THE INFLUENCE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON EMPLOYEE'S COUNTERWORK BEHAVIOR AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT: MEDIATING ROLE OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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The Influence of Emotional Intelligence on Employee's Counterwork Behavior and Organizational Commitment: Mediating Role of Transformational Leadership

Bikhtiyar HUSSEIN[1], Mehmet YESILTAS[2]

Abstract

The study investigated direct and indirect impact of emotional intelligence on employee counterproductive work behavior and organizational commitment through transformational leadership. On the basis of theoretical and empirical studies, one exogenous variable (emotional intelligence) and three endogenous variables i. e transformational leadership, counterproductive work behavior, and organizational commitment were analyzed through structural equation modeling with the aid of AMOS V24. The participants were 302 administrative staff of private universities in Kurdistan region of Iraq. This study found emotional intelligence to significantly reduce counterproductive work behavior, while it was also found to significantly enhance employee commitment to their organization and transformational leadership. Moreover, transformational leadership was found to have a significant effect of reducing counterproductive work behavior among the staff, while it encourages their commitment to the university. In addition, transformational leadership was found to have a positive partial mediation in the relationship between emotional intelligence and counterproductive work behavior on one hand, and the relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational commitment on the other hand. Finally, the theoretical and practical implications of the study were addressed.

*Keyword*s: organizational success, employee attitude and behavior, emotional intelligence, transformational leadership, social intelligence.

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Introduction

The sustainability of organizational success depends on an effective and efficient workforce. It is imperative for a firm to develop its human capital through consistent training and development (McCleskey, 2014). According to Siegling, Nielsen, and Petrides (2014), human resources capital is considered to be the cornerstone of a firm development and achievement of sustainable competitive advantage. Luthans, Avolio, and Norman (2007) opined that employee attitude and behavior in a firm significantly depends on their emotional intelligence. The individual emotional intelligence knows how to manage emotions and complex relationships (Siegling *et al.* 2014). In addition, Keskin *et al.* (2016) opined that when employees have an exposure to an unpleasant behavior from his/her subordinates in the workplace, the emotional intelligence comes to play in overcoming these unpleasant situations. Therefore, the employees' attitude, behavior and job outcomes are determined by emotional intelligence. Moreover, the achievements of employees in terms of physical, psychological and professional are all influenced by emotional intelligence (Luthans, Luthans, & Avey, 2014).

Meanwhile, Goleman (1998) observed that interpersonal skills have become an important component to effective leadership. Owing to this, understanding the impact of one's emotional intelligence and the potential effect of it on leadership deserves attention. According to Kouzes and Posner (2003), effective leadership is significant to the success achievement of a firm, thus, the ability to identify and define effective leadership is important. Traditional wisdom means technical expertise, superior performance and experience that is already established, and convert same into effective leadership. In the world today, successful leaders are considered to be the one that inspire and motivates others, promoting a positive work environment, perceiving and understand the emotions and fostering a climate around the firm in which the employee turn challenging opportunities into successes (Kouzes & Posner, 2003). Alson, Dastoor, & Chin-Loy (2016) posit that achievement of corporate sustainability has been consistently linked with emotional intelligence and transformational leadership. This corroboration the position of Ket de Vries (2013) who posited that "transformational leaders are aware of confusion can be created when holding grudges which could lead to merciless attitude, hindered the firm progress, thus negatively impact the success of the firm. On the other hand, it could develop a culture of understanding where people are likely to make extra efforts (Bass, 1990). Such culture in addition promotes a coaching culture, mutual collaboration and retaining valued employees; it allows greater creativity and innovation, leading to increased productivity (Ket de Vries, 2013: 11).

While emotional intelligence has been linked to transformational leadership (TM), TM has also been considered as a significant determinant of organizational commitment (OC) (Allen and Meyer, 1996; Eby *et al.* 1999; Mowday *et al.* 1982). According to Bartlett (2001: 336), "organizational commitment can be thought of

as the level of attachment felt towards organization in which one is employed". Similarly, Allen and Meyer (1996) defined OC as "an individual dedication and loyalty to an organization". Therefore, committed employee have reason, they are involved, assist to find solution to firm problems and feel the need to put more efforts beyond his/her job requirements with the aim of contributing significantly to the firm (Mowday *et al.* 1979). In spite of emotional intelligence maintaining widely acceptability in previous research, some of the studies have recently observed the need for more studies that will critically examines the influence of emotional intelligence (Brunetto *et al.* 2012), hence, the attempt by this study to fulfill that need. In addition, it is notable that majority of previous studies takes place in the developed countries, while the studies in developing countries are few (Suifan, Abdalah, & Sweis, 2015), especially in Kurdistan region of Iraq. Thus, this study partially addresses this gap by applying this empirical research within the context of Kurdistan region in Iraq.

This study has both theoretical and practical implications in addressing the transformational leadership (TL), and the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI), counterproductive work behavior (CWB), and organizational commitment (OC) as shown in Figure 1. Some previous studies have investigates the direct relationship between EI and CWB (Emani, 2014; Al Ghazo, Suifan, & Alnuaini, 2019; Miao, Humphrey, & Qian, 2017; Jung & Yoon, 2012; Keskin *et al.* 2016); EI and OC (Aghdasi *et al.* 2011; Al-Nasser & Behery, 2015; Amjad, 2018; Kumari & Priya, 2015; Masrek *et al.* 2015); EI and TL (Alston, Dastoor, & Chin-Loy, 2016; Antoniou, 2005; Biswas & Rahman, 2017; Leban & Zulauf, 2004); TL and CWB (Baharom *et al.* 2017; Uddin, Rahman, & Howladar, 2017); and TL and OC (Feizi, Ebrahimi, & Beheshti, 2014; Gillet & Vandenberghe, 2014; Gulluce *et al.* 2016; Porter, 2015); but with no investigation of transformational leadership. Thus, to the best of our knowledge, previous research has not covered the new element discussed in this study, which is the mediating impact of transformational leadership in the impact of emotional intelligence on counterproductive work behavior and organizational commitment in the context of Kurdistan region of Iraq, especially in the private tertiary institutions.

The significance of this study is in multifold. First, the theoretical significance is addressed by providing a concise literature review in respect to emotional intelligence, counterproductive work behavior, transformational leadership, and organizational commitment. All the constructs were measured using reliable and previously developed scales, improved to investigate correctly, as well as the nexus between them. Second, the practical implication of this study will afford the decision makers in organizations an opportunity to have a significant insights on how emotional intelligence influence counterproductive work behavior and organizational commitment through transformational leadership. In addition, this study highlights the significance of transformational leadership as a mediator in the nexus among emotional intelligence, counterproductive work behavior, and organizational climate in the private universities in Kurdistan region of Iraq.

Literature review

Emotional Intelligence

Maamari and Majdalani (2017) traced the history of emotional intelligence to "Alfred Binet and Charles Darwin" that identified another type of intelligence that was referred to as "Social Intelligence" or "Practical Intelligence". Nevertheless, the first definition of "Emotional Intelligence" according to McCleskey (2014) came from Edward Thorndike in 1920. In addition, emotional intelligence "is an intellectual capability which allows one to understand, identify, and asses the meaning of emotions; to reason; and to help in solving problems (Suleiman, Awwad, & Kada Ali, 2012: 117). In reference to another author, a popular description of emotional intelligence characteristics is that it belongs to "emotion-related self-perceptions" and traits found at the base of the personality hierarchies (Miao *et al.* 2017). In the measurement of an individual performance in both daily lives and professional, emotional intelligence is a critical factor. This intelligence can be the cause of achieving success, contribute to the evaluation of managerial qualities, and improves organizational communications and interactions (Basogul & Ozgul, 2016).

In addition, emotional intelligence is viewed as part of social intelligence that involves the ability to observe individual and others feelings and emotions, to be able to differentiate between them, and to utilize the information obtained to guide one's thinking and actions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). In other words, Shamsuddin and Rahman (2014, p.13) posits that emotional intelligence "requires being able to monitor, identify, and understand one's own emotions and the emotions of other people and to know the difference between one's own emotions and those of others".

Employee Counterproductive work behavior

The employee counterproductive work behavior (CWB) is an intentional conduct of an employee that is detriment to a firm or other member in the firm, and it includes all activities that have intent to harm (Spector & Fox, 2002). In addition, Gonzalez-Mule *et al.* (2013) posits that the conduct includes dereliction of duty, incorrectly discharge of a task on purpose, verbal hostility, physical aggression, theft and sabotage. The authors stressed further some of the actions are directed towards people they are working together, while others are aimed at organizations. Several researchers have studies CBW, but from different theoretical view which thus results to an increase in the number of terms using in the literature (Spector & Fox, 2002). The CBW was first used to define organizational aggression as behavior which is aimed to harm an organization (Spector, 1978). Subsequently, Hogan and Hogan (1989: 273) defined it as "delinquency"; another author described it as "deviance" (Robinson & Bennett, 1995); Skarlicki and

Folger (1997) described it as "retaliation"; "aggression" was used by Neuman and Baron (1998); while "counterproductive" was used by Fox and Spector (1999); and subsequently, "antisocial and revenge" was used (Spector & Fox, 2002).

The definition of CWB was based on the literature of social psychological aggression (Neuman & Baron, 1998; O'Leary-Kelly *et al.* 1996; Spector, 1978), while others based it on deviance, which includes violation of the rules and norms of a firm (Hollinger, 1986; Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Meanwhile, criminology approach was adopted by Hogan & Hogan (1989) which compares imprisoned felons with a general population of college to achieve insights in respect of the unique traits of people who are involved in what is known as "organizational delinquency". In addition, organizational justice was utilized by Skarlicki & Folger (1997), which put into consideration the CBW as a type of revenge. Emotion-based framework was adopted by Spector & Fox (2002) which suggest that some firms' happenings can result to unpleasant emotions, and might under the normal situations leads to feelings of revenge and hence lead to CWB.

Organizational commitment

According to Boylu, Peli, & Gucer (2007), organizational commitment (OC) is described as "the strength of an individual's ties with the organization" or "behavioral actions resulting from the commitment of individuals". Whyte started the started the discussion on OC in 1956, and the concept has been improved by many scholars (Gulluce *et al.* 2016), and as such several notions abound about commitment. The definition by Mowday *et al.* (1979) has been the most generally acceptable one which described commitment as "the relative strength of an individual's ties with to an organization". In reference to O'Reilley & Chatman (1986), organizational commitment was defined as "the psychological commitment that an individual feels towards an organization" (Korkmaz & Erdogan, 2014). In terms of classification, Allen and Meyer (1996) classified organizational commitment into "affective commitment", "continuance commitment", and "normative commitment". According to Shafiq & Rana (2016), affective commitment indicates when an employee is committed to an organization emotionally, and his/her integration with the commitment. The motivation that an employee has to remain in a firm is his/her emotional commitment and also to be identified with the organization. Under the affective commitment, employee stays in the company not because they need it, but because they want it (Shafiq & Rana, 2016). This is owing to the fact that the employees consider him/herself as part of the firm and thus believe that is necessary that he/she remain with the company. As for the continuance commitment, this emphasizes the commitment in relative to the size of investment that an employee has made in the company. In view of this, the awareness of an employee on the costs to bear by employee if he/she decides to leave the firm is being points out with the continuance commitment. The normative commitment highlights sense of responsibility that an employee

feels about their company to remain. This type of commitment assist employee to display some behavioral actions not because he/she was asked to do so for their own benefit, but owing to the fact it's righteous and ethical (Shafiq & Rana, 2016).

Transformational Leadership

True leadership according to Alston *et al.* (2016) "emerges from those whose primary motivation is deep desire to help others" (p. 12). Greenleaf (2003) also answered who is a servant leader, which was described as "one who is a servant first", "it started with the natural feelings that one want to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead" (p. 16). The identification and definition of the components of transformational leadership was emphasized with Bass (1985) leadership model. The model stated that followers' success and accomplishments are improved by a transformational leader by having influence on their values and needs, and encourage them to work towards more accomplishment than what they considered possible. Moreover, followers' attitudes, beliefs, and values are changed by transformational leader to be in consonant with the attitudes, beliefs and value of their company. The followers are also guide to self-development by a transformational leader, and to higher stages of success. Bass's leadership model consists of four dimensions which are: "charisma", "inspiration", individualized consideration", and "intellectual stimulation".

In the course of their research for over two decades, Kouzes & Posner (2003: 13) found that "credibility is the foundation of leadership". Kouzes & Posner (2003) developed a theory of leadership, termed "Five Practices of Leadership". Leadership was defined as "relationship that was built from a foundation of trust, which enables leaders and followers to seize opportunities and take risks to effect change within an organization ultimately influencing organizational effectiveness while fostering corporate sustainability (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). According to Covey & Gulledge (1994), leaders should endeavor to change themselves before they can stimulate an effective change within their company. Leadership is about practice; and a leader that can improve their understanding on the function and influence of emotions in their place of work, can successfully instill meaning and impact into their company's management structure.

Emotional Intelligence and Counterproductive work behavior

A significant correlation of emotional intelligence with general mental ability and individual characteristics was noticed in the observed by Van Rooy and Viswesvaran (2004), which the study stressed, could provide an explanation for counterproductive work behavior. Similarly, Mesmer-Magnus *et al.* (2010) stated that employee with less emotional intelligence are prone to involvement in unethical activities that involve counterproductive work behavior. The importance of emotional intelligence was stressed by Mayer, Caruso, and Salovey (1999) that it

has a role to play in reducing the deviance that leads to counterproductive behavior that is related to job tasks. Meanwhile, Miao *et al.* (2017) opined that employee with high levels of emotional intelligence are not likely to commit any acts that could results to CBW. This view corroborates the position of Petrides, Furnham, & Mavroveli (2007) who observed that employees with high level of emotional intelligence have less chances of being caught in engaging in any deviant acts than those with low level of EI. A recent study by Al Ghaso *et al.* (2019) that investigates the mediating role of organizational climate in the relationship between EI and CWB in private universities in Jordan found a significant impact of EI on CWB. Therefore, the theory of attribution which states that employee with high levels of EI are less prone to involvement in acts related to CWB is supported with previous studies (Jung & Yoon, 2012). Hence, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H1: Emotional intelligence impact negatively on Employee Counterproductive Work Behavior.

Emotional Intelligence and Organizational Commitment

Abraham (1999) posits that individuals with high level of emotional intelligence are highly optimistic and possess some characteristics that enable them to be resolute and focused. At the workplace, individuals are exposed to arrays of stress, hardship, and challenges which are detriment to their job performance, and their commitment to the organization. However, employees with high level of EI do not apportion the blame of the dissatisfaction to the organization (Levitats & Vigoda-Gadot, 2017). In addition, Abraham (1999) observed that emotional intelligent employee assist his/her company to innovate and tackle challenges. The significant relationship between EI and OC has been established in some studies (Aghdasi *et al.* 2011; Al-Nasser & Behery, 2015; Amjad, 2018; Kumari & Priya, 2015; Levitats & Vigoda-Gadot, 2017; Shafiq & Rana, 2016). Thus, Meyer, Morin, & Vandenberghe (2015) submitted that firms should provide training to improve their employees' emotional intelligence. Amjad (2018) suggests that the commitment of emotionally intelligent employees to their organization does not depend on the internal mechanisms, but they develop favorable working relationship that affects positively their firms' commitment. The impact of EI on the affective commitment was investigated in the study of Devece, Palacios-Marques, & Alguacil (2016), and the study found a significant effect of EI on affective commitment. Meanwhile, Fu (2014) and Ouyang *et al.* (2015) opined that emotionally intelligent employees experience lower work stress which makes them to have high commitment towards their company.

Some studies observed that emotional intelligence not only influence employee commitment to their organization, but also enhance their morale and well-being (Carmeli, 2003; Salami, 2008). It was then suggested in the study of Bennis (2001) that firms should organize trainings and workshop for their employee that will train them on their interpersonal skills which will improve their commitment

and loyalty. Sound interpersonal skills among the employees reduces turnover, hence Carmeli (2003) observed that individuals with high emotional intelligence tend to have positive emotions and will be more committed towards the firm. Thus, we hypothesize a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational commitment among the university staff in Iraq.

H2: There is positive relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational commitment.

Emotional Intelligence, Transformational Leadership, and Counterproductive work behavior

Several studies have demonstrated the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and transformational leadership (TL) to be positive (Alegre & Levitt, 2014; Alston *et al.* 2016; Antoniou, 2005; Biswas & Rahman, 2017; Gardner & Stough, 2002; Goleman *et al.* 2002; Palmer *et al.* 2001; Leban & Zulauf, 2004). It was demonstrated in the study of Alegre & Levitt (2014) that a collection of emotional traits and skills are determinant of effective leadership. In addition, these emotional traits and skills can be identified for leadership selection purpose and development, and also utilize it for improving the effectiveness of leaders. Goleman *et al.* (2002) opined that it is the level of leaders' understanding of the significant function that emotion performs in a company that differentiates the best leader from the others. This assertion corroborates the position of George (2000) who observed that feelings are essential components of leadership, and it is the multiplicity of mood and emotion that impact on the effectiveness of leadership. The linkage between EI, TL, and performance was investigated by Leban and Zulauf (2004), and the study found a significant relationship between EI and TL. Similar study was conducted by Gardner and Stough (2002) who examined EI as a determinant of TL using the "Swinburne University Emotional Intelligence Test (SUEIT)" and Bass (1985) "Multifaceted leadership questionnaire (MLQ)". The study established a significant effect of emotional intelligence on transformational leadership. Similarly, Palmer *et al.* (2001) and Rahim and Psenicka (2005) reported a positive relationship between EI and TL. A recent study by Alston *et al.* (2016) which investigate EI and TL for foster sustainability, found EI to be a significant determinant factor for transformational leadership.

H3: Emotional Intelligence has a positive relationship with Transformational Leadership.

Meanwhile, some studies have found transformational leadership to have impact on counterproductive work behavior (CWB) (Baharom *et al.* 2017; Uddin, Rahman, & Howladar, 2017). Baharom *et al.* (2017) observed that leaders envision the future of their followers and the firm they are leading, but stressed that their style of leadership is a determinant of their influence. This view corroborates the findings of Hornstein (2016) who found that about 60% of employees retaliate

against their organization as a consequent of the abuse from their leader. However, Carless (1998, p.888) observed that transformational leaders "articulate a vision, use participate decision-making, and promote a cooperative and trusting work environment", and thus stops employee from deviating. Transformational leaders change their followers into active, obedient, goal-oriented, and engage less in a deviant acts, striving for the success of their organization (Huang *et al.* 2015; Lee & Feng, 2008). A recent empirical study by Uddin *et al.* (2017) which investigate relationship between transformational leadership and deviant behavior in Bangladesh found a negative relationship, while similar result was established by Baharom *et al.* (2017) who did similar study in Pakistan public organizations. In view of these, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H4: Transformational leadership has a negative relationship with counterproductive work behavior.

H5: Transformational leadership mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and counterproductive work behavior.

Emotional Intelligence, Transformational Leadership, and Organizational Commitment

Several studies have linked emotional intelligence to be significant determinants of transformational leadership in an organization. In addition, some studies posit that emotionally intelligent employees are more committed to their organizations. Meanwhile, transformational leadership has been identified in some previous studies as key determinants of organizational commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Eby *et al.* 1999; Gillet & Vandenberghe, 2014; Khasawneh *et al.* 2012; Mowday *et al.* 1982). This finding has increased the interest of several researchers owing to the positive relationship found between transformational leadership and the commitment of employee to their organization (Khasawneh *et al.* 2012). Thus, transformational leadership is a significant construct that has influence on employee and organizational outcomes. Owing to the relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational commitment of the employees, and the concern of transformational leaders to inspire their followers to accomplish beyond expectation, there is possibility for transformational leadership to mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and the commitment of the employee to the organization. Therefore, the following hypotheses are developed:

H6: There is a positive relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment.

H7: Transformational leadership partially mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational commitment.

Methodology

In this study, the research framework as depicted in Figure 1 indicates the nexus among our variables. A relationship between the emotional intelligence of the employees to the counterproductive work behavior and organizational commitment is proposed in this framework, evaluating the mediating role of transformational leadership. In this study, we contend that emotionally intelligent employee will act less of counterproductive work behavior, and such employee will be more committed to their organization by hypothesizing that transformational leadership will partially mediate the relationship. In order words, emotional intelligence will have direct and indirect influence on employee counterproductive work behavior and organizational commitment.
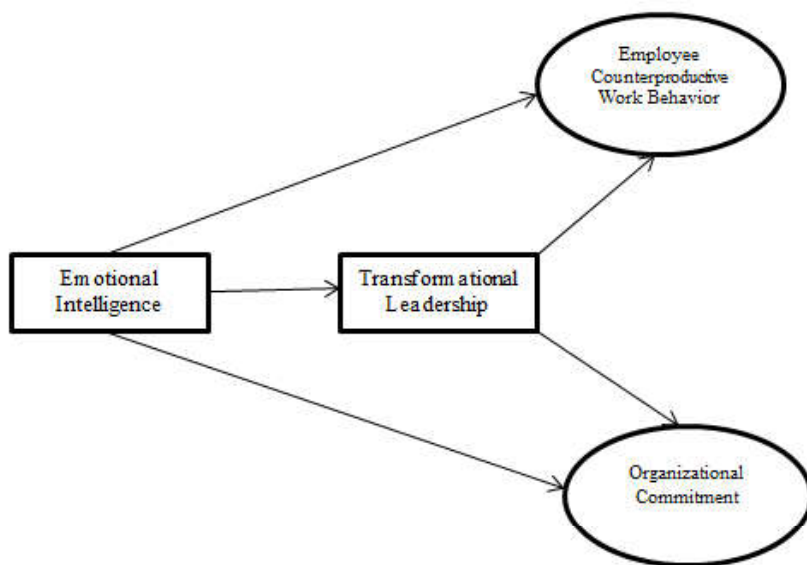

Figure 1. Research framework

Model measurement

The constructs measured in this study included emotional intelligence (EI), transformational leadership (TL), counterproductive work behavior (CWB), and organizational commitment (OC). In order to ensure consistency with previous studies, the questionnaires were translated and normalized in respect of the language to be used in Iraq. The "Trait Meta Mood Scale (TMMS)" was adopted for measuring emotional intelligence. The scale according to Mayer *et al.* (2000) has three dimensions which are interpersonal factors of emotional attention, emotional repair, and emotional clarity with 16 items. 23 items that were adopted

and modified from "Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire" (Bass & Avolio, 2000) was used for measuring transformational leadership. As for the CWB, 33 items adapted and modified from previous studies (Rahman, Ferdausy, & Karan; Appelbaum, Iaconi, & Marousek, 2007) were utilized, while OC was measured with the "Organizational Commitment Questionnaire" adapted from Haghighat Joo, 2005). The instrument contains 24 items examine three dimensions: affective, normative, and continuance commitment. All the items were arranged on a 5-point likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Data Collection

This study was carried out in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. The private universities in the region were contacted through email to seek the consent of their administrative staff participation in the survey. 11 private universities granted our request and 550 questionnaires were distributed to the 11 universities with 50 questionnaires each. 302 out of the 550 questionnaires which are about 54.9% were retrieved as completed and used for analysis. In reference to Kline (2001), a sample size of 100 is sufficient for factor analysis, while Bentler and Chou (1988) suggested that 15 cases for each construct are sufficient in path analysis method. Thus, the sample size was large enough for further analysis. From the descriptive analysis, 209 (69.2%) of the respondents were male, while the remaining 30.5% were female. The statistics also shows that 10.6% of the respondents were between the ages of 18-24 years, and the remaining age groups comprised 25-34 years (43%), 35-44 years (40.7%), 45-54 years (5%), and above 54 years (0.7%). The educational background of the respondents comprised 2.3% (intermediates), 5% (high school), 13.9% (four-year college degree), and 21.5% (graduate degree). The marital status of the respondents shows that 34.8% of the respondents are single, while 65.2% are married. In addition, the examination of the respondents' organization tenure reveals that 7.3% of them have spent less than a year, 19.5% (1-5 years), 22.8% (6-10 years), 29.5% (11-15 years), 14.6% (16-20 years), and 6.3% (over 20 years).

Results

Factor Loading Analysis

In order to ensure the validity of constructs (emotional intelligence, transformational leadership, counterproductive work behavior, and organizational commitment), four separate analyses were conducted. The loading indicators for emotional intelligence are presented as model in Figure 2. The numbers on path in the figure denotes the loadings between EI and its indicators. In reference to Argyris & Schon (1997), a minimum threshold value of 0.5 for loadings was suggested. As

illustrated in Figure 2, the factor loadings for emotional intelligence are all above the threshold. The model fitness for emotional intelligence is presented in Table 1. The table shows that all indices meet the criteria (NFI = .936, CFI = .992, RFI = .900, GFI = .961, RMSEA = .021).

Table 1. Model fitting analysis for Emotional Intelligence

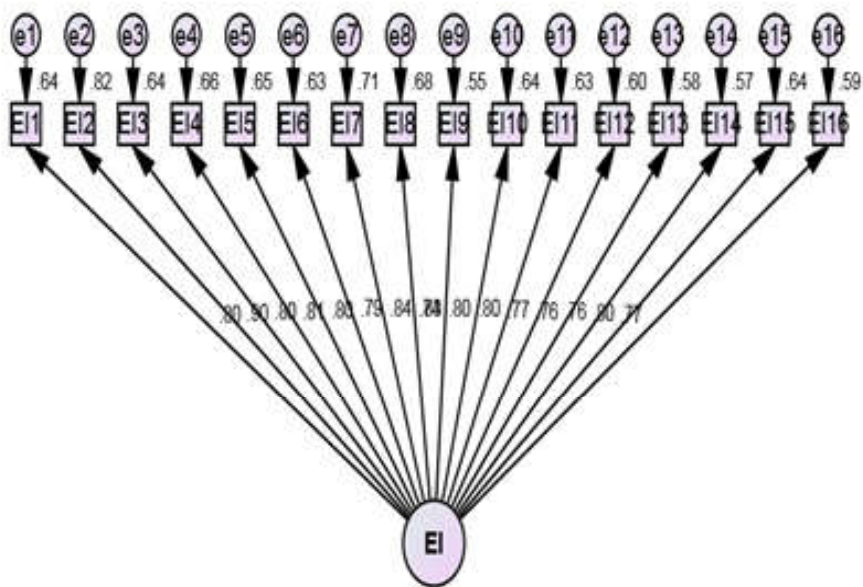| Fit Index	Value	Critical (Acceptable) Value
Normed fit index (NFI)	.936	>0.9
Comparative fit index (CFI)	.992	>0.9
Relative fit index (RFI)	.900	>0.9
Goodness of fit index (GFI)	.961	>0.9
Root means square error of approximation (RMSEA)	.021	<0.08

Figure 2. Emotional Intelligence measurement model

The transformational leadership construct is defined by 23 indicators. This construct is tested to illustrate the measure adequacy of its indicators. *Figure 3* depicts the loadings of the indicators and shows that all the indicators have a loading that is above the minimum threshold of 0.5. The fitness of the model is also presented in *Table 2*. Based on the *Figure 3* and *Table 3*, transformational leadership is well-defined.

Table 2. Model fitting analysis for Transformational Leadership

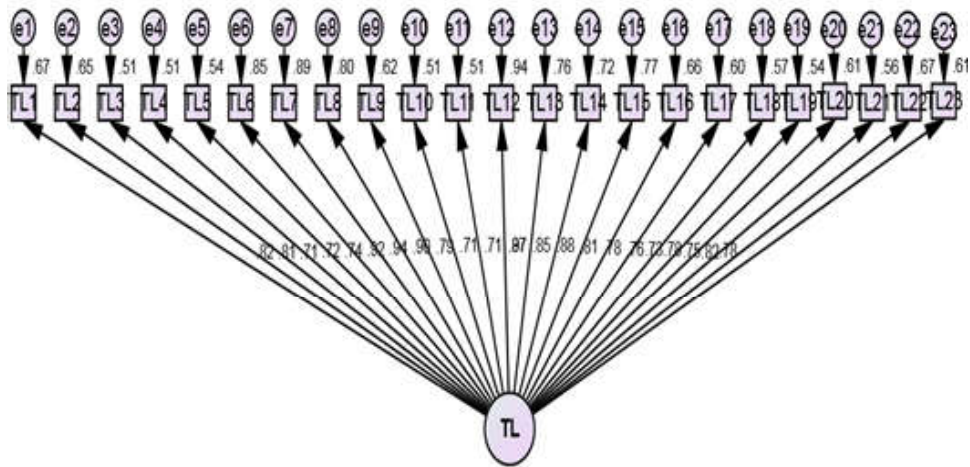| Fit Index	Value	Critical (Acceptable) Value
Normed fit index (NFI)	.987	>0.9
Comparative fit index (CFI)	.990	>0.9
Relative fit index (RFI)	.932	>0.9
Goodness of fit index (GFI)	.957	>0.9
Root means square error of approximation (RMSEA)	.023	<0.08

Figure 3. Transformational leadership measurement model

The employee counterproductive work behavior is defined by 33 items. The result as presented in Figure 4 and Table 3 reveal the adequacy of the indicators, and fitness of the model. The results presented in Figure 4 shows that all the items loads above minimum threshold of 0.5, similarly the model fitness satisfy all the requirements as presented in *Table 3*.

Table 3. Model fitting analysis for Organizational Commitment

Fit Index	Value	Critical (Acceptable) Value
Normed fit index (NFI)	.913	>0.9
Comparative fit index (CFI)	.958	>0.9
Relative fit index (RFI)	.901	>0.9
Goodness of fit index (GFI)	.954	>0.9
Root means square error of approximation (RMSEA)	.053	<0.08

Figure 4. Counterproductive work behavior measurement model

The last construct taken into consideration is organizational commitment. This construct is defined by 24 items. In reference to the results presented in Figure 5 and Table 4, the CFA model indicates adequacy of the model indicators as they all have loading factor above 0.5, while the model fit indices as presented in Table 4 also show that organizational commitment is well-defined.

Table 4. Model fitting analysis for Counterproductive Work Behavior

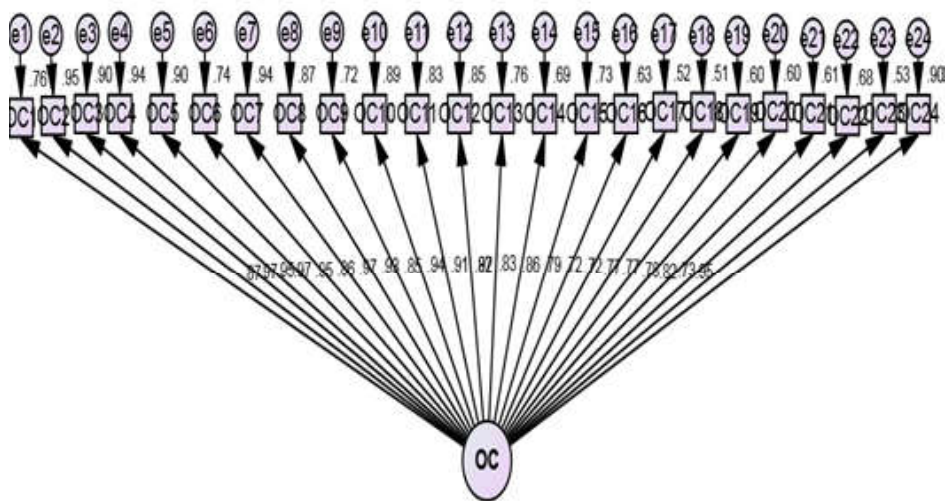| Fit Index	Value	Critical (Acceptable) Value
Normed fit index (NFI)	.903	>0.9
Comparative fit index (CFI)	.990	>0.9
Relative fit index (RFI)	.902	>0.9
Goodness of fit index (GFI)	.926	>0.9
Root means square error of approximation (RMSEA)	.017	<0.08

Figure 5. Organizational Commitment measurement model

Measurement Model

The full measurement model including the four constructs was examined to determine the discriminant validity of factors. As seen in Table 5, the criteria for each of the indices were met (NFI = .911, CFI = .962, RFI = .931, GFI = .945, RMSEA = .072). This is an indication that the full model measurement fits well to the research data.

Table 5. Model fit for model measurement

Fit Index	Value	Critical (Acceptable) Value
Normed fit index (NFI)	.911	>0.9
Comparative fit index (CFI)	.962	>0.9
Relative fit index (RFI)	.931	>0.9
Goodness of fit index (GFI)	.945	>0.9
Root means square error of approximation (RMSEA)	.072	<0.08

Convergent validity

Three phases of convergence validity was defined by Fornell and Larker (1981): a) reliability of items for each measure, i.e the factor loading must be (=) or (>) than 0.5 (Argyris & Schon, 1997); b) Cronbach's alpha of every construct must be (=) or (>) than 0.7 (Nunally & Bernstein, 1994); and, c) the "average variance extracted" (AVE) must be (=) or (>) than 0.5 (Segars, 1997). As presented in Table 6, all the constructs have Cronbach's alpha, and AVE values that meet the threshold requirements. This implies adequacy of the proposed constructs convergence validity of the measurement model.

Table 6. Convergent validity

Construct	Average variance extracted	Cronbach's Alpha
Transformational Leadership	0.89	0.82
Emotional Intelligence	0.75	0.71
Counterproductive Work Balance	0.92	0.91
Organizational Commitment	0.87	0.73

Structure Model Testing

The path coefficients of the model as presented in Table 7 showed that emotional intelligence exerted a significant negative and direct impact on counterproductive work behavior (β = -.202, t = 2.851); thus, hypothesis 1 was accepted. This implied that a unit change in the emotional intelligence of the administrative staff in Iraqi private universities, there will be a reduction of about 0.202 units in the counterproductive work behavior among the staff. The findings showed further that hypothesis 2 and 3 were accepted as a result of the significant positive and direct effect of emotional intelligence on organizational commitment (β = .184, t = 7.702), and the positive and direct effect of emotional intelligence on transformational leadership (β = .803, t = 22.176). These results implied

that, holding all other variable constant, a unit changes in emotional intelligence in the university administrative staff in kurdistan region in Iraq will influence about .184 and .803 units changes in employee organizational commitment and transformational leadership respectively. Results as presented in Table 7 indicated that hypotheses 4 ($\beta = -.553$, $t = 7.966$) and 6 ($\beta = .818$, $t = 35.002$) were accepted as a result of their negative and positive significant coefficients respectively. In other words, a unit changes in the transformational leadership will increase the chances of private universities in Kurdistan region of Iraq to reduce the counterproductive work behavior among the staff, while a unit changes in transformational leadership will enhance the commitment of the staff to the universities.

Table 7. Hypothesis testing (Direct relationship)

Hypothesis	Interaction	Coefficient	T value	P value	Decision
H1	EI CWB	-.202	2.851	.004	Supported
H2	EI OC	.184	7.702	.000	Supported
H3	EI TL	.803	22.176	.000	Supported
H4	TL CWB	-.553	7.966	.000	Supported
H6	TL OC	.818	35.002	.000	Supported

Hypotheses 5 and 7 were to examine the mediating role of transformational leadership in the relationship between emotional intelligence and counterproductive work behavior on one hand, and nexus between emotional intelligence and organizational commitment on the other hand. The results as presented in Table 8 revealed that transformational leadership partially mediated the impact of emotional intelligence on counterproductive work behavior (*indirect effect* = .444**), while transformational leadership also showed a positive partial mediation between emotional intelligence and organizational commitment (*indirect effect* = .656**). Therefore, the two hypotheses were accepted.

Table 8. Mediation Analysis

Hypothesis	Interaction	Indirect effect	P value	Decision
H5	EI TL CWB	.444	.000	Partial mediation
H7	EI TL OC	.656	.000	Partial mediation

Discussion

This study developed and tested a causal model which examined the influence of emotional intelligence on employee counterproductive work behavior and organizational commitment. Specifically, the direct and indirect effect of emotional intelligence on these two variables was investigated through transformational leadership among the staff in private universities in Kurdistan region of Iraq. In the model proposed by some studies, data were analyzed through. In addition to the causal model, the impacts of factors on each other were also studied. In consistent with some previous studies and commonly held beliefs, the findings of this study show that emotional intelligence as a direct and indirect effect on counterproductive work behavior and organizational commitment. In addition, the path analysis result revealed that transformational leadership reduces the counterproductive work behavior, while it improves organizational commitment. Moreover, transformational leadership was found to positively and significantly mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and counterproductive work behavior on one hand, and relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational commitment on the other hand. Theoretically, our findings supports the Goleman *et al.* (2002) hormonal and neural theory that explain the significant impact of emotional intelligence, and also maintained that transformational leadership are effective owing to their ability to create a sense of direction beyond day-to=day task completion, develop vision for the future and armed with ability of managing relationship through honesty. Thus, this study suggests that a leadership training that are associated with culture and competencies and targeted at learning and maintenance should be continually organized.

The significance of emotional intelligence on counterproductive work behavior is consistent with some previous studies (Al Ghazo *et al.* 2019; Jung & Yoon, 2010; Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999; Mesmer-Magnum et al, 2010; Miao *et al.* 2017; Van Rooy & Viswesvaran, 2004). The theory of attribution is supported with our study, which is an indication that employee that is highly emotionally intelligent is less likely to engage in deviant acts. Similarly, this study finding on the effect of emotional intelligence on organizational commitment support some previous studies that demonstrated similar findings in their study and concludes that employees that has high emotional intelligence are more committed to their organization (Al Nasser & Behery, 2015; Amjad, 2018; Kumani & Priya, 2015; Levitats & Vegoda-Gadot, 2017). Meanwhile, in reference to the suggestion by Meyer, Marin, & Vandenberge (2015), organizations should provide training for their employees so as to enhance their emotional intelligence.

Moreover, the belief that emotional intelligence is a determinant of transformational leadership was confirmed in this study. The finding aligns with previous studies that investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership (Alegre & Levit, 2014; Alston *et al.* 2016; Biswas & Rahman, 2017; Goleman *et al.* 2002). The significance of the relationship is

an indication that an effective transformational leader will require emotional intelligence that will enable him/her to direct and manage the followers and the organization towards achieving success. The direct relationship between counterproductive work behavior and organization commitment was examined. It was believed in the literature that transformational leadership should be able to reduce the acts of employee that will lead to counterproductive behavior (Baharom etal. 2017; Hornstein, 2016; Uddin, Rahman, & Howladar. 2017). The finding of these studies was supported with our finding. This implies that the counterproductive work behavior among employee can be reduced with the assistance of a transformational leader. Employees are more likely to be committed to their organization if they are an effective transformational leader that they trusted. The belief was held in some previous studies (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Eby *et al.* 1999; Gillet & Vandenberghe, 2014; Khasawneh *et al.* 2012), and was supported with the finding from this study which demonstrates a positive significance effect of transformational leadership on organizational commitment.

Interestingly, an interesting finding from this study is the significant mediating role of transformational leadership in the relationship between emotional intelligence and counterproductive work behavior, and the relationship between emotional relationship and organizational commitment. This study demonstrates that emotional intelligence has an indirect effect on counterproductive work behavior and organizational commitment through transformational leadership.

The conduct of this research in a developing Middle Eastern country like Iraq is an attempt to contribute to the emotional intelligence literature, and to emphasize the significance of such concept and to increase the awareness of its significance in a third-world country. This study demonstrates that the understanding the counterproductive work behavior and organizational commitment is of utmost importance, which has drastic impact on employees and thus requires a precaution to avoid counterproductive work behavior and enhance organizational commitment. The demonstration of the relationship between EI, CWB, TL, and OC will enable organizations to develop better coping strategies, avoid future conflicts, enhance employees EI, train and re-train the transformational leaders, so as to enhance the commitment of the employees for the organizational success. Characteristics of EI should be the focus of concern to employers, and should be considered as the main prerequisite when recruiting, selecting, and promoting some employees. The private universities in Iraq should attempt to understand the cause of CWB which will make the EI to be effective, and thus the teamwork will increase, boost their loyalty and dedication, and in turn contribute to the sustainable performance of the university.

Conclusion

This study is not devoid of limitations which in the first place the selection of private universities as the unit of analysis. This could lessen the generalization of the findings. In addition, only Kurdistan region was captured in Iraq and as such generalization of the findings should be done with caution, and also only one style of leadership was employed. Meanwhile, the findings and suggestions of the literature and research findings are necessary and significant, future studies should focus on investigating the nexus between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership in respect of trust and job satisfaction, in addition the process by which leaders exert their influence over subordinates. Finally, other style of leadership like charismatic, laissez-fair, democratic leadership and so on should be investigated as a mediator in the relationship between emotional intelligence, counterproductive work behavior, and organizational commitment. Finally, future studies can expand the scope of study so as to enable generalization.

Recommendations

Since emotional intelligence was found to have direct and indirect relationship with employee counterproductive work behavior and organizational commitment through transformational leadership, some suggested are made for organizations to navigate the present dynamic and competitive business environment. First, we suggest that every organization should conduct proper training on improving employees and leaders' emotional intelligence needs. Moreover, an assignment of job autonomy by the managers to the employees gives an emotional autonomy to the employee. In addition, we suggest that understanding-based emotional intelligence through transformational leadership could assist organizations in reducing employee counterproductive behavior, while organizational commitment will be enhanced.

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