The concept of emotional intelligence and its connections with other important psychological constructs have been the focus of a wide range of current research (see Mestre & Fernández-Berrocal, 2007, and Salovey, Woolery, & Mayer, 2001, for reviews). Yet the relationship between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership, a leadership style that is highly correlated with efficiency and satisfaction of the leaders’ followers, has scarcely been analyzed. We hypothesize that individuals who score high in emotional intelligence emerge as leaders more easily than low-emotional-intelligence individuals due to the fact that they are more transformational in their leadership style. We further suggest that this is especially the case in highly cohesive groups. In this study, we test these ideas and find empirical support for our hypotheses.

Introduction

There are several characteristics that are perceived to be relevant for leadership emergence, such as certain mental abilities (Atwater, Dionne, Avolio, Camobreco, & Lau, 1999; Atwater & Yammarino, 1993), personality traits (Hoogh, Hartog, & Koopman, 2005; Houghton, Bonham, Neck, & Singh, 2004), leadership behaviors (Mackenzie, Podsakoff, & Rich, 2001), and the degree of a person’s physical attractiveness (Weierter, 1997), among others. Recent studies suggest that emotions also play a crucial role in the perception and emergence of...
leaders in groups (Pescosolido, 2002). For instance, an individual’s charisma and empathy influence whether he or she is perceived as a leader (Conger, 1999; Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Ketel, Humphrey, & Sleeth, 2002) or as having effective leadership skills (Cooper & Sawaf, 1997; Grossman, 2000). These perceptions, in turn, make leadership emergence more plausible.

Along these lines, emotional intelligence, that is, the ability to perceive, glean information from, and manage one’s own and others’ emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1990), may be related to transformational leadership. This leadership style involves establishing oneself as a role model by gaining the trust and confidence of followers (Bass, 1985, 1998) and has been shown to be highly correlated with the efficiency and satisfaction of the leader’s followers (De-Groot, Kiker, & Cross, 2000; Lowe, Kroec, & Sivasubramanian, 1996; Srivastava & Bharamanaikar, 2004).

Although there is a wide range of research on transformational leadership (see Avolio & Yammarino, 2002; Bass, 1999; and Hunt, 1999, for reviews), the relationship between this leadership style and emotional intelligence has not yet received empirical attention. In this article, we propose a model of the relationship between transformational leadership and emotional intelligence and test it.

### Emotional intelligence: The Concept and Its Relationship to Other Variables

Salovey and Mayer (1990) introduced the concept of emotional intelligence. However, Daniel Goleman promoted the topic in a book titled *Emotional Intelligence* (Goleman, 1995). Following this early publication, several authors explored the concept with different theoretical models (e.g., Bar-On & Parker, 2000; Ciarrochi, Forgas, & Mayer, 2001; Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Parker, Taylor, & Bagby, 2001). Two main approaches emerged: a *mixed model*, which combines emotional abilities with personality dimensions such as optimism and self-motivation abilities (Bar-On, 1997, 2006; Goleman, 1998) and an *ability model*, which focuses on how individuals process emotional information and the analysis of the capabilities that are required for such processing (Brackett & Salovey, 2006; Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999). Mayer and Salovey’s (1997) model focused on emotional constructs, such as the ability to perceive, glean information from, and manage one’s own and others’ emotions (see also Salovey & Mayer, 1990). These theoretical models have influenced studies on the relationship between emotional intelligence and other psychological constructs, such as mental health and physical well-being (Donaldson & Bond, 2004), stress (Moira, Luminet, & Menil, 2006; Salovey, Stroud, Woolery, & Epel, 2002), alexithymia (Parker et al., 2001), and life satisfaction (Augusto, Martinez et al., 2004; Livingstone & Day, 2005; Wolfradt, Felfe, & Koster, 2002).

Previous research also addressed the relationship between emotional intelligence and work-related variables such as emotional work (Wong & Lang, 2002), stress perceptions in the workplace (Bar-On, Brown, Kirkcaldy, & Thomé, 2000), satisfaction (Augusto, Berrios et al., 2006; Augusto, López-Zafra et al., 2006), and performance (Boyatzis, 2006; Lam & Kirby, 2002; Lopes, Grewal, Kadis, Gall, & Salovey, 2006). Finally, several researchers (e.g., Caruso, Mayer, & Salovey, 2002) also focused on leaders’ ability to recognize others’ emotional expressions, how leaders could use emotions to supervise their followers in work groups, and how emotions could be used to develop leadership skills. These abilities and capacities are crucial in leadership processes because they are perceived positively by leaders’ followers.

### Transformational Leadership: The Concept and Its Relationship to Emotional Intelligence

Transformational leadership style was first articulated by Burns (1978) and further developed by Bass and colleagues (Avolio, 1999; Avolio & Bass, 2002; Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1995). An impressively wide corpus of research followed, inspired by a desire to understand the high efficiency of transformational leaders (Bass, 1996, 1998, 1999; Conger & Hunt, 1999; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996; López-Zafra, 2001) and their ability to motivate their followers to improve their performance (Conger & Kanungo, 1998; House, 1977; Lowe et al., 1996).

Transformational leadership style involves establishing oneself as a role model by gaining the trust and confidence of the followers (Bass, 1985, 1998). The relationship that emerges between transformational leaders and their followers is, in fact, very emotional. For instance, transformational leaders generally use emotional support and are able to spread their emotions concerning their own expectations of their followers (Avolio & Bass, 2002; Bass, 1996; López-Zafra & Morales, 2007). They are also able to profit from their followers’ emotional commitment (Dionne, Yammarino, Atwater, & Spangler, 2004). Furthermore, transformational
leaders present several nonverbal emotional cues (e.g., the way they look at other people and their speech fluency) that lead them to be perceived as effective and charismatic leaders (Weierter, 1997).

Most of the work that has focused on transformational leadership and emotions is theoretical (e.g., Bass, 2002; Brown & Moshavi, 2005). This relationship has been considered in only a few empirical studies to date (e.g., Barbuto & Burbach, 2006; Barling, Slater, & Kelloway, 2003; Mandell & Pherwani, 2003; Sosik & Mergerian, 1999). The results of these studies showed that these concepts are related. Specifically, it has been shown that individuals who have high emotional intelligence are also more transformational in their leadership style than those who show low emotional intelligence. However, the factors that could influence the relationship between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership have so far not been specified. Bearing these comments in mind, individual, group, or context variables may play a crucial role in such relationships. Thus, in this article, we go further in the analysis of the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership and propose that specific group variables such as the degree of cohesiveness may be important in the emergence of a leader.

**Group Cohesiveness**

Festinger (1950) defined group cohesiveness as “the resultant forces that are acting on the members to stay in a group” (p. 274). Cohesiveness thus implies the attraction that the group members feel for the group itself and for other group members (Parks & Sanna, 1999), and the social identity that emerges in the group according to the perceived similarity of its members (Hogg, 2000; Turner, 1999). Interestingly, cohesive groups improve the relationships between their members (Levine & Moreland, 1998), showing a strong positive relationship between cohesion and team success (Carron, Bray, & Eys, 2002). Individuals in cohesive groups are also more satisfied with their performance than those in noncohesive groups (Hackman, 1990). Furthermore, highly cohesive groups with positive norms about productivity have a higher performance than groups that are less cohesive (Wech, Mossholder, Steel, & Bennett, 1998). Cohesiveness is also a key concept in the analysis of group behavior because it differentiates mere social categories from real groups (Carron & Bradley, 2000). Finally, when analyzing leadership and cohesion, results show that a significant relationship exists between several leader behaviors, such as training and giving feedback, and team cohesion (Murray, 2006).

In sum, this pattern of relationships and behaviors in groups that are highly cohesive, are well established to be related with the leadership process. However, there is no study that relates these two concepts with emotional intelligence. As we have pointed out in the introduction, some studies have related leadership in general, and transformational leadership in particular, with emotional intelligence in leaders. Our work goes one step further to analyze the role of these three concepts in the emergence of leadership.

In particular, we think that individuals with high emotional intelligence may emerge as transformational leaders, especially in highly cohesive groups, because a leader needs a unified group of followers. Only a few studies, however, have examined the influence of group cohesiveness on emotional intelligence and transformational leadership. For example, Rapisarda (2002) found that groups whose members show emotional intelligence competencies, such as achievement orientation, empathy, influence, leadership, communication, and conflict management, are more cohesive than groups that do not show these emotional competencies. On the other hand, transformational leaders also have a direct influence on the degree of cohesiveness of a group (Pillai & Williams, 2004).

**A Model of Emotional Intelligence and Transformational Leadership**

Bearing these comments in mind, we hypothesize that the relationship between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership will have an effect on leadership emergence. Specifically, individuals who have high emotional intelligence would emerge more frequently as leaders than low-emotional-intelligence individuals because they are more transformational in their leadership style. Furthermore, this might specifically be the case in high-cohesion groups because often their members are more receptive to transformational leaders and pay more attention to their group colleagues than individuals in low-cohesion groups. Several specific hypotheses follow from this general hypothesis. They are plotted in Figure 1 and enumerated below.

**Hypothesis 1:** Individuals who are high in emotional intelligence will also be more transformational in their leadership style than those who are low in emotional intelligence.

**Hypothesis 2:** Individuals who are more transformational in their leadership style will emerge more easily
as leaders in a group than those who are less transformational in their leadership style.

**Hypothesis 3:** Individuals who are high in emotional intelligence will also emerge more easily as leaders in a group than those who are low in emotional intelligence.

**Hypothesis 4:** Individuals who are high in emotional intelligence will emerge as leaders in a group as a result of being more transformational in their leadership style.

**Hypothesis 5:** The influence of transformational leadership and emotional intelligence on leadership emergence will rise in highly cohesive groups.

To test these hypotheses, participants estimated the degree of cohesiveness of their class group. Based on these scores, each participant was classified as belonging to a high- or a low-cohesion group. They further evaluated their own emotional intelligence and leadership style, and they selected from among their classmates those who they thought would be good and bad leaders, respectively.

**Method**

**PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURE**

Two hundred ten undergraduates (45 men and 165 women) from three different groups participated in our study. Participants had a median age of 19 years (range 17–47). Students received course credit for their participation. The proportion of women versus men in our study is due to the gender segregation in the courses. Our participants were all students from health sciences departments, and, in Spain, the proportion of women studying in these courses is about 74.2% (MEC, 2007).

Participants completed a 30-minute set of questionnaires that measured their sociodemographic status and the perceived degree of cohesiveness of their class group, and their emotional intelligence and leadership style (instruments are described below). Afterwards, they selected from their group those who they thought would be good and bad leaders, respectively.

Two groups of undergraduates in their first academic year and a group in the third academic year were selected. We selected these groups to analyze whether the time individuals spent together influences group cohesion and leadership emergence. Individuals were assigned to a high- ($n = 85$) or a low-cohesion ($n = 125$) group, depending on their estimations of the degree of cohesiveness of their own group. Specifically, we analyzed the difference between the three groups in a one-way analysis. We did not find a difference in participants’ estimations of the group cohesiveness when comparing the two groups of undergraduates in the first academic year ($M = 2.75$ vs. $M = 2.93$; $t[1,130] = −1.22$; $p > .05$). Therefore, these two groups were pooled for the subsequent analyses. Participants’ estimations of group cohesiveness were higher in the group of undergraduates in the third academic year than in the (pooled) group of undergraduates in the first academic year ($M = 3.26$ vs. $M = 2.94$; $t[1,208] = 3.04$; $p < .01$).

**INSTRUMENTS**

**Sociodemographic Questionnaire**

Participants gave their gender, age, and academic year. They further reported how many academic years they had spent with their classmates and answered several questions about their class group. All these variables were included in the analyses as independent variables. Specifically, participants estimated
1. How they thought they would be evaluated by their classmates on a scale of 1 (positive evaluation) to 3 (negative evaluation).

2. Their affinity with the members of the class group on a scale of 1 (I feel a very strong affinity with the members of my class group) to 5 (I do not feel any affinity with the members of my class group).

3. The degree of cohesiveness of the class group on a scale of 1 (The group is highly cohesive) to 5 (The group is not cohesive at all).

Evaluation of Emotional Intelligence
On 5-point scales, participants evaluated their emotional intelligence. Specifically, they filled in the Trait Meta-Mood Scale (TMMS-24; Salovey, Mayer, Goldman, Turvey, & Palfai, 1995), which is a 24-item questionnaire that identifies three interpersonal factors: emotional clarity, emotional regulation, and emotional attention.

Emotional clarity refers to an individual’s tendency to distinguish their own emotions and moods (8 items, e.g., “I often perceive my feelings clearly”); emotional regulation refers to an individual’s tendency to regulate their own feelings (8 items, e.g., “Although I am sometimes sad, I generally have an optimistic viewpoint”); emotional attention conveys the degree to which an individual tends to observe and think about their own feelings and moods (8 items, e.g., “I think it is not worth paying attention to my own emotions or moods”).

The Spanish version of the TMMS was administered by Fernández-Berrocal, Extremera, and Ramos (2004). Cronbach’s alpha was .90 for emotional clarity, .86 for emotional regulation, and .86 for emotional attention. This instrument has proved to be very reliable (reliability = .95), and it is suitable to be used in Spanish native samples (Extremera, Fernández-Berrocal, & Salovey, 2006).

Perception of Leadership Style
On 5-point scales, participants evaluated their own leadership style. Specifically, they filled in a reduced Spanish version of the Multifactorial Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) by López-Zafra (1998). This instrument is made up of 22 items and has convergent validity with the MLQ (Bass, 1985). Cronbach’s alpha was .91 for transformational leadership, .62 for transactional leadership, and .58 for laissez-faire. This questionnaire has two forms. Our participants used the self-rating version.

Transformational leadership was assessed by four components from the global transformational leadership scale: Charisma or idealized influence is shown by leaders who act as role models, create a sense of identification with a shared vision, and instill pride and respect from association with them; inspirational motivation is shown by leaders who use emotional support and exhibit excitement about goals and future states; intellectual stimulation is shown by leaders who encourage their followers to rethink their conventional practices and ideas and increase problem solving; and individualized consideration is shown by leaders whose behavior communicates personal respect for followers and who attend to their followers’ individual needs.

Transactional leadership was assessed with two subscales: management by exception is shown by leaders who monitor performance and take corrective action as necessary, and contingent reward is shown by leaders who provide tangible or intangible support and resources to followers in exchange for their efforts and performance. The laissez-faire style was assessed by three items that measured the avoidance or absence of leadership.

Questionnaire About Positive and Negative Elections
Participants selected from among their classmates the individuals who they thought would be good and bad leaders, based on the definition of what is a good and a bad leader provided by the researchers. A good leader was defined as a person who coordinates the group, defends the group members’ interests, and makes them feel comfortable in formal and informal social settings. A bad leader was defined as one who lacks these traits. They were asked to think about all the members of the group, avoiding naming someone because they were friends or people they knew best; they also had to select at least one and not more than three individuals who they considered displayed the characteristics of the definitions. This invited them to think about the public behavior of their classmates. Their answers were anonymous, and individuals were randomly seated.

Results
In our study, we conducted analyses of variance (ANOVAs) with an alpha level of .05. We used Tukey’s HSD (honest significant difference) test in post hoc analyses.

Sociodemographic Data
The analysis of participants’ estimations of how they thought they would be evaluated by their classmates yielded a significant effect of the sex of the participant, $F(1, 208) = 23.84$, $p < .001$. Specifically, female participants thought that they
The analyses of both participants’ degree of affinity with the class group and their estimations of the group cohesiveness yielded a main effect of sex of the participants, $F(1, 208) = 23.85, p < .001$ and $F(1, 208) = 6.07, p = .01$, respectively. In both cases, female participants had a higher degree of affinity than male participants ($M = 2.12, SD = 0.99$ vs. $M = 2.54, SD = 1.04$) and perceived the class group as more cohesive than male participants ($M = 2.78, SD = 0.72$ vs. $M = 3.20, SD = 0.86$).

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND LEADERSHIP STYLE

To analyze the influence of participants’ emotional intelligence on their leadership style, individuals were classified as high or low in emotional clarity, emotional regulation, and emotional attention, depending on whether their scores were above or below the median of the group (see Extremera & Fernández-Berrocal, 2005). We conducted ANOVAs for cohesiveness $\times$ leadership style for each of the three factors of emotional intelligence as dependent variables (see Table 1).

The ANOVA for cohesiveness $\times$ leadership style $\times$ emotional clarity yielded a significant interaction between these three variables: $F(2, 410) = 8.59, p < .001$. To analyze this interaction, we examined the simple cohesiveness $\times$ emotional clarity interactions within the three levels of the leadership style. In transformational leadership, the cohesiveness $\times$ emotional clarity interaction was significant: $F(1, 206) = 26.05, p < .001$. Post hoc analyses showed that participants who had high emotional clarity evaluated themselves as more transformational in their leadership style than those who had low emotional clarity. This pattern of results emerged in both the high- and low-cohesion group ($p < .001$, and $p < .001$, respectively). However, the difference between participants high and low in emotional clarity was greater in the high-cohesion group than in the low-cohesion group ($p < .001$). The simple cohesiveness $\times$ emotional clarity interaction in transactional and laissez-faire leadership did not yield any significant results.

The analysis cohesiveness $\times$ leadership style $\times$ emotional regulation also yielded a significant interaction among these three variables: $F(2, 410) = 2.68, p = .045$. We examined the simple cohesiveness $\times$ emotional regulation interactions within the three levels of leadership style. This interaction was significant in transformational leadership: $F(1, 206) = 4.45, p = .037$. Post hoc analyses showed that participants who were high in emotional regulation evaluated themselves as more transformational in their leadership style than those who were low in emotional regulation. This difference was higher in the high-cohesion group than in the low-cohesion group ($p = .037$). The simple cohesiveness $\times$ emotional regulation interaction in transactional and laissez-faire leadership did not yield any significant effect.

Finally, the analysis cohesiveness $\times$ leadership style $\times$ emotional attention did not yield any significant effect.

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**Table 1. Influence of Emotional Intelligence Factors and Group Cohesiveness on Leadership Style**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotional factor</th>
<th>High cohesion</th>
<th>Low cohesion</th>
<th>High cohesion</th>
<th>Low cohesion</th>
<th>High cohesion</th>
<th>Low cohesion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clarity</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>4.38 (.46)</td>
<td>3.98 (.34)</td>
<td>3.62 (.51)</td>
<td>3.69 (.57)</td>
<td>1.73 (.41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>3.41 (.68)</td>
<td>3.68 (.43)</td>
<td>3.61 (.51)</td>
<td>3.72 (.47)</td>
<td>1.87 (.64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulation</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>4.15 (.63)</td>
<td>3.97 (.39)</td>
<td>3.62 (.49)</td>
<td>3.79 (.60)</td>
<td>1.74 (.62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>3.60 (.81)</td>
<td>3.75 (.40)</td>
<td>3.60 (.54)</td>
<td>3.64 (.45)</td>
<td>1.85 (.61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>3.94 (.73)</td>
<td>3.86 (.41)</td>
<td>3.60 (.48)</td>
<td>3.69 (.54)</td>
<td>1.79 (.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>4.06 (.75)</td>
<td>3.80 (.42)</td>
<td>3.64 (.55)</td>
<td>3.74 (.49)</td>
<td>1.77 (.67)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Means and (standard deviations) are on a scale ranging from 1 to 5, in which higher numbers indicate higher leadership style. Cell ns range from 27 to 73.

---

1 Higher scores in both affinity and cohesion indicate lower estimations.
In contrast with the previous results, participants who were high in emotional attention did not evaluate themselves as more transformational in their leadership style than those individuals who were low in emotional attention ($M = 3.89, SD = .56$, vs. $M = 3.91, SD = .59$).

**LEADERSHIP STYLE AND LEADERSHIP EMERGENCE**

To analyze the influence of leadership style on leadership emergence, participants were classified as high or low in transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles. Specifically, participants were split into high and low groups in each leadership style, depending on whether they were above or below the median of the scores of the corresponding leadership style. As a measure of leadership emergence, we computed the number of positive choices minus the number of negative choices that each participant received. Both positive and negative choices were weighted (with weights of 3, 2, and 1), according to the order in which that participant was selected (i.e., first, second, or third). The higher the order was, the larger the weight. Those individuals who received only one positive or negative choice were not considered in our analyses. We conducted ANOVAs for cohesiveness $\times$ transformational style $\times$ transactional style $\times$ laissez-faire style on the weighted measure of leadership emergence (see Table 2).

The analyses showed an interaction effect between cohesiveness $\times$ transformational style $\times$ laissez-faire style, $F(1, 194) = 6.43, p = .012$. To analyze this interaction, we examined the simple transformational style $\times$ laissez-faire style interactions within the two levels of cohesiveness. In the high-cohesion group, this interaction was significant, $F(1, 81) = 6.741, p = .011$. Post hoc analyses showed that those participants who were both high in transformational leadership and low in laissez-faire leadership style emerged more frequently as leaders than those participants who were high in both leadership styles ($p = .032$). Participants who were both high in transformational leadership style and low in laissez-faire leadership style also emerged as leaders more frequently than those participants who were low in transformational leadership (regardless of whether they were high or low in laissez-faire leadership; $p < .001$ and $p = .035$, respectively). The analysis transformational style $\times$ laissez-faire style in the low-cohesion group did not yield any significant effect.

**EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND LEADERSHIP EMERGENCE**

As in the analyses of emotional intelligence and leadership style, participants were classified as high or low in emotional clarity, emotional regulation, and emotional attention. We analyzed the influence of group cohesiveness and each of the components of emotional intelligence on the weighted measure of leadership emergence.

The ANOVAs for cohesiveness $\times$ emotional clarity and cohesiveness $\times$ emotional regulation yielded significant interactions between these two variables, $F(1, 206) = 2.75$, $p = .049$ (see Table 3) and $F(1, 206) = 6.61, p = .011$, respectively. Specifically, individuals who were high in emotional clarity or high in emotional regulation emerged more frequently as leaders than those who were low in emotional clarity or low in emotional regulation. This pattern of results only emerged in the high-cohesion group ($p = .01$) for the cohesiveness $\times$ emotional clarity interaction, but emerged in both the high- and the low-cohesion group for the cohesiveness $\times$ emotional regulation interaction. In line with the results on emotional intelligence and leadership style, the ANOVA for cohesiveness $\times$ emotional attention did not yield any significant effect. Overall, this component of emotional intelligence did not seem to be related to leadership emergence.

**Table 2. Influence of Transformational and Laissez-Faire Leadership Styles and Group Cohesiveness on Leadership Emergence**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High in transformational leadership</th>
<th>Low in transformational leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High cohesion</td>
<td>Low cohesion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High in laissez-faire leadership</td>
<td>1.13 (3.93)</td>
<td>0.90 (2.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low in laissez-faire leadership</td>
<td>4.65 (1.28)</td>
<td>0.63 (3.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low in transformational leadership</td>
<td>1.50 (4.10)</td>
<td>−1.82 (7.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low in laissez-faire leadership</td>
<td>0.24 (2.62)</td>
<td>0.90 (10.88)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Means and (standard deviations) are on a scale ranging from 47 to −37, in which higher numbers indicate higher leadership emergence. Cell n.s. range from 10 to 42.*
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, LEADERSHIP STYLE, AND LEADERSHIP EMERGENCE

To test whether individuals who were high in emotional intelligence emerged more frequently as leaders as a result of being more transformational in their leadership style, we analyzed the correlation between participants’ scores in the components of emotional intelligence and in transformational leadership, the correlation between participants’ scores in transformational leadership and the weighted measure of leadership emergence, and the correlation between participants’ scores in the components of emotional intelligence and the weighted measure of leadership emergence.

In line with Hypothesis 4, the correlation between participants’ scores in both emotional clarity and emotional regulation and their level of transformational leadership was high (.57, p < .001 and .401, p = .004 in the high-cohesion group and .32, p = .01 and .34, p = .007 in the low-cohesion group). However, the correlation between emotional attention and transformational leadership was not significant (.11, p = .48 and .175, p = .17 in the high- and low-cohesion group, respectively).

When analyzing the correlations between participants’ scores in the components of emotional intelligence and the weighted measure of leadership emergence, we observe that these did not differ from a zero correlation (i.e., .20, p = .19; .12, p = .45; and .015, p = .92 for emotional clarity, regulation, and attention, respectively, in the high-cohesion group; and for the low-cohesion group, .08, p = .54; .11, p = .38; and .071, p = .584 for emotional clarity, regulation, and attention, respectively).

Finally, the correlation between participants’ scores in transformational leadership and the weighted measure of leadership emergence was also high (.55, p < .001 and .20, p = .006, in the high- and low-cohesion group, respectively).

In sum, the correlation between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership and the correlation between transformational leadership and leadership emergence were high. However, the correlation between emotional intelligence and leadership emergence did not differ from zero. Furthermore, this pattern of results emerged more clearly in the high-cohesion group than in the low-cohesion group.

To analyze the influence of the components of emotional intelligence and the leadership style on leadership emergence we conducted a stepwise regression analysis. Our results show that both transformational leadership and transactional leadership styles were the best predictors for leadership emergence. Specifically, transformational leadership had a greater impact on the emergence of leadership (β = 5.58; p < .001) whereas transactional leadership was a negative predictor (β = −1.73; p < .05). That is, the more transformational and the less transactional a person is, the more likely it is that they will emerge as a leader.

The results of these analyses support the hypothesis that individuals high in emotional intelligence emerge more frequently as leaders because they are more transformational in their leadership style.

Discussion

Our research evaluated the extent to which emotional intelligence and transformational leadership are related concepts. We hypothesized that individuals who score high in emotional intelligence frequently emerge as leaders because they are more transformational in their leadership style. Also, we suggested that this is especially the case in highly cohesive groups. These ideas were formalized in a process model and tested.

We found empirical support for our hypotheses. The results in our study showed that individuals high in both emotional clarity and emotional regulation (two key components of emotional intelligence) evaluated themselves as more transformational in their leadership style than those individuals low in both components. On the contrary, there were no differences between high and low individuals in emotional attention and their transformational leadership style.
From these results we may assert that understanding and regulating followers’ emotions seem to be more important to transformational leadership than feeling others’ emotions. Our results are in line with findings by Salovey, Stroud, Woolery, and Epel (2002). These authors showed that individuals who score high in emotional attention often report more anxiety than individuals with low scores in this variable. A possible explanation is that the latter are not as aware of and worried about their affects and use more effective strategies in their relationships (Gohm, 2003). High scores in emotional clarity and emotional regulation are also related to high satisfaction and low anxiety (Extremera et al., 2006; Fernández-Berrocal, Extremera, & Ramos, 2003). In a similar vein, emotional regulation correlates positively with physical and mental health (Extremera & Fernández-Berrocal, 2002). In sum, all these results show that emotional clarity and emotional regulation are good predictors of positive outcomes whereas emotional attention is not.

Furthermore, individuals who were high in transformational leadership and low in laissez-faire leadership emerged very frequently as leaders in an informal context. These individuals were selected very often as good leaders and less often as bad leaders by their classmates. As predicted, this was especially the case in high-cohesion groups. Our results highlight the importance of cohesiveness as a predictor of how much influence the relationship between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership will have on the emergence of leadership. Note that to lead, a leader needs a unified group of followers, and cohesiveness is a key concept in the analysis of group behavior because it differentiates mere social categories from real groups (see Carron & Bradley, 2000).

Supporting our model, the correlation between participants’ scores in emotional intelligence and those in transformational leadership was very high. Also, the correlation between participants’ scores in transformational leadership and scores in leadership emergence was very high. But the correlation between emotional intelligence and leadership emergence was not substantial and did not differ from zero. This result supports the idea that transformational leadership can be thought of as a construct that modulates the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership emergence, influencing the constructive group dynamic and the emergence of a leader. Thus it appears that to emerge as leaders in a class context, individuals high in emotional intelligence needed to be transformational in their leadership style. Simply being high in emotional intelligence did not seem to be enough. As in the previous results, this was especially the case in the high-cohesion group.

In sum, our study contributes to knowledge about emotional intelligence and transformational leadership in several ways. First, our results support the recent attempts to investigate affective processes in leadership (e.g., Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002; George, 2000). Second, we show that the relationship between transformational leadership style and emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in the emergence of leaders, but the impact is mediated by group cohesiveness. Finally, we also show that possessing the emotional-intelligence components of emotional clarity and regulation promoted the perception of an individual as a leader, but only if these individuals were transformational in their leadership style. In line with other research (e.g., Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003), our study also revealed that being laissez-faire correlates negatively with the emergence of leadership. It seems to be easier for an individual who has spent time in a group and feels connected to their group members to emerge as a leader if they are transformational in leadership style and high in emotional intelligence. Therefore, emotions and affect are key aspects in the perception of individuals as transformational leaders (Brown & Keeping, 2005).

In our study, participants selected from among their classmates those they thought would be good and bad leaders. Therefore, leadership emergence was based on group members’ judgments. However, participants evaluated themselves on the leadership styles and emotional intelligence scales. Consequently, their scores could be inflated (López-Zafra, 1998). In future research it would be interesting to have external ratings of the emergent leaders. Another question requiring future research is whether our results also hold in a formal leadership context (e.g., managers in a workplace).

In summary, the findings of this study are a promising starting point for future research in formal contexts and also have a direct implication for training leaders and coaches. It is important to train leaders not only about effective behaviors but also about understanding and managing emotions, as they both influence cohesion, and consequently, results from the group.

References


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