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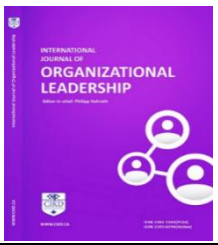

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Employees' Emotional Intelligence in Private vs Public Organizations and Performance: The Mediation Effect of Transformational Leadership in a Time-lagged Study

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ABSTRACT

Research about transformational leadership has demonstrated a bond with emotional intelligence. Employees under a transformational leadership relationship score higher on both constructs. However, whether this result is comparable across public and private organizations remains a research gap. This study examines the relevance of private versus public workers' emotional intelligence in perceiving their leader´s transformational style and its impact on both objective (production rate) and subjective (satisfaction) performance. In a two-time response design, 423 workers (239 men and 184 women) in T1 and 305 workers (167 men and 138 women; 72.10%) in T2 responded about their leader´s leadership style. The results confirm the relationship between the worker's emotional intelligence and subjective performance, with perceived transformational leadership serving as a mediator in this relationship for private organizations. However, in public organizations, the higher the level of perceived transformational leadership, the lower the percentage of productivity. Thus, the type of organization (private versus public) moderates this mediational relationship, which is maintained over time. In summary, employees' perceptions of their leader's leadership style in private organizations are more relevant than in public organizations, with higher levels of performance in the former compared to the latter. Therefore, this paper contributes to the knowledge base by addressing the shortcomings of recent studies through the incorporation of an organizational effect type in a two-time-lagged approach (T1-T2). This time-lag study examines the importance of workers' emotional intelligence in understanding the role of transformational leadership in performance in private versus public organizations. These findings help in making decisions about leadership training.

Employees face diverse work demands in all countries, stemming from recent crises (e.g., economic, pandemic), which prompts them to actively reassess their priorities (Tessema et al., 2022). However, the way they can do it depends on the context in which they work, as well as their job and personal demands-resource balance (Demerouti & Bakker, 2023). Considering the Job demands-resources theory (JD-R; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Demerouti et al., 2001), the balance between personal and job demands and resources reduces burnout, whereas it improves engagement, promoting better results in work (Bakker et al., 2014). In this theory, leadership is a job resource that has trickle-down effects of leaders on employees. Although different leadership styles have been proposed as positive (as opposed to abusive leadership, which is demanding), several studies indicate a limited contribution of these proposals beyond the Transformational Leadership (TFL) style (Hoch et al., 2018; Lopez-Zafra et al., 2022). Therefore, TFL is still considered the prevailing leadership style in recent research and practice (Carasco-Saul et al., 2015; Thanh et al., 2022) and it is included as a job resource in the JD-R theory (Bakker et al., 2023; Cortés-Denia et al., 2024). In this context, research indicates that the TFL indirectly contributes to improved job performance and satisfaction by sharing perceptions of job demands and resources with their followers (Bakker et al., 2023); ultimately, this enhances organizational performance, as expressed by increased productivity (Katou et al., 2022).

However, previous studies focus on subjective performance and fail to differentiate it from objective performance or productivity. Moreover, research often bases itself on employees' perceptions of their leaders' leadership style, failing to differentiate between private and public contexts to analyze the effects on performance (which may be subjective) and productivity (which should be objective). Therefore, there is a gap in the literature about addressing these aspects in a joint study in which the research problem is specifically considered. This study makes a contribution to the existing knowledge about the relationships among variables that have been studied separately but not included in a comprehensive model. In fact, this study proposes a novel approach by extending the JD-R theory. Specifically, we consider the context in which the leader-follower relation takes place (private vs. public organizations) and also the effect that this context may have on the final outcome (subjective performance and objective performance or productivity). Moreover, we incorporate a personal resource related to workers´ wellbeing (i.e., emotional intelligence). Emotional Intelligence (EI) encompasses several emotional competencies (Mayer et al., 2016) and refers to the ability to perceive and express emotions, consider emotions when thinking or making decisions, understand emotions, and regulate emotions in oneself and others. Employees with a higher level of EI tend to experience more positive feelings, which are effectively reinvested in their work (Jordan et al., 2002). Additionally, this personal resource could help to pertain to a profile that has higher levels of effort and commitment and to have a perceived positive leader (i.e., authentic leader; Pulido-Martos et al., 2023).

Indeed, there is an emotional face of leadership that has increased in attention to the role of affect in leadership (Cropanzano et al., 2020; van Knippenberg & van Kleef, 2016). In this context, research has shown that transformational leaders foster commitment and trust through effective communication and emotional intelligence (Kim & Kim, 2017; Pulido-Martos et al., 2024). They possess high levels of charisma or idealized influence, creating a climate of trust and acting as a reference model. They also exhibit high inspirational motivation, generating

enthusiasm for work, promoting high intellectual stimulation that fosters creativity and problem-solving abilities, and considering all members of a workplace (Bass & Avolio, 1997). These characteristics imply that the leader is a resource, but also provides useful resources to their employees. Moreover, these characteristics are emotional and have led to a wide corpus of research on the TFL-EI bond (Kim & Kim, 2017; Lopez-Zafra et al., 2017) and its impact on performance. Likewise, it has been analyzed that TFL leaders with emotional skills have better results (Görgens-Ekermans & Roux, 2021). In addition, in work groups with TFL, an emotional contagion occurs that generates groups of employees with a higher level of EI (Lopez-Zafra et al., 2017). This implies that employees working with emotionally intelligent transformational leaders are also high in their personal emotional intelligence resources. In sum, TFL leaders who are emotionally intelligent directly impact individual job performance (see Coronado-Maldonado & Benítez-Márquez, 2023 for a review), due to the influence that EI instills on some TFL behaviours (Görgens-Ekermans & Roux, 2021; Hur et al., 2011). However, there is a research gap regarding the influence of context (Shao, 2024), and thus, we contribute to the knowledge by comparing the process in public versus private organizations.

The TFL- EI Relation to Subjective Performance and Objective Performance (Productivity)

The positive link between TFL- performance is a well stablished result (i.e., Breevaart et al., 2016; Buil et al., 2019; Hetland et al., 2018; Saleem et al., 2019; Uddin et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2011), in different cultural contexts (Hermosilla et al., 2016). Moreover, recent interest has been shown in the impact of this bond on performance (Saha et al., 2023). However, although studies have addressed the different variables that could impact this relation (Khan et al., 2020), there are some antecedents that could help further explain it, which we include as a novelty in this study (i.e., the emotional intelligence of their employees and the private vs. public context).

We contribute to the debate about the relationship between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and job performance, which yields contradictory results in the literature. Some studies found significant positive relationships between EI and performance, both subjective (Brasseur et al., 2013; Schlaegel et al., 2020; Sendaro & Baharun, 2020) and objective (Gignac et al., 2012). But, other studies fail to show any significant relationship (Turner & Lloyd-Walker, 2008). Moreover, Ma et al. (2020) found that in public companies, the performance in positions with high emotional demands depends on the level of EI. However, these results are not confirmed in private companies. Thus, considering performance in both its objective and subjective dimensions, as well as the type of organization (private vs. public), could help shed light on this debate. Furthermore, most studies consider only direct relationships but do not delve into the mediation and moderation effects. To delve deeper into this, TFL is considered a mediator between EI and performance (subjective) and productivity (objective performance).

In this study, we include employees´ emotional intelligence as a personal resource and type of organization (public vs. private) as a contextual resource that could mediate differences found in performance (objective performance and subjective performance or productivity) as an outcome. In fact, the study of the bond TFL-EI has several shortcomings, recently highlighted by Shao (2024), which we address by contributing to the knowledge in this regard. Among these, leader affect research has been mainly restricted to the effect on the part of leaders, not considering the affective variables of followers. Moreover, context is underappreciated in leader

affect research, whereas considering context can provide valuable insights beyond those offered by a context-free approach. Finally, the existing research on this topic pays little attention to temporal variations in leader affect, and our research includes two temporal moments to analyze the temporal stability and variance of the model.

To further contribute to the knowledge about this link, we consider the context of the organizations. Context comprises environmental or situational stimuli that provide constraints on and opportunities for behavior, as well as the assignment of meaning to that behavior (Johns, 2024). Regarding leadership, Liden and Antonakis (2009) refer to context as the physical and social environment in which leadership is observed. We focus on public and private organizations, as we hypothesize that differences in their employees' labor conditions affect their personal relations and thus act as a contextual resource. By including the type of organization (public vs. private), we shed light on the differences found in both sectors that coexist to meet society's demands. The former focuses on public administration, whose objectives depend on the poll booth, and the latter on the marketplace. Both are needed and coexist; however, clear differences make them have different results. Public organizations have leaders in a higher rotation and they face higher levels of goal ambiguity than private organizations; however, they have higher working stability (Boyne, 2002). This implies a perception of the insignificant contribution of leaders in public organizations (van Wart, 2003), as they are limited in opportunities to change or improve results (Dull, 2009). Despite the increasing interest in applying new human resource management practices to public organizations, primarily to enhance employee performance (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011), these practices are often borrowed from private organizations (Blom et al., 2020). As a consequence, public and private sector employees are almost equally affected by ability-, motivation- or opportunity-enhancing practices, and a "blurring effect" (Rainey & Chun, 2007) may reduce the differences. There is a need to perform research addressing the relationship between TFL and performance in both private and public organizations. Most studies focus on the private sector (e.g., Buil et al., 2019) and are cross-sectional, whereas a smaller number of studies focus on the public sector (Sun & Henderson, 2017; Suriyanti, 2020). Therefore, our study contributes to the debate about the research gap regarding the role of the type of organization (i.e., private versus public) in the referred relationship. This is of great importance, as it may affect the way leaders behave in different contexts. For example, research comparing public and private hospitals reveals that this context influences the way nursing professionals encounter difficulties, which is often shaped by fundamental management issues related to organizational behavior, such as leadership, perception of organizational support, and organizational commitment (Freire & Azevedo, 2024).

In this study, we shed light on these aspects by considering a time-lag perspective on followers' emotional intelligence (an affective variable) in two different contexts (public vs. private organizations). This study also contributes to knowledge by adopting a time-lag approach, examining the invariance of effects over time (i.e., testing a two-time model). Most studies regarding the effects of EI and transformational leadership on job performance are cross-sectional (Brasseur et al., 2013; Gignac et al., 2012; Li & Hung, 2009; Manaf & Latif, 2014; Monus & Ayhün, 2024; Schlaegel et al., 2020; Sendaro & Baharun, 2020; Uddin et al., 2017) and thus, there is a gap in the maintenance of the effect across time.

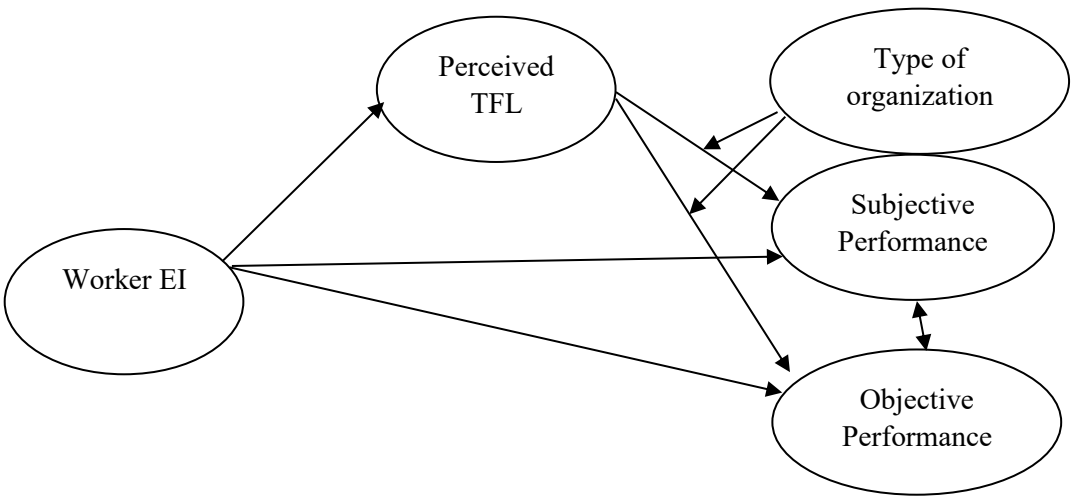
In summary, the present study addresses several shortcomings of recent studies on the relationship between EI and TFL by employing a time-lag approach. Furthermore, it aims to deepen the analysis of the mediating role of TFL in the relationship between EI and job performance (both subjective and objective). Finally, this relationship is examined in relation to the type of organization (i.e., private versus public), testing the moderating role of the organization (see Figure 1 for the proposed model).

Our study differentiates from the existing literature in considering the moderator role of the organization. Previous studies have made differences between results found in private and public organizations, but fail to consider the type of organization as a possible moderator. Furthermore, studies often focus on subjective performance, whereas we also consider objective performance based on productivity. Finally, considering two-time measurement allows us to identify whether the TFL style is maintained or not, and its consequences. In particular, we propose that the TFL is perceived as stable and thus will be maintained.

Therefore, we predict that the link between EI (as an antecedent) and performance/productivity (as a result) will be mediated by TFL (H1) and moderated by the type of organization (private versus public organizations) (H2), which will be maintained over time (H3).

Figure 1

Proposed Model of Relations



Method (Time 1)

Procedure and Sample

Five researchers contacted private and public organizations (n = 130) from the North (Basque Country) and South of Spain (Andalusia), using a non-probability sampling technique to ensure quality and representativeness, considering geographic availability and travel costs. 68.48% gave all necessary permissions and allowed the questionnaires to be administered in work settings. As inclusion criteria, participants had to have had a personal face-to-face interaction with the leader, be in the job for a minimum of six months, and agree to have a unique code to respond a second time. The study protocol and procedures were approved by the Ethics

Committee of the University of the first author (Ref. CEIH 300514-2), and informed consent was obtained from all participants.

The final sample consisted of 423 workers (239 men and 184 women) with a mean age of 42.57 (*SD* = 10.82, range = 20-73 years old) who belonged to private (n = 70) and public (n = 19) organizations. The mean time working at the organization was 16.5 years (*SD* = 13.74).

Instruments

Evaluation of the perception of the leader's leadership style. Participants completed a short Spanish version of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) (Avolio et al., 1995) by Lopez-Zafra (1998). Only the 13 items related to TFL were used (Ordinal α = .96 for the global scale) to evaluate their perceptions of their leaders' leadership style on 5-point scales. In particular, TFL contains four components: (a) Charisma or idealized influence (Ordinal α = .86) is shown by leaders who act as role models, create a sense of identification with a shared vision, and instill pride and respect by association ("He/she is able to overcome any obstacle"); (b) Inspirational motivation (Ordinal α = .93) is shown by leaders who use emotional support and exhibit excitement about goals and future states ("He/she develops new ways of motivating us"); (c) Intellectual stimulation (Ordinal α = .93) is shown by leaders who encourage their followers to rethink their conventional practices and ideas and increase problem-solving ("He/she worries about our training"); and finally, (d) Individualized consideration (Ordinal α = .89) is shown by leaders whose behavior communicates personal respect to followers and who attend to their followers' individual needs ("Gives advice to those who need it").

Evaluation of EI in workgroups. Using 5-point scales, the participants evaluated their perceived EI in their workgroup by completing the WEIP-S (Jordan & Lawrence, 2009; Spanish validation by Lopez-Zafra et al., 2012). This 16-item questionnaire identifies four factors: two involving intrapersonal abilities related to awareness of one's own emotions (Ordinal α = .89) (e.g., "I can talk to other members of my group about my feelings") and management of one's own emotions (Ordinal α = .83); (e.g., "When I am frustrated with a group member, I can overcome my frustration"); and two measuring abilities related to dealing with others and drawing on interpersonal abilities: awareness of the emotions of others (Ordinal α = .89) (e.g., "I am able to accurately describe how other group members feel") and management of others' emotions (Ordinal α = .92) (e.g., "I am able to cheer up other members when they feel dejected"). The global internal consistency is .74.

Evaluation of performance. To assess subjective performance, participants completed the Team workgroup questionnaire (TWG; Aubé et al., 2000). This questionnaire comprises 10 Likert-items scored from totally disagree (1) to totally agree (5) and is composed of three factors: quality of the group experience (i.e. social climate at work is good); viability of the team (i.e. new members are easily integrated into this team); and team performance (i.e. members of the team perceived that the assigned objectives of the group are accomplished). The internal consistency measured with ordinal α (Zumbo et al., 2007) of these factors is .96, .84, and .91, respectively. The global internal consistency is .88.

Goal achievement has been used in previous studies (e.g., Chen et al., 2015; Janssen & Van Yperen, 2004) to assess objective performance. In this vein, the percentage of goal achievement in the last year was collected by the researcher from the leader of the organization and ranked

on a scale of 1-4 (1: from 0 to 25 percent; 2: from 26 to 50 percent; 3: from 51 to 75 percent; 4: from 76 to 100 percent).

Sociodemographic variables: Individuals reported their sex, age, and educational level. The researcher included the category type of organization (private versus public) in the database after acknowledging the acute information from the organization.

Data Analysis

To test the pattern of relationships among variables, namely EI, TFL, objective performance, and subjective performance, we used structural equation modelling (SEM) with Lavaan package of RStudio, AMOS 26, and Lisrel 8.52. The estimation method used was maximum likelihood with a robust (Huber-White) standard, which is commonly employed for SEM when there is a moderate violation of normality in the data (Ganac & Broc, 2019). The adjusted model was examined by the ratio Chi square statistic (X^2) and degrees of freedom, which is considered good below 3, residual mean squared error approximation (*RMSEA*), with index values below .08 indicating a proper fit and Standarized Root Mean Residual (SRMR) which if it is above 1 suggest a problem with the fit (Hair et al, 2014). Furthermore, we used a normed fit index (*NFI*) and comparative fit index (*CFI*), which are best if above .90; however, values higher than .95 are recommended for model acceptance (Kline, 2015). To determine the internal consistency of the instruments, we estimated the Cronbach (Elosua & Zumbo, 2008) and Omega coefficients (Zumbo et al., 2007).

Results

The factorial structure of all measurement models demonstrates a good fit of the measures (see Table 1). Descriptive statistics and inter-correlations of all measured variables in Time 1 (T1) are presented in Table 2. As expected, the associations between all variables were positive and moderately correlated. EI was positively correlated with TFL. However, when analyzing the relationships between objective and subjective performance, correlations show that subjective performance is positively related to all the EI and TFL dimensions, whereas the percentage of goal achievement (objective performance) is only positively related to subjective performance.

Table 1

Goodness of Fit Indices for the Tested Measures

	χ^2 [a]	df[b]	NNFI[c]	CFI[d]	GFI[e]	RMSEA[f]
EI	1239.58***	54	.57	.65	.15	.18
TFL	300.81***	52	.91	.93	.09	.08
SubjPer	604.61***	42	.74	.83	.08	.14

Note. EI = emotional intelligence; TFL= transformational leadership; SubjPer= subjective performance; [a]Chi square [b]Degrees of freedom [c]Non-normed fit index [d]Comparative fit index [e]Godness of fit index [f]Root mean square error of approximation [g]Confidence interval ***$p < .001$.

Table 2

Descriptives, Convergent and Discriminant Validity Values and Correlations among the variables of Interest (T1: n=423)

	Mean (SD)	A	AVE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Charisma	3.99 (.74)	.81	.58	1														
2. Indiv_Consid	3.96 (.86)	.83	.77	.79**	1													

3. Insp_Motivat	3.76 (.89)	.88	.76	.83**	.84**	1														
4. Intelectual_Est	3.89 (.81)	.86	.67	.79**	.83**	.80**	1													
5. TFL	3.91 (.76)	.95		.93**	.93**	.94**	.92**	1												
6. Own_aware	5.31 (1.17)	.89	.74	.29**	.32**	.36**	.30**	.34**	1											
7. Own_manage	5.68 (.98)	.80	.54	.15**	.16**	.16**	.16**	.17**	.45**	1										
8. Other_aware	5.06 (.96)	.85	.64	.22**	.19**	.24**	.24**	.24**	.38**	.38**	1									
9. Other_manage	5.32 (.98)	.89	.74	.27**	.29**	.31**	.31**	.32**	.477**	.39**	.52**	1								
10. Weip_Total	5.34 (.78)	.90		.31**	.32**	.36**	.33**	.36**	.79**	.72**	.74**	.78**	1							
11. Viability	4.14 (.65)	.81	.61	.39**	.40**	.43**	.40**	.44**	.39**	.28**	.20**	.32**	.40**	1						
12. Experience	4.21 (.79)	.93	.90	.41**	.43**	.47**	.40**	.46**	.33**	.25**	.17**	.29**	.35**	.73**	1					
13. Performance	4.09 (.67)	.85	.74	.25**	.25**	.28**	.24**	.28**	.23**	.21**	.16**	.22**	.27**	.66**	.55**	1				
14. Performance Total	4.16 (.61)	.91		.40**	.42**	.45**	.40**	.45**	.36**	.28**	.20**	.32**	.39**	.90**	.88**	.83**	1			
15. Objective Performance	3.43 (.67)			-.05	-.00	-.04	.01	-.03	.08	.04	.11*	.08	.10*	-.00	-.01	.10*	.03	1		

Note. *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$ Source: Authors own work. (SD)= Standard deviation; AVE = Average variance extracted.

Structural Model

According to previous literature, we estimate a model of predictions for EI regarding TFL and both subjective and objective performance. In the first step, the model includes the direct predictive effects of EI on both subjective performance and objective performance (i.e., goal achievement), as well as on transformational leadership. In turn, TFL maintained predictive effects on subjective and objective performance. The results showed that the model fit the data well ($\chi^2 = 65.12$; df = 49; $p < .001$; CFI = .99; TLI = .98; SRMR = .03; RMSEA = .03). Moreover, convergent validity and reliability were evaluated using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), given correlations are significant among the variables studied (Hair et al., 2014). These results were satisfactory, yielding values above .50 for AVE (Cheung et al., 2024). The Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations, with a threshold value of 0.85, was used to examine discriminant validity in variance-based SEM (i.e., partial least squares). In this study, the results met this requirement, and considering both exploratory and validity analyses, we could assert that there is no overlap among the constructs (TFL, WEIP-S, and the evaluation of performance). Thus, they are measuring different aspects (see Table 3). Results also indicate that, for the correlations among the TFL style, these dimensions measure the same construct and could be considered a global dimension.

Then, we conducted regression analyses to test the mediation effect of TFL in the relationship between EI and performance (both subjective and objective) (H1). Conditions are addressed as the regression on TFL about EI has a significant standardized beta ($\beta = .353$, $t = 7.86$; $p = .000$); the regression on subjective performance for EI has a significant standardized beta ($\beta = .392$, $t = 8.88$; $p = .000$); and the regression on subjective performance regarding EI and TFL has a significant standardized beta as well, indicating a significant effect of TFL on subjective performance ($\beta = .35$, $t = 8.06$; $p = .000$), being the effect of EI on subjective performance lower in the third regression (.30) than in the second regression (.44). As a result, it can be concluded that TFL mediates the relationship between EI and subjective performance (Baron & Kenny, 1986). However, as the regression considering the effect of TFL on objective performance is

not significant, we can conclude that there is insufficient evidence to support the existence of a mediating role of TFL in the relationship between EI and objective performance.

Table 3

Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) Results (T1: n = 423)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Charisma	1									
2. Indiv_Consid	.96	1								
3. Insp_Motivat	.98	.99	1							
4. Intelectual_Est	.94	.99	.91	1						
5. Own_aware	.36	.41	.43	.37	1					
6. Own_manage	.26	.26	.24	.25	.54	1				
7. Other_aware	.26	.21	.27	.29	.43	.45	1			
8. Other_manage	.33	.4	.37	.38	.50	.45	.57	1		
9. Viability	.52	.48	.55	.48	.48	.32	.22	.34	1	
10. Experience	.48	.50	.55	.45	.41	.31	.20	.33	.84	1
11. Performance	.33	.32	.34	.29	.29	.22	.15	.21	.79	.63

Method (Time 2)

To analyze H2 and H3, in which we examine the measurement invariance of the relations among variables (i.e. EI, TFL, and performance), and the moderation role of the type of organization in a time-lag period, four months after the first administration participants responded to a second wave. As criteria, participants had to have the same position over this period in the organization, and responded about the same T1 leader.

Data and Sample

72.10% of the initial sample met the inclusion criteria (same position, same leader) and responded to the T2 (n = 305: 167 men and 138 women) four months later. The sample had a mean age of 42.98 (*SD* = 10.98; range, 23-73 years old) and consisted of individuals from different private (n = 51) and public (n = 17) organizations. The mean time working at the organization was 12.68 years (*SD* = 11.10). The procedure, ethics and instruments were the same as in T1.

Results

Concerning H3, the structural model of T1 was replicated with the data obtained in T2. The resulting model showed an appropriate adjustment, ($\chi 2$ = 89.79; df = 49; $p < .001$; CFI = .98; TLI = .97; SRMR = .04; RMSEA = .05). Moreover, invariance was evaluated for all variables studied (subjective performance, objective performance, emotional intelligence, and transformational leadership). A structural model was established for each of them, in which the model of measurement of each variable in T1 and T2 was related, establishing a causal relationship between the two models (regression). The criteria applied in this structural model were that if the beta values obtained approached one and the error variance associated with the latent variables in T2 approached 0, the invariance was fulfilled. Furthermore, the model should have a good fit. For all variables in the study, invariance was verified, concluding that all the relationships maintained in T1 were also maintained in T2 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1996).

The obtained values were: EI in T1 and T2 (β = 1.06; χ^2/df = 1.64; $p < .001$); subjective performance in T1 and T2 (β = .84; χ^2/df = 1.42; $p < .000$); percentage of goal achievement in T1 and T2 (β = .89; χ^2/df = 0; $p < .000$); and TFL in T1 and T2 (β = .98; χ^2/df = 1.64; $p < .000$). Therefore, these values indicate that there is invariance for the jointed structural model in T1 and T2, supporting H3. Moreover, the variances of the residual errors associated with each variable in T2 were very close to zero, with values ranging from .05 to .02.

In sum, the joint factorial structure remains invariant across the two time points measured, and the postulated relationships in T1 are invariant with respect to T2, thus supporting H2. Similar results are obtained for the relationship between EI and subjective and objective performance, with evidence supporting the hypothesis.

Once the general relation model (mediation of TFL in the relationship between EI and performance) was tested in T1 and T2, we aimed to test whether the type of organization moderated the model (H2). To address this aim, we run a multiple-group fit to test the invariance of the model across the types of organization at both times. Results show that there is a variance between groups (χ^2 = 186.46; df = 50; $p < .001$; NCP = 113.81; 90 Percent Confidence Interval for NCP = 78.79; 156.43). When considering each parameter (private vs. public/objective vs. subjective performance), the results show that the effect of TFL on subjective performance is significant in both types of organizations (β = .40, t = 5.82; p = .01 for private vs. β = .38, t = 3.80; p = .01 for public organizations). However, there is a differential effect of TFL on objective performance, which is significant only for public organizations, but in a negative sense (β = -.26, t = -2.34; p = .01 in public organizations vs. β = -.06, t = -.91; $p > .01$ for private organizations). This difference could explain the variance between groups. Finally, the variances of the residual errors associated with each variable in T2 were very close to 0, obtaining values between .05 and .02; thus supporting the replication of the variance in T2.

Discussion

This study contributes to knowledge about the relationship between perceived TFL (job resource) and employees´ EI (personal resource) in organizational outcomes (subjective performance and objective performance or productivity), considering different organizational contexts (private vs. public) in a time-lag study.

The findings obtained in T1 and replicated in T2 verify that EI of workers is a personal resource acting as an antecedent of performance and is mediated by the perception employees have of their leader's transformational leadership style. However, our results show that TFL predicts the subjective, but not the objective performance (i.e., goal achievement or production rate). Thus, previous evidence regarding the relationship between subjective performance, and TFL (Li & Hung, 2009; Manaf & Latif, 2014) is confirmed in this study, but the relationship between TFL and objective performance proven by previous studies (i.e., Breevaart et al., 2016; Chen et al., 2015; Uddin et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2011) has not been corroborated in the present study. Furthermore, our study demonstrates that the type of organization moderates the relationship between TFL and performance in a complex way. In the case of private organizations, TFL mediates the relationship between workers' EI and both subjective and objective performance (i.e., goal achievement). But, in the case of public organizations, the influence of TFL on the percentage of goal achievement (i.e., objective performance) is negative or inverse. In other words, the higher the perceived level of transformational leadership in the

public organization, the lower the percentage of goal achievement. Thus, these findings are extremely important as they indicate that the context should be considered when analyzing the impact of personal and job resources.

A possible explanation for these results might be that, in public organizations, employees' situations are more stable, which can help them maintain a higher emotional equilibrium (i.e., a higher feeling of security, less fear of job loss, etc.). As the standard emotional state of people is generally better, the emotional factor may not be as decisive in determining whether people are efficient or productive. Moreover, perhaps having a leader who is oriented towards people might make employees feel more relaxed and less focused on performance. It is also possible, in line with the Job Demands-Resources Model (JD-R) (Demerouti et al., 2001), that in safe and stress-free work environments, excellent performance depends solely on the personal resources of employees (i.e., their EI level, which acts as a performance facilitator). This result is frequently reported in the literature, particularly in relation to subjective performance (Lorente et al., 2014). It is also possible that employees may develop distrust in a leader who is only part of the group for a limited time, which could negatively impact performance. This result has been demonstrated in other studies and cultures (see Belrhiti et al., 2020), where transactional leadership yields better results than transformational leadership in public organizations. On the contrary, in private organizations, an employee's situation is generally less stable (i.e., higher risk of being fired or replaced by others), and consequently, their emotional equilibrium is lower. Hence, transformational leaders become a more relevant aspect that might determine employees' performance at work, their efficiency, and efficacy. Furthermore, there is more pressure to achieve goals in private organizations than in public ones. In this stressful work context, the leader may have a significant influence on the results, acting as an important support for employees who appreciate this type of leader. These results are in agreement with the JD-R theory, which posits that performance at work depends on the interplay between demands and resources. Thus, in labor contexts with high demands (i.e., private organizations), more resources would be needed to successfully address them. If in this context employees have both personal resources (i.e., EI) and labor resources (i.e., TFL), they are more likely to perceive these demands as challenges, which would encourage motivation and performance at work.

Several limitations stem from this research. First, it would be interesting to test some relationships considering the group level of analysis. Our study is based on individual responses from employees who are members of groups. Future research should consider group/team or organizational levels to test the proposed models. Additionally, the data are based on self-reports (as in most research in this theme; Saha et al., 2023), and to mitigate concerns about common method variance, we examine the focal relationships across two time periods. For future work, multiple sources of information should be considered. Another limitation is the particular set of organizations that participated in the study, which are located in a specific country. Replication of this study in other geographical contexts may yield different results due to contextual factors and dynamics beyond the type of organization (i.e., private versus public). Several practical implications can be derived from this study. First, the findings highlight the important role of EI in the efficacy of group work (i.e., goal achievement). In other words, our proposed "emotional face" is crucial and indicates that managers should promote the development of group EI to increase both efficacy and efficiency. Moreover, the study shows

that transformational leadership is also relevant regarding group performance. Accordingly, managers should try to support this type of leadership and prioritize it with respect to other types of leadership styles. Furthermore, context is likely responsible for variations among types of organizations, and thus, it should be considered for management purposes. Interestingly, this context may help explain the varying responses of employees to high job demands. In particular, newly popular concepts disseminated by social media, such as "The Great Resignation" and "Quiet Quitting," are not academically analyzed (Marks, 2023), but are assumed to be part of the problem in contexts like hospitals (Formica & Sfodera, 2022). Behind these popular terms lies an undeniable reality, referring to the phenomenon of workers deciding to leave their jobs or doing the bare minimum, reflecting the challenges of managing people in the post-COVID-19 pandemic world (Ng & Stanton, 2023). In both cases, workers are dissatisfied and become disengaged in their current jobs (Harter, 2023), with a significant degree of quit contagion that should be analyzed by leaders (Klotz, 2022), which implies lower performance. For future studies, we propose analyzing whether the great resignation is a preferable behavior in private organizations, whereas quiet quitting is more typical of public organizations. This could help to understand the buffer effect of leadership and emotional intelligence (Aslam et al., 2023). However, we consider that this effect is more relevant in private organizations than in public organizations, where employees can opt for a different strategy.

There are also interesting implications regarding people training in organizations. Leaders should learn how to adapt their leadership practices to the organizational characteristics (type of organization) and the personal resources of employees, along with their motivation (extrinsic vs. intrinsic) (Belrhiti et al., 2020). Some studies emphasize the need to train leaders and employees to share a similar vision of leadership (Seung-Ho et al., 2020). In particular, it would be beneficial for managers to support training policies that aim to reinforce both employees' and leaders' emotional capabilities. Therefore, these managerial implications also have strategic implications since it would be convenient if such policies are aligned with the company's strategy.

In sum, the results obtained are promising and have strong practical implications; they can constitute a starting point for new studies in the area of TFL and EI in private vs private organizations, which is of great concern to leaders and organizations today.

Conclusion

The present study contributes to the literature by highlighting the influence of the context and showing the invariance of leader-employee dynamics over time. Moreover, it is the first time that the context is proven to moderate the mediational relation of TFL with performance (subjective and objective). In public organizations, the emotional face of transformational leadership is less decisive in determining performance. However, in private organizations, being perceived as a transformational leader positively relates to performance, and the leader is an important support at work. Therefore, we can conclude that transformational leaders are perceived by their employees with personal resources (EI), implying different dynamics in the relationship a leader has with his/her employees and determines the relevance of personal demands and resources on performance due to context.

Declarations

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Not applicable.

Disclosure Statement
No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Ethics Approval
The study protocol and procedures were approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of the first author (Ref. CEIH 300514-2), and informed consent was obtained from all participants.

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