framework, as noted by Afsar et al. (2019). Al-Hawari et al. (2021) also emphasized the need for integrated models to better reflect the challenges of employee performance in contemporary businesses. According to Banks et al. (2016), fragmented approaches limit our ability to understand how psychological and leadership factors interact to affect productivity. Similarly, San Swe Htun et al. (2025) found that few comprehensive models include motivational pathways.

Another major limitation in the literature is the dominance of studies conducted in developed economies. Sharma (2024) asserts that organizational procedures, leadership styles, and employee expectations vary significantly across settings. According to Asrar-ul-Haq and Kuchinke (2016), a leader's effectiveness is greatly influenced by contextual and cultural factors. Arshad et al. (2023) called for context-sensitive studies that integrate emotional intelligence and leadership and look at mediating factors. Traditional management approaches and hierarchical organizations often influence leadership strategies in underdeveloped countries. Structured leadership and clear managerial direction positively affect employee satisfaction and organizational success in such contexts (Zaheer and Sadiq, 2025).

Given these gaps, an integrated paradigm that currently examines transformational leadership, transactional leadership, emotional intelligence, and employee motivation in relation to employee productivity is clearly needed. To close this gap, the current study offers a comprehensive model linking leadership styles, emotional intelligence, and productivity outcomes through employee motivation.

This study contributes to the limited body of empirical research in developing economies by concentrating on the Afghan organizational context. It offers a more thorough comprehension of how emotional intelligence and leadership styles affect employee productivity through motivational processes. The results are anticipated to provide both

theoretical and practical insights, especially for companies looking to improve productivity through the development of emotional intelligence and motivation-centered leadership styles.

The study offers the following hypotheses to examine the relationships among transformational leadership, transactional leadership, emotional intelligence, employee motivation, and employee productivity, grounded in the theoretical framework and literature review.

H1: Transformational leadership has a significant positive effect on employee productivity.

Transformational leadership is distinguished by the expression of a compelling vision, intellectual stimulation, and personalized attention (Bass & Avolio, 1995). From a theoretical perspective, it boosts employee productivity by encouraging intrinsic motivation, psychological empowerment, and alignment of individual and organizational goals. According to self-determination theory, employees perform better when their demands for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are met (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Transformational leaders make these conditions possible by fostering meaningful work and promoting employees' growth (Gagné et al., 2015). Empirical studies back up this claim, demonstrating that transformational leadership increases task performance by increasing motivation and engagement (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Banks et al., 2016). Thus, transformational leadership is predicted to have a major positive impact on workforce productivity.

H2: Transactional leadership has a significant positive effect on employee productivity.

Transactional leadership is built on regulated interactions between leaders and employees that prioritize clear expectations, contingent rewards, and performance monitoring. From a theoretical perspective, it boosts employee productivity by connecting effort to rewards and performance results. According to expectation theory, employees are more likely to perform well when they see a clear link between their efforts and desirable incentives (Vroom, 1964). Transactional leaders support this system through feedback and performance-based rewards (Bass et al., 2008). Empirical research shows that contingent reward behaviors are positively related to task performance and productivity (Podsakoff et al., 2006; Wang et al., 2011). Thus, transactional leadership is predicted to have a considerable positive impact on workforce productivity.

H3: Emotional intelligence has a significant positive effect on employee productivity.

The capacity to recognize, manage, and effectively use emotions in the workplace is known as emotional intelligence (Wong & Law, 2002). Theoretically, it improves stress resilience, interpersonal effectiveness, and emotional control, thereby boosting employee productivity. Employees with high emotional intelligence are better at managing work-related issues, maintaining concentration, and forming strong professional relationships—all of which lead to better performance. According to earlier studies (Joseph & Newman, 2010; Miao et al., 2017), emotional intelligence is associated with greater task performance through

enhanced emotional management and interpersonal functioning. Further evidence indicates that emotionally intelligent individuals function better in dynamic work environments (Côté, 2014). Therefore, it is anticipated that emotional intelligence significantly improves employee performance.

H4: Employee motivation mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and employee productivity.

The main way that transformational leadership boosts employee productivity is through influencing intrinsic motivation. According to self-determination theory, employees are more motivated when their needs for relatedness, competence, and autonomy are satisfied (Deci & Ryan, 2000). These needs are met by transformational leaders through customized attention, empowerment, and meaningful work (Gagné et al., 2015). People become more intrinsically motivated, which boosts effort and output. Additionally, studies have demonstrated that transformational leadership increases motivation, which improves task performance (Breevaart et al., 2014). Therefore, it is anticipated that employee motivation mediates the relationship between transformative leadership and employee productivity.

H5: Employee motivation mediates the relationship between transactional leadership and employee productivity.

Transactional leadership affects employee productivity through extrinsic incentive mechanisms, by establishing clear performance standards and linking rewards to accomplishments, transactional leaders inspire employees to attain desired outcomes. Expectancy theory states that employees are motivated when they believe their efforts yield worthwhile rewards (Vroom, 1964). Motivation and performance increase when dependent rewards are perceived as just and encouraging (Kuvaas et al., 2017). Empirical research indicates that motivated employees under transactional leadership are more productive due to clear objectives and reinforced performance expectations (Van den Broeck et al., 2016). Therefore, it is anticipated that employee motivation serves as a mediator in the relationship between employee productivity and transactional leadership.

H6: Employee motivation mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and employee productivity.

By boosting intrinsic drive, emotional intelligence increases employee productivity. Strong emotional intelligence enables employees to manage their emotions better, reduce stress, and maintain a positive outlook at work, all of which support sustained motivation (Wong & Law, 2002). Effective emotional regulation fosters autonomous motivation, which is directly linked to performance outcomes, according to self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2017). Additionally, empirical studies indicate that emotional intelligence increases motivation by improving emotional regulation and reducing stress-related disruptions (Van den Broeck et al., 2016; Miao et al., 2018). Employees with emotional intelligence are therefore more driven and effective. Thus, the relationship between emotional intelligence and productivity is expected to be mediated by employee motivation.

Conceptual Model

Based on established theories of motivation, emotional intelligence, and leadership styles, this study proposes an integrated conceptual model that illustrates the direct and indirect effects of emotional intelligence, transactional leadership, and transformational leadership on employee productivity through employee motivation. According to the concept, employee motivation plays a critical role in moderating the relationships among leadership behaviors, emotional competencies, and performance outcomes. It is based on theories of self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 2000), emotional intelligence (Salovey & Mayer, 1990), transformational leadership (Bass, 1985), and transactional leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1995).

Specifically, transformational leadership aims to boost intrinsic motivation through vision, empowerment, and tailored support, whereas transactional leadership primarily influences extrinsic motivation through predetermined expectations and contingent rewards. Emotional intelligence facilitates both internal and external motivating processes by improving emotional regulation and interpersonal efficacy. These motivational pathways thus lead to improved employee productivity. By combining these connections into a single model, as illustrated in Figure 1, the conceptual framework offers a comprehensive explanation of employee productivity in organizational contexts, particularly in developing-country circumstances.

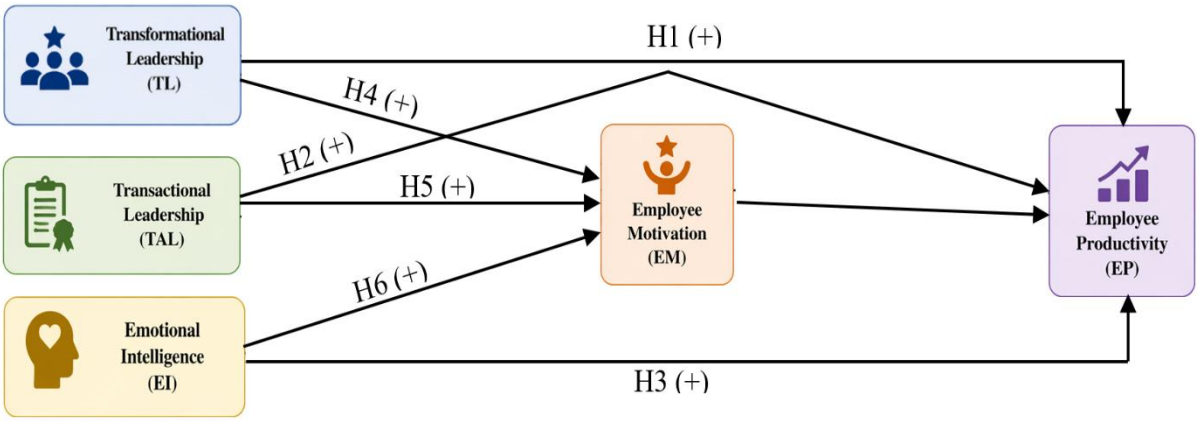

Figure 1. *Conceptual Model of the Study*

Source: Based on the theories of transformational and transactional leadership (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1995), emotional intelligence (Salovey & Mayer, 1990), self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 2000), and empirical research (Judge and Piccolo, 2004; Miao et al., 2018; Gagné et al., 2015).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the relationships among transformational and transactional leadership styles, emotional intelligence, employee motivation, and employee productivity. A deductive method was employed, in which theories and prior empirical research were used to construct hypotheses, which were then tested using primary data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Population and Sample

The target population of this study consists of employees working in selected public, private, and international organizations in the service sector (e.g., education, banking, and administrative services) in Afghanistan, particularly in major urban centers (e.g., Kabul, Jalalabad), where access to respondents was feasible. The unit of analysis is individual employees. This study does not aim to represent all organizations in Afghanistan; rather, it focuses on a sample of employees from selected organizations to examine the proposed relationships. A total of 350 valid responses were collected, which is considered adequate for multivariate statistical techniques such as regression and mediation analysis (Hair et al., 2009). Stratified sampling was employed to ensure representation across different organizational types (public, private, and international). Organizations were first categorized into strata by type, and respondents were proportionally selected from each stratum. This approach enhances representativeness and reduces sampling bias (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

Data Collection Procedure

A standardized, self-administered questionnaire measuring transformational and transactional leadership styles, emotional intelligence, employee motivation, and productivity was used to gather data. Subject-matter experts reviewed the questionnaire and pilot-tested it with 50 respondents to ensure clarity and content validity. A few small adjustments were made in response to pilot feedback. Once formal authorization from participating organizations was obtained, the questionnaires were distributed both online (via email and chat platforms) and on paper to increase accessibility. Respondents were informed of the study's academic purpose and assured of confidentiality and anonymity. It was completely voluntary to participate. A total of 370 surveys were distributed. After checking for inconsistent or incomplete responses, 350 valid questionnaires were retained for analysis. The data were coded and analyzed in Stata using regression, mediation, and descriptive statistics.

Measurement Tools

All constructs were measured using established and validated scales from prior studies:

- Transformational and transactional leadership were measured using adapted items from the MLQ (Bass & Avolio, 1995).
- Emotional intelligence was measured using the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) (Wong & Law, 2002).
- Employee motivation was measured using adapted items from the Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale (WEIMS) (Tremblay et al., 2009).
- Employee productivity was measured using items from the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) (Koopmans et al., 2014).

In line with earlier organizational research, each item was scored on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

Pilot Testing

50 participants participated in a pilot study to evaluate the assessment tool's dependability and clarity. A few little wording adjustments were made in light of the results, but nothing was removed. The pilot sample was not included in the final study.

Reliability Analysis

Internal consistency reliability in the pilot study was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR).

Table 1. *Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha (CA)*

Construct	CR	CA
Transformational Leadership	0.918	0.89
Transactional Leadership	0.909	0.86
Emotional Intelligence	0.933	0.88
Employee Motivation	0.946	0.90
Employee Productivity	0.951	0.91

Table 2 displays the Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR) values for each research construct. With both CR and CA values for transformational leadership, transactional leadership, emotional intelligence, employee motivation, and employee productivity surpassing the well-recognized cutoff of 0.70, the results demonstrate good internal consistency reliability. Specifically, Composite Reliability scores, which range from 0.909 to 0.951, demonstrate a high level of consistency among the indicators evaluating each component. Furthermore, the reliability and consistent capture of the appropriate structures of the measuring items are attested to by Cronbach's Alpha values, which range from 0.85 to 0.91. All constructs showed satisfactory reliability, according to the pilot results, with Cronbach's alpha values above the suggested cutoff of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2009). This gave the assurance to move forward with extensive data gathering.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Stata. The analysis followed a systematic sequence:

1. Descriptive statistics to summarize demographic characteristics and key variables
2. Correlation analysis to examine initial associations among variables
3. Diagnostic tests, including normality tests, variance inflation factor (VIF), and heteroskedasticity tests, to validate regression assumptions
4. Multiple regression analysis to test direct relationships
5. Mediation analysis using bootstrapping techniques to examine the mediating role of employee motivation

Bootstrapping was employed to test mediation effects because it does not assume normality of indirect effects and provides more robust confidence intervals (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

Ethical Considerations

Throughout the whole research procedure, ethical guidelines were closely adhered to. Before participation, respondents' consent was obtained, and they were informed of the study's academic goal. All replies were used exclusively for research, and no personally identifiable information was gathered.

FINDINGS

Table 1. *Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 350)*

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	220	62.9
	Female	130	37.1
Age Group	20–30 years	140	40.0
	31–40 years	120	34.3
	41–50 years	60	17.1
	Above 50 years	30	8.6
Education Level	Bachelor’s Degree	180	51.4
	Master’s Degree	130	37.1
	PhD	20	5.7
	Other	20	5.7
Organization Type	Public	120	34.3
	Private	150	42.9
	Semi-Government	80	22.9
Work Experience	Less than 5 years	110	31.4
	5–10 years	140	40.0
	11–15 years	60	17.1
	Above 15 years	40	11.4

The demographic profile indicates that the majority of respondents were male (62.9%), with females representing 37.1% of the sample. Most participants were between 20 and 40 years of age, accounting for 74.3% of the total sample, suggesting a relatively young workforce. In terms of education, over half of the respondents held a bachelor’s degree

(51.4%), followed by master's degree holders (37.1%), indicating a well-educated sample. Regarding organizational affiliation, the largest proportion of respondents worked in the private sector (42.9%), followed by the public sector (34.3%) and semi-governmental organizations (22.9%), ensuring diversity across organizational types. Regarding work experience, most respondents had 5-10 years (40.0%), reflecting a moderately experienced workforce. Overall, the sample demonstrates adequate diversity in demographic characteristics, supporting the generalizability of the study findings.

Reliability

While the pilot study assessed the instrument's initial validity and reliability, the reliability in this section is based on the final dataset of 350 respondents. It reflects the real measurement properties used for hypothesis testing. According to Hair et al. (2014), reliability and validity must be proven before structural analysis and hypothesis testing. The validity and reliability of the measuring tool were assessed in this study using proven statistical techniques often used in management and organizational research.

Table 2. *Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha & Composite Reliability)*

Construct	Composite Reliability (CR)	Cronbach's Alpha (CA)
Transformational	0.93	0.915
Transactional	0.92	0.910
Emotional Intelligence	0.92	0.911
Employee Motivation	0.94	0.935
Employee Productivity	0.90	0.875

According to the results in Table 2, all constructions exhibit good internal consistency and dependability. Cronbach's Alpha (CA) levels vary from 0.875 to 0.935, and Composite Reliability (CR) values range from 0.90 to 0.94, all of which are higher than the suggested cutoff of 0.70. Emotional intelligence, transactional leadership, and transformational leadership all show high dependability, meaning that emotional competencies and transformational and transactional leadership styles are consistently measured. With outstanding consistency throughout its items, employee motivation exhibits the highest reliability. Additionally, employee productivity shows adequate dependability. A high degree of internal consistency among the measurement items was shown by Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values, which varied from 0.875 to 0.946 and exceeded the suggested criterion of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Table 3. *Descriptive Statistics*

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Transformational L.	350	4.002	.499	2.2	5
Transactional L.	350	3.986	.51	2.8	5
Emotional Intelligence	350	3.941	.51	2.4	5
Employee Motivation	350	4.757	.382	4	5
Employee Productivity	350	4.835	.303	4	5

Based on responses from 350 participants, Table 3 displays the descriptive statistics for the study's primary variables. The mean values show that respondents reported

comparatively high levels of emotional intelligence (M = 3.94, SD = 0.51), transactional leadership (M = 3.99, SD = 0.51), and transformational leadership (M = 4.00, SD = 0.50), indicating generally favorable opinions of leadership practices and emotional competencies within the organizations under study. Strong levels of motivation and productivity among respondents were indicated by the exceptionally high mean scores with minimal variability for employee productivity (M = 4.84, SD = 0.30) and employee motivation (M = 4.76, SD = 0.38). Overall, the descriptive results point to favorable conditions for future investigations examining the relationships among organizational culture, employee productivity, emotional intelligence, motivation, and transformational and transactional leadership styles.

Table *Error! No text of specified style in document.. Matrix of Correlations*

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) Transformational Leadership	1.000				
(2) Transactional Leadership	0.090	1.000			
(3) Emotional Intelligence	0.030	-0.020	1.000		
(4) Employee Motivation	0.461	0.294	0.488	1.000	
(5) Employee Productivity	0.308	0.342	0.301	0.516	1.000

Employee motivation and productivity are positively correlated with both transformational and transactional leadership, as Table 4 demonstrates, suggesting that effective leadership boosts employee motivation and output. Additionally, motivation and productivity are positively correlated with emotional intelligence, underscoring its role in boosting productivity. Interestingly, the biggest association between productivity and employee motivation indicates that motivated employees typically perform better. Overall, our findings validate additional regression and mediation analysis and support current theories of motivation and leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Goleman, 1998).

Normality Test

Table 5. *Shapiro-Wilk W Test for Normal Data*

Variable	Obs	W	V	z	Prob>z
Residual	350	0.997	0.830	-0.441	0.671

Table 5 reports the Shapiro–Wilk test results for the regression residuals. The p-value (0.671) is greater than 0.05, indicating that the residuals follow a normal distribution. Gujarati and Porter (2009) emphasize that meeting the normality assumption improves the reliability of regression estimates and hypothesis testing. Field (2018) also notes that normally distributed residuals enhance the robustness of regression results, especially in mediation and moderation analyses. Accordingly, the normality assumption is satisfied, supporting the suitability of the data for further analysis.

Multicollinearity Test

Table 6. *Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) Results*

Variables	VIF	1/VIF
Employee Motivation	2.033	.492
Emotional Intelligence	1.475	.678
Transformational Leadership	1.380	.725
Transactional Leadership	1.158	.864
Mean VIF	1.512	.

Table 6 reports the VIF; the VIF values range from 1.158 to 2.033, with a mean VIF of 1.512, all of which are well below the recommended threshold of 5. Hair et al. (2009) state that VIF values below this level indicate no serious multicollinearity problem. Similarly, Gujarati and Porter (2009) argue that VIF values far below 10 suggest that regression estimates are stable and reliable. In addition, all tolerance values are substantially above the minimum acceptable level of 0.10, further confirming the absence of multicollinearity. Overall, these results indicate that the independent variables are sufficiently distinct, allowing reliable estimation of regression coefficients and supporting the suitability of the data for regression, mediation, and moderation analyses.

Heteroscedasticity Test

Table 7. *Breusch-Pagan / Cook-Weisberg Test for Heteroskedasticity*

Test Statistic	df	χ^2	p
Breusch-Pagan / Cook-Weisberg	1	1.35	0.245

The findings of the Breusch-Pagan/Cook-Weisberg test are shown in Table 7. Since the p-value (0.245) is greater than 0.05, the assumption of homoskedasticity is met, and heteroskedasticity is absent. According to Wooldridge (2016), OLS estimates and standard errors are reliable when homoskedasticity holds. Additionally, Gujarati and Porter (2009) contend that satisfying this condition permits the interpretation of regression results with confidence, hence endorsing the use of additional regression, mediation, and moderation analyses.

Regression Model

Model 1: Direct Effects Model

This model examines the direct effects of transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and emotional intelligence on employee productivity.

$\mathbf{EP} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 TL + \beta_2 TAL + \beta_3 EI + \varepsilon$

Where:

- **EP** = Employee Productivity
- TL= Transformational Leadership
- TAL = Transactional Leadership

- **EI** = Emotional Intelligence
- β_0 = Intercept
- β_1, β_2, β_3 = Regression coefficients
- ε = Error term

Model 2: Impact of Emotional Intelligence and Transformational and Transactional Leadership Styles on Employee Motivation

This model investigates whether transformational and transactional leadership styles and emotional intelligence significantly predict employee motivation.

EM = $\beta_0 + \beta_1 TL + \beta_2 TAL + \beta_3 EI + \varepsilon$

Where:

- EM = Employee Motivation

Model 3: Mediation Model

This model examines whether the relationship between transformational and transactional leadership styles, emotional intelligence, and employee productivity is mediated by employee motivation.

EP = $\beta_0 + \beta_1 TL + \beta_2 TAL + \beta_3 EI + \beta_4 EM + \varepsilon$

Partial or full mediation is assessed based on the significance of β4 and the change in coefficients of TL, TAL, and EI.

Indirect Effects (Mediation Paths)

The indirect effects are computed as:

Indirect Effect = a × b

Where:

- a = Effect of independent variable on mediator
- b = Effect of mediator on dependent variable

Bootstrapping (5,000 resamples) is used to test the significance of indirect effects.

Table 8. *Results of Linear Regression Analysis*

EP	Coef.	St.Err.	t-value	p-value	[95% Conf	Interval]	Sig
TL	0.312	0.031	10.06	0	.251	.373	***
TAL	0.341	0.029	11.76	0	.284	.398	***
EI	0.298	0.030	9.93	0	.239	.357	***
Constant	1.945	0.165	11.79	0	1.621	2.269	***

Mean dependent var	4.835	SD dependent var	0.303
R-squared	0.680	Number of obs	350
F-test	245.18	Prob > F	0.000
Akaike crit. (AIC)	21.62	Bayesian crit. (BIC)	38.94

**** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.1*

The regression model in Table 8 is statistically significant (F = 245.18, p < .001), indicating that the independent variables collectively have a significant impact on employee productivity. Strong explanatory power in behavioral and organizational research is demonstrated by the R-squared value of 0.680, indicating that transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and emotional intelligence account for 68% of the variation in employee productivity (Cohen, 1988; Hair et al., 2009). Employee productivity is positively and significantly affected by transformational leadership (β = 0.312, p < .001). This suggests that leaders who inspire, motivate, and intellectually stimulate employees contribute to higher productivity, a finding consistent with leadership theory and prior empirical studies (Bass & Avolio, 2004). Transactional leadership also shows a positive and statistically significant relationship with productivity (β = 0.341, p < .001). This indicates that clear performance expectations, rewards, and monitoring mechanisms help improve employee output, supporting earlier findings that transactional leadership is effective in goal-oriented work environments (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Emotional intelligence is likewise a significant predictor of employee productivity (β = 0.298, p < .001). This result implies that employees who can manage their emotions and understand others tend to perform better at work, which aligns with previous research emphasizing the role of emotional competencies in job performance (Goleman, 1998). The regression results offer compelling empirical evidence that emotional intelligence and transformational and transactional leadership philosophies have a major impact on employee productivity. These results validate the study's hypotheses and provide a strong foundation for further analyses examining employee motivation as a mediating variable.

Mediation Analysis

Table 9. *Mediation Analysis of Employee Motivation between Transformational Leadership and Employee Productivity*

Path	B	SE	t	p	95% CI
TL → EM (a)	0.3535	0.0365	9.69	.001	0.2817, 0.4252
EM → EP (b)	0.3761	0.0409	9.20	.001	0.2957, 0.4566
TL → EP (c′)	0.0545	0.0314	1.74	.083	−0.0072, 0.1161
Indirect Effect (a × b)	0.1329	—	—	—	0.0921, 0.1777

Model Fit:

R^2 (EM model) = 0.213

R^2 (EP model) = 0.272

N = 350

Table 9 shows that transformational leadership positively and significantly affects employee motivation (B = 0.3535, p < .001), indicating that leaders who inspire, encourage, and intellectually stimulate employees increase their motivation. This is consistent with the self-determination theory, which holds that supportive leadership creates intrinsic motivation by meeting employees' psychological needs (Deci & Ryan, 2000). According to earlier research, transformational leadership is a powerful predictor of motivation in a variety of

settings (Breevaart et al., 2014; Orabi et al., 2016). Additionally, employee productivity is significantly positively affected by employee motivation (B = 0.3761, p < .001), indicating that motivated employees are more engaged, put forth greater effort, and perform better (Locke & Latham, 2004; Grant, 2008). The direct impact of transformative leadership on productivity becomes non-significant (B = 0.0545, p = .083) when motivation is incorporated into the model, suggesting that motivation completely mediates this relationship.

The considerable bootstrapped indirect impact (B = 0.1329; 95% CI [0.0921, 0.1777]) confirms that the main way transformative leadership affects productivity is by increasing employee motivation (Avolio et al., 2009; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). According to Hair et al. (2009), the mediation model explains 21.3% of the variance in motivation (R^2 = 0.213) and 27.2% of the variance in productivity (R^2 = 0.272). These are significant results for behavioral research. These results demonstrate that the impact of transformative leadership on employee productivity in Afghan firms is totally mediated by employee motivation.

Table 10. *Mediation Analysis of Employee Motivation between Transactional Leadership and Employee Productivity*

Path	B	SE	t	p	95% CI
TAL → EM (a)	0.2200	0.0384	5.73	.001	[0.1445, 0.2955]
EM → EP (b)	0.3603	0.0371	9.72	.001	[0.2874, 0.4333]
TAL → EP (c')	0.1239	0.0278	4.46	.001	[0.0692, 0.1785]
Indirect Effect (a × b)	0.0793	—	—	—	[0.0472, 0.1183]

Model Fit :

R^2 (EM model) = 0.086

R^2 (EP model) = 0.306

N = 350

Table 10 presents that transactional leadership positively and significantly affects employee motivation (B = 0.2200, p < .001), suggesting that contingent rewards, clear expectations, and performance monitoring enhance employees' motivation. This is consistent with earlier research showing the efficacy of transactional leadership in structured settings (Podsakoff et al., 2006; Avolio et al., 2009) and expectancy theory, which holds that employees are motivated when effort is clearly linked to performance and rewards (Vroom, 1964). Additionally, employee motivation positively impacts production (B = 0.3603, p < .001), indicating that motivated employees put forth greater effort and perform better (Locke & Latham, 2004; Grant, 2008). The direct impact of transactional leadership on productivity remains substantial when motivation is taken into account (B = 0.1239, p < .001), although the coefficient decreases, suggesting partial mediation (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Hayes, 2018).

According to Judge and Piccolo (2004), the bootstrapped indirect impact is significant (B = 0.0793; 95% CI [0.0472, 0.1183]), demonstrating that transactional leadership affects productivity both directly and indirectly through motivation. According to organizational research, the model explains 8.6% of the variance in motivation (R^2 = 0.086) and 30.6% of the variance in productivity (R^2 = 0.306) (Hair et al., 2009). These results demonstrate that the

impact of transactional leadership on productivity in Afghan firms is somewhat mediated by employee motivation.

Table 11. *Mediation Analysis of Employee Motivation between Emotional Intelligence and Employee Productivity*

Path	B	SE	t	p	95% CI
EI → EM (a)	0.3656	0.0350	10.43	.001	0.2967, 0.4345
EM → EP (b)	0.3838	0.0417	9.21	.001	0.3019, 0.4658
EI → EP (c')	0.0384	0.0312	1.23	.219	−0.0230, 0.0998
Indirect Effect (a × b)	0.1403	—	—	—	0.0980, 0.1866

Model Fit :

R^2 (EM model) = 0.238

R^2 (EP model) = 0.269

N = 350

Table 11 shows that emotional intelligence positively and significantly influences employee motivation (B = 0.3656, p < .001), indicating that employees who understand and regulate their emotions are more motivated. This is consistent with the hypothesis of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998; Mayer et al., 2008), which highlights that emotionally competent people are better able to handle difficulties, maintain positive feelings, and have internal motivation. According to earlier studies, emotional intelligence improves motivation through interpersonal and self-regulation abilities (Law et al., 2004; Miao et al., 2017). Employee production is strongly influenced by employee motivation (B = 0.3838, p < .001), indicating that motivated employees are more productive (Locke & Latham, 2004; Grant, 2008). The direct impact of emotional intelligence on productivity is no longer significant when motivation is taken into account (B = 0.0384, p =.219), suggesting complete mediation (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Hayes, 2018).

The bootstrapped indirect effect is significant (B = 0.1403; 95% CI [0.0980, 0.1866]), indicating that motivation is the main way in which emotional intelligence affects productivity (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2005; Joseph & Newman, 2010). The model highlights the crucial role of motivation in converting emotional capacities into performance, explaining 23.8% of the variance in motivation (R^2 = 0.238) and 26.9% of the variance in productivity (R^2 = 0.269) (Hair et al., 2009). These results demonstrate that in Afghan firms, the relationship between employee productivity and emotional intelligence is totally mediated by employee motivation.

Visual summary of the final analytical results

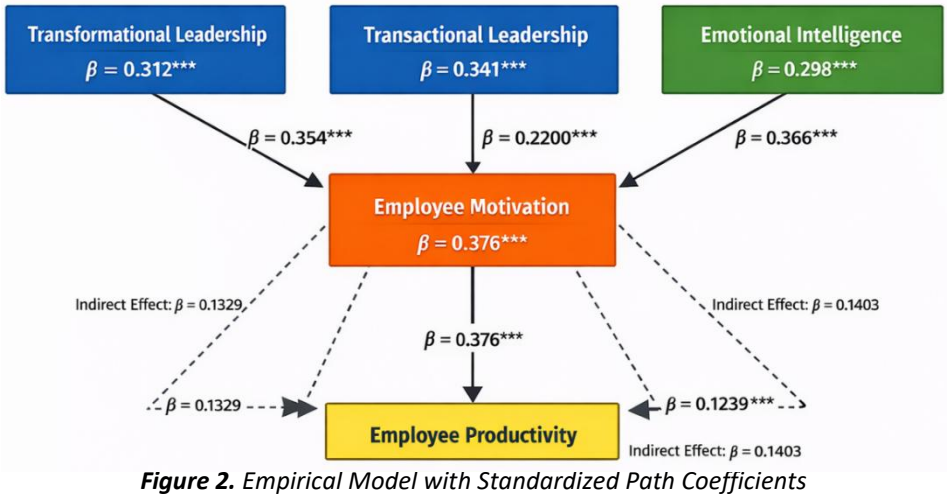

Figure 2. *Empirical Model with Standardized Path Coefficients*

Note: Tables 10–12 present the path coefficients obtained from distinct PROCESS mediation models. *** p <.001. Model 1 regression findings yield direct effects (β = 0. 312, 0.341, 0.298).

DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that employee productivity is positively affected by transformational leadership, consistent with a large body of leadership research. By communicating a common goal, stimulating the mind, and giving each employee personal attention, transformational leaders increase productivity. This interpretation aligns with earlier studies by Bass and Avolio (1995), Judge and Piccolo (2004), and Banks et al. (2016), which emphasize the performance-enhancing role of transformational leadership. However, the current findings extend prior research by demonstrating that, within the Afghan organizational context, the direct effect of transformational leadership on productivity becomes insignificant when employee motivation is introduced as a mediator. This suggests that transformational leadership primarily influences productivity through motivational mechanisms rather than through direct control or supervision. Unlike findings from many developed-country contexts where partial direct effects remain evident, employees in developing environments appear to rely more heavily on motivational processes to translate leadership behaviors into performance outcomes (Asrar-ul-Haq & Kuchinke, 2016). These results answer the relevant research question by confirming that employee motivation is the key pathway through which transformational leadership affects productivity, supporting the motivational foundations of transformational leadership theory and self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

The study also finds a significant positive relationship between transactional leadership and employee productivity. This result supports previous research suggesting that contingent rewards, performance monitoring, and clearly defined expectations are effective in enhancing productivity, particularly in structured and performance-oriented environments (Podsakoff et al., 2006; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Unlike transformational leadership, transactional leadership maintains a significant direct effect on productivity even after

accounting for employee motivation, indicating partial mediation. This suggests that transactional leadership operates through both motivational and control-based mechanisms. These findings are consistent with Wang et al. (2011), who argued that transactional leadership reinforces desired behaviors through reward systems. Although some prior studies have questioned the long-term effectiveness of transactional leadership compared to transformational leadership (Banks et al., 2016), the present findings highlight its continued relevance, particularly in developing-country contexts where organizational cultures emphasize hierarchy, compliance, and role clarity. Thus, the results answer the research question by confirming that transactional leadership remains an effective and contextually appropriate approach for enhancing employee productivity (Zaheer & Sadiq, 2025).

Furthermore, the results indicate that emotional intelligence is a significant predictor of employee productivity, which is consistent with emotional intelligence theory and prior empirical evidence (Goleman, 1998; Wong & Law, 2002). Emotionally intelligent employees are better equipped to manage stress, regulate emotions, and maintain productive interpersonal relationships, all of which contribute to higher performance levels. However, when employee motivation is included in the analysis, the direct relationship between emotional intelligence and productivity becomes insignificant, indicating full mediation. This finding contrasts with some studies that reported a direct association between emotional intelligence and performance (Law et al., 2004). However, it aligns with self-determination theory, which posits that emotional regulation enhances autonomous motivation, thereby improving performance outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2017). In the studied context, emotional intelligence appears to function as a foundational capability that strengthens motivational states rather than directly influencing task execution, thereby answering the relevant research question.

The study shows that the relationships among transformational and transactional leadership styles, emotional intelligence, and employee productivity are significantly mediated by employee motivation. In particular, motivation slightly mediates the association between transactional leadership and productivity, whereas it fully mediates the impacts of transformational leadership and emotional intelligence. These results align with earlier studies that highlight motivation as the process by which leadership actions lead to performance (Tremblay et al., 2009; Gagné et al., 2015). The current findings imply that motivation is more significant in resource-constrained and hierarchical settings than in studies conducted in developed economies, where leadership may have a greater direct influence. This study's cross-sectional design and reliance on self-reported data, which may affect causal interpretation, limit its contributions. However, the results have significant practical consequences, underscoring the need for firms to give leadership development programs equal weight with motivational tactics. To improve generalizability, future studies should use longitudinal designs, add more mediating and moderating variables, and expand the model across more industries and cultural contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated how transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and emotional intelligence impacted employee productivity in Afghanistan. Employee motivation was also assessed as a mediator of the relationships among leadership, EI, and employee productivity. This research integrates transformational leadership, transactional leadership, emotional intelligence, and motivating factors to fulfill the need for a more contextualized and holistic model of organizational behavior in international developing economies. The results provide substantial empirical support for the view that leadership style and EI are major factors that determine how productively an individual performs as an employee. More specifically, quasi-hypotheses H1, H2, and H3 were tested, and the results confirm a positive direct effect of Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership, and Emotional Intelligence on productively performing employees. In addition to the current study's findings being supported by previous studies of Leadership and EI theories (Bass and Avolio, 1995; Judge and Piccolo, 2004; Goleman, 1998), the main conclusion of this research is that the use of transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and EI all have a statistically significant impact on productivity levels of employees.

Additionally, the study found that motivation mediates the relationships between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and productivity, and between leadership behavior and productivity, using a series of mediation tests. As such, we conclude that transformational leaders can influence productivity not through direct supervision of employees' tasks but rather by increasing employees' motivation (H4 and H6). In contrast, motivation only partially mediates the effect of transformational leadership on employee productivity (H5). Similarly, transactional leadership directly and indirectly influences employee productivity. Transactional leadership plays an important role in performance-oriented organizations, especially in emerging market economies, because motivation strongly influences productivity.

All in all, the findings show that employee motivation is the main psychological mechanism by which emotional intelligence and transformational and transactional leadership styles increase productivity in businesses in Afghanistan. In environments with hierarchical structures, limited resources, and significant job volatility, effective leadership appears to depend more on the ability to motivate and inspire employees than on direct influence. By experimentally validating an integrated model in a developing-country context, this work significantly adds to the body of knowledge on leadership and organizational behavior. It also demonstrates the significance of context in understanding how leadership and emotional intelligence impact employee productivity.

From a theoretical perspective, this research builds on transformational and transactional leadership theories by empirically validating the idea that leadership effectiveness depends not solely on leader behaviors but primarily on the motivational mechanisms leaders use to get their team members to perform effectively. This research supports Self-Determination

Theory (SDT) in confirming that motivation is the primary route through which leadership and emotional intelligence impact performance. Additionally, this study advances the literature on emotional intelligence by clarifying how it affects productivity. Whereas the modern perspective on emotional intelligence is as a "capability" that enables teams to be mentally engaged, develop "psychological energy," and enhance their level of engagement by increasing their motivation to perform, it does not directly affect the employee's ability to get the job done.

Collectively, these three areas of leadership style, emotional intelligence, and motivation are connected by this research, which also supports a new way of viewing these three distinct components as a combined system that fills a major gap in the literature on employee productivity and provides a more thorough understanding of this field of study.

Practical Implications

The conclusions of this have significant applications for leaders, managers, and legislators. The findings imply that, rather than focusing solely on transformational and transactional leadership styles, firms should view employee motivation as a strategic resource. Initiatives for leadership development, especially those focused on transformational leadership, should place strong emphasis on motivational techniques such as empowerment, meaningful work, recognition, and personalized attention. At the same time, procedures for transactional leadership should be established to ensure consistency, equity, and transparency in the distribution of rewards and performance reviews. Additionally, by boosting motivational and emotional control skills, training programs targeted at improving emotional intelligence might tangentially increase employee productivity. Organizations are urged to implement context-sensitive leadership strategies in Afghanistan and other developing nations that strike a balance among structured guidance, clear expectations, and inspirational leadership.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations that should be noted despite its contributions. First, the identification of the causes of the variables under study is limited by the cross-sectional research design. Second, using self-reported data may introduce common-method bias, even though diagnostic testing indicates the risk is low. Third, the results may not be as applicable to other industries, such as manufacturing or public administration, given the study's focus on service-sector businesses.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies should build on this study's results by employing longitudinal research designs to fully understand causal relationships over time fully. To gain a more complete picture of employee productivity, researchers are also urged to examine other mediating or moderating factors, such as organizational culture, work satisfaction, leadership trust, or psychological empowerment. By extending the proposed model to other industries and conducting cross-national comparison studies, the results' generalizability would be further enhanced. Furthermore, future research may examine differences by gender and generation to

understand better how motivation and leadership operate across a range of workforce groups.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

The first author was responsible for the conceptualization, data collection, analysis, and article drafting. The second author supervised the study, provided guidance during the inquiry, and assisted with editing and polishing the final product.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Upon reasonable request, the corresponding author will provide the data supporting the study's conclusions. To protect respondent confidentiality, access may require ethical approval.

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