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## Emotional and Social Intelligence as Drivers of Transformational Leadership: Implications for Supportive Learning Environments among International Students

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**ABSTRACT:** *In the era of globalized higher education, emotionally and socially intelligent leadership is essential for cultivating inclusive environments. This study uses partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) on a sample of 306 international students in South Korea to investigate how emotional intelligence (EI) and social intelligence (SI) drive transformational leadership (TL) and a supportive learning environment (SE). The results demonstrate that both EI ( $\beta = 0.122$ ,  $p = 0.027$ ) and SI ( $\beta = 0.679$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) are powerful predictors of TL, with SI exerting a dominant influence. Furthermore, TL serves as a critical driver of SE ( $\beta = 0.539$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and significantly mediates the impact of both types of intelligence on the student experience. These findings establish that social and emotional fluency are foundational requirements for*

*effective leadership. This research provides a definitive framework for universities to enhance international student engagement and academic success through intelligence-driven, transformational leadership.*

**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence, Social Intelligence, Transformational Leadership, Supportive Learning Environment, International Students

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## INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary era of globalization, higher education institutions are navigating a sustained surge in international student mobility, resulting in increasingly complex and diverse academic landscapes (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Beerkens, 2003). While this demographic shift theoretically enriches the learning experience through cross-cultural exchange, it simultaneously imposes rigorous demands on educational leaders to cultivate environments that transcend mere academic instruction to provide holistic emotional and social support (Leask, 2009; Andrade, 2006). This necessity is particularly acute in global studies and internationally oriented programs, where interpersonal interaction, cultural sensitivity, and social integration are foundational to a student's personal and academic evolution (Byun, 2015).

The efficacy of such environments is inextricably linked to the deployment of transformational leadership (TL). Characterized by inspirational motivation and individualized consideration, TL has emerged as a pivotal approach for empowering learners and fostering a sense of belonging (Lin & Wang, 2025). Within the specific context of South Korea, international students report that career awareness and financial security heavily influence their settlement intentions, while formal institutional initiatives often yield limited results. This discrepancy underscores the urgent need for a leadership paradigm grounded in emotional and social intelligence to bridge the gap between institutional policy and the lived experience of student success (Feyissa & Sherpa, 2025).

However, transformational behaviors do not emerge in a vacuum; they are driven by the leader's emotional intelligence (EI) and social intelligence (SI). Emotional intelligence, the capacity for self-awareness and empathy, enables leaders to decipher and respond to the nuanced emotional needs of a diverse student body (Goleman, 1995; Mayer et al., 2008). Complementing this, social intelligence provides the essential fluency required to navigate complex social dynamics and build institutional trust (Boyatzis, 2018). As international student

experience shifts from traditional, lecture-based models toward collaborative, culturally embedded practices, the ability of a leader to manage the social and material aspects of academic culture becomes paramount (Na Ranong & Byram, 2025).

Despite the established importance of these individual constructs, a critical gap remains in the literature. While research has independently examined leadership styles and emotional competencies, few studies have synthesized these variables into a cohesive structural framework to evaluate their collective impact on the international student experience. This study addresses that lacuna by examining how EI and SI function as direct antecedents to transformational leadership and how this leadership style ultimately shapes the supportive learning environments necessary for academic success in the globalized South Korean context.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Conceptualizing the Role of Intelligence in Transformational Leadership**

The current literature on educational leadership is frequently fragmented and examines emotional intelligence (EI), social intelligence (SI), and transformational leadership (TL) as isolated constructs. A significant lacuna exists in understanding the structural interplay among these competencies in non-Western academic contexts, particularly in the rapidly globalizing South Korean sector. Prior research often focuses on administrative efficiency and overlooks the human-centric leadership required to support international students facing unique cultural adaptation challenges (Andrade, 2006).

This study addresses this gap by synthesizing Goleman's (1995; 1998) intelligence theory and Bass's (1998) transformational leadership theory. The proposed model moves beyond a descriptive view by arguing that EI and SI serve as the psychological antecedents that fuel transformational behaviors. It contends that internal emotional intelligence (EI) and external social intelligence (SI) are the "raw materials" that leaders must possess to execute the four pillars of transformational leadership, namely, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, idealized influence, and individualized consideration, ultimately cultivating a supportive learning environment (SE).

### **Emotional intelligence and transformational leadership**

Emotional intelligence (EI) serves as the internal foundation for cultivating effective leadership in complex academic settings. Leadership development is being increasingly understood through the lens of emotional competencies, such as self-awareness, empathy, and self-regulation, rather than through mere experiential exposure (Goleman, 1998; Propst & Koesler, 1998). In the context of international education, EI plays a critical role in enhancing collaborative learning

by enabling leaders to manage their emotions while constructively engaging with a diverse student body to maintain a positive environment (Nguyen, 2022).

This competence is vital for transformational leaders who must motivate and support global learners from diverse backgrounds. Research has demonstrated a strong positive correlation between EI and transformational leadership (TL), identifying emotional understanding and management as the most significant predictors of this leadership style (Barling et al., 2000; Mandell & Pherwani, 2003). Leaders with high EI are more adept at recognizing followers' emotional needs and establishing institutional trust, mechanisms that are essential for transformational efficacy (Gardner & Stough, 2002; Harms & Credé, 2010). On the basis of the previous findings, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H1: Emotional intelligence is positively related to Transformational Leadership

### **Social Intelligence and Transformational Leadership**

Social intelligence (SI), defined as the capacity to navigate complex social interactions and understand social cues, is indispensable for leaders operating across cultural boundaries (Goleman, 2003; Thorndike, 1920). While EI focuses on internal emotional processing, SI provides the external fluency required for efficient behavior in multicultural teaching settings (Rockstuhl et al., 2011; Zaccaro et al., 2004). In international education, these skills allow department heads to effectively process social information and promote stronger relationships with culturally diverse cohorts (Ebrahimpoor et al., 2013).

The dominant influence of SI suggests that in globalized academic environments, a leader's adaptability is a primary driver of their leadership style. While EI influences TL as an affective trait, SI functions as a critical adaptive behavior that ensures that leadership is appropriate for the social context (Ang et al., 2015; Ng et al., 2009). This capacity to respond to social dynamics aligns with the tenets of transformational leadership, where socially intelligent interactions build the trust necessary for engagement. On the basis of the literature presented, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Social intelligence is positively related to Transformational Leadership

### **Transformational Leadership and the Supportive Learning Environment**

Transformational leadership (TL) functions as a primary mechanism for cultivating academic environments in which international students feel empowered and integrated. Characterized by inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, TL shifts its focus from hierarchical procedures to a collective purpose (Burns, 1978; Marks & Printy, 2003). In the South Korean context, this is particularly salient, as the transition toward collaborative, culturally embedded practices requires leaders who can

foster a positive school culture with high expectations (Leithwood et al., 1994; Na Ranong & Byram, 2025).

The relationship between TL and a supportive learning environment (SE) is characterized by the leader's ability to encourage proactive behaviors and organizational citizenship (Hamdi, 2021; Hanif & Alwi, 2025). By emphasizing relational and emotionally responsive leadership, transformational leaders promote a sense of belonging that transcends formal institutional initiatives (Ho et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2024). On the basis of this synthesis, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H3: Transformational leadership is positively related to the supportive learning environment.

### **The Direct and Mediating Influence of Intelligence on the Environment**

Theoretical frameworks suggest that while EI and SI are distinct constructs, they both contribute to the self-regulation and social adaptability required in an inclusive educational experience (Khodadady & Hezareh, 2016; Wang, 2025). A supportive learning environment enhances student expertise by promoting active engagement and the application of knowledge (Elvira et al., 2016). When leaders utilize social awareness and self-management, they directly enhance relational harmony and group learning outcomes (Goleman, 1995).

However, a central argument of this study is that TL serves as the essential bridge between these types of intelligence and the environment. While EI and SI provide "raw materials" for interaction, they must be manifested through transformational behaviors, such as vision building and individual support, to be translated into institutional effectiveness (Bass & Avolio, 1990; Stewart, 2006). This mediation implies that intelligence-driven leadership pushes individuals beyond prior limits to achieve academic success (Bass, 1998; Edwards, 2008). Accordingly, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H4: Emotional intelligence is positively related to a supportive learning environment.

H5: Social intelligence is positively related to a supportive learning environment.

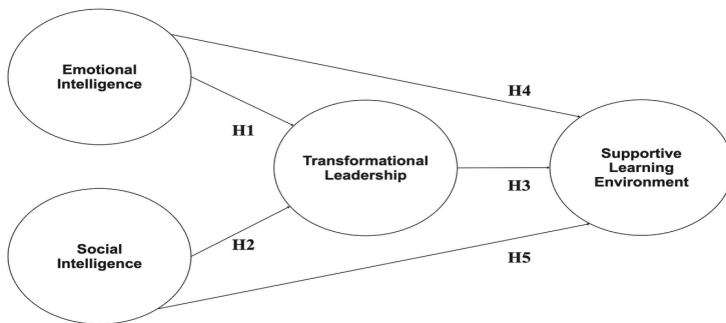
H6: Transformational leadership mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and a supportive learning environment.

H7: Transformational leadership mediates the relationship between social intelligence and a supportive learning environment.

### **Research Model**

To better visualize the hypothesis development, Figure 1 shows the hypotheses proposed in this study and a schematic diagram of the research model.

Figure 1: Research Model



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## METHOD

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered through Google Forms to 306 international students enrolled in private universities in Busan, South Korea. Participants were recruited via convenience sampling with support from faculty members and international student offices. The survey was conducted in English, participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained before completion. Anonymity and confidentiality were assured, and the respondents were informed of their right to withdraw at any time in accordance with ethical research guidelines.

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design using a survey-based approach to examine the interrelationships among emotional intelligence (EI), social intelligence (SI), transformational leadership (TL), and the supportive learning environment (SE) among international students in South Korea. A descriptive study was chosen to describe the existing level of emotional and social intelligence and explain how these constructs influence transformational leadership and the development of supportive learning environments. The research model incorporated both direct and mediating relationships, allowing the testing of hypotheses H1–H7 through partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM).

## Variables and Measurements

This study employed four well-established measurement instruments to examine the relationships among emotional intelligence (EI), social intelligence (SI), transformational leadership (TL), and the supportive learning environment (SE) in the context of education. Each instrument was selected on the basis of its empirical reliability and prior validation in educational and leadership research.

Four items measuring emotional intelligence were adapted from Nguyen's (2022) application of the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale, originally developed by Schutte et al. (1998). These items assess self-expression, empathy, motivation, and emotional regulation among students in academic settings. Five items related to social intelligence were adapted from the Tromsø Social Intelligence Scale (TSIS) developed by Silvera et al. (2001). These items focused on faculty members' ability to form positive relationships, interact inclusively with diverse students, manage social dynamics, and encourage collaborative learning.

Transformational leadership was measured using five items adapted from Tepper and Percy's (1994) Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), which evaluates leaders' ability to inspire critical thinking, provide individualized academic support and innovation, and promote teamwork among students. In this study, the term "leader" refers specifically to faculty members who teach and interact directly with international students in academic and instructional settings. Finally, the supportive learning environment construct was measured with five items derived from Elvira et al. (2016), the Supportive Learning Environment for Expertise Development Questionnaire (SLEED-Q), which examines student motivation, engagement, academic performance, and personal development within supportive classroom contexts.

All the items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This scale was selected because of its widespread validation in studies of emotional and social intelligence and transformational leadership, as well as its suitability for culturally diverse international student samples. Prior research indicates that five-point scales provide sufficient sensitivity while maintaining strong reliability, a conclusion supported by the internal consistency estimates obtained in this study.

The partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) approach was employed to perform the analyses using Smart PLS software version 4. PLS-SEM is a widely recognized analytical technique (Hair et al., 2019). PLS-SEM is especially useful when complex models, small sample sizes, and nonnormal data distributions are considered. It enables the investigation of both measurement and structural models, offering a reliable method for validating latent factors and evaluating path relationships (Pham et al., 2026). Given the predictive value of this investigation and the availability of a multilayered model structure, PLS-SEM was employed to test the hypothesized model.

## **RESULTS**

As summarized in Table 1, the sample comprises 306 international students, with the majority drawn from Nepal (64.7%) and Bangladesh (19.9%). This composition reflects both the convenience sampling approach employed and the comparatively high enrollment of students from these countries within the study setting. Other nationalities, such as India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Europe, were represented by 15.4% of the participants, adding a degree of cultural diversity to the sample, albeit in smaller proportions.

The gender distribution of the respondents revealed that compared with females, male students (60.1%) were more highly represented (39.9%). In terms of year of study, the largest group consisted of first-year students (46.1%), followed by third-year students (26.1%). Fewer participants were enrolled in the second (19.6%) and fourth years (8.2%) of the study. This pattern suggests that the sample is predominantly composed of students in the early stages of their academic programs.

With respect to academic performance, the majority of the students reported grade point averages in the 3.0–4.0 range (61.1%). A further 27.8% reported GPAs above 4.0, reflecting a relatively high-achieving subgroup. Moreover, 9.5% of the participants reported GPAs between 2.0 and 3.0, and only 1.6% reported GPAs below 2.0, suggesting that academically struggling students made up a tiny fraction of the sample.

Age distribution, reflected through reported birth years, shows that only respondents were born between 1984 and 2003 (Elder), whereas the vast majority belonged to the younger cohort born between 2004 and 2007 (Younger). This finding indicates that the population under study primarily comprises students in the traditional university-age bracket, mostly in their late teens to mid-twenties.

**Table 1. Demographic Information (n=306)**

Item	Description	Frequency	Percent
<b>Gender</b>	Male	184	60.1%
	Female	122	39.9%
<b>Year of Study</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Year	141	46.1%
	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	60	19.6%
	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	80	26.1%
	4 <sup>th</sup> Year	25	8.2%
<b>Nationality</b>	Nepal	198	64.7%
	Bangladesh	61	19.9%
	Others	47	15.4%
<b>Previous Academic Performance</b>	Above 4.0 GPA	85	27.8%
	3.0 - 4.0 GPA	187	61.1%
	2.0- 3.0 GPA	29	9.5%
	Below 2.0 GPA	5	1.6%

**Measurement Model Testing**

Table 2 shows the factor loadings, Cronbach’s alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) for the constructs used in the study. These results validate the reliability and construct validity of the measurement

items across four key factors. In this study, emotional intelligence (EI), social intelligence (SI), transformational leadership (TL), and supportive learning environment (SE) are considered.

**Table 2: Reliability and Validity Test Results**

	<b>Factor Loading</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>Average Variance Extracted (AVE)</b>
<b>Emotional Intelligence</b>				
EI1	.746	.641	.807	.582
EI2	.780			
EI3	.764			
<b>Social Intelligence</b>				
SI1	.780	.884	.915	.683
SI2	.809			
SI3	.857			
SI4	.854			
SI5	.830			
<b>Transformational Leadership</b>				
TL1	.733	.880	.913	.677
TL2	.823			
TL3	.875			
TL4	.816			
TL5	.860			
<b>Supportive Learning Environment</b>				
SE1	.762	.833	.915	.683
SE2	.848			
SE3	.860			
SE4	.855			
SE5	.803			

*Note:* EI: Emotional Intelligence, SI: Social Intelligence, TL: Transformational Leadership, SE: Supportive Learning Environment, CR: Composite Reliability

The reliability and validity assessment of the study constructs indicated generally robust psychometric properties. For **emotional intelligence (EI)**, the factor loadings ranged from 0.746 to 0.780, with most items above the

recommended 0.50 threshold. The composite reliability (CR) of 0.807 further supported construct reliability, while the average variance extracted (AVE) was 0.582. **Social intelligence (SI)** demonstrated strong psychometric adequacy, with factor loadings ranging from 0.780 to 0.857. Cronbach’s alpha (0.884) and the CR (0.915) indicated high reliability, and the AVE (0.683) confirmed convergent validity. **Transformational leadership (TL)** also exhibited robust measurement properties, with loadings ranging from 0.733 to 0.875. The Cronbach’s alpha (0.880) and CR (0.915) exceeded the recommended thresholds, and the AVE (0.683) supported convergent validity. **The supportive learning environment (SE)** achieved high reliability and validity, with factor loadings ranging from 0.762 to 0.860, a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.833, a CR of 0.915, and an AVE of 0.683.

**Hypothesis Testing: Direct Effect**

**The data in Table 3** show that emotional intelligence (EI) had a significant positive effect on transformational leadership (TL) ( $\beta = 0.122, t = 2.280, p = 0.027$ ), whereas social intelligence (SI) demonstrated an even stronger effect ( $\beta = 0.679, t = 14.098, p < 0.001$ ). TL exerted a substantial influence on the supportive learning environment (SE) ( $\beta = 0.539, t = 7.458, p < 0.001$ ). Direct effects were also observed from EI to SE ( $\beta = 0.093, t = 2.214, p = 0.027$ ) and from SI to SE ( $\beta = 0.238, t = 3.200, p < 0.001$ )

**Hypothesis Testing: Mediation Effect**

**Table 3. Hypothesis Testing: Direct and Mediation Effects**

Path	Path Coefficient	Standard Deviation	t-value	p-value	Result
EI→TL	.122	.053	2.280**	0.027	Supported
SI→TL	.679	.048	14.098***	<.001	Supported
TL→SE	.539	.072	7.458***	<.001	Supported
EI→SE	.093	.042	2.214***	0.027	Supported
SI→SE	.238	.074	3.200**	<.001	Supported
EI→TL→SE	.066	.030	2.158***	0.031	Supported
SI→TL→SE	.366	.056	6.529**	<.001	Supported

Note: EI: Emotional Intelligence, SI: Social Intelligence, TL: Transformational Leadership, SE: Supportive Learning Environment. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

The mediating effects of transformational leadership (TL) on the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and a supportive learning environment (SE). Both indirect paths were positive and significant. The first path (EI → TL → SE) had a path coefficient of 0.066,  $t = 2.158$ ,  $p = 0.031$ , indicating partial mediation. The second path (EI → TL → SE) was stronger, with a coefficient of 0.366,  $t = 6.529$ ,  $p = 0.001$ , confirming that TL was a significant mediator. These results suggest that higher emotional intelligence enhances a supportive learning environment through transformational leadership.

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study confirm the critical role of emotional and social intelligence in cultivating transformational leadership and creating supportive learning environments in educational contexts. Emotional intelligence significantly predicts transformational leadership, which aligns with prior research demonstrating that self-awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation enable leaders to inspire and guide others effectively (Goleman, 1995; Mayer et al., 2008). Building on this foundation, the present study shows that emotional intelligence enables transformational leaders to respond more effectively to the emotional challenges faced by international students. Moreover, social intelligence facilitates culturally responsive interactions that strengthen supportive learning environments and enhance students' sense of belonging. The strong relationship observed between social intelligence and transformational leadership also contributes to broader discussions on relational and adaptive leadership, which emphasize that effective leadership increasingly depends on the ability to understand social dynamics, build meaningful relationships, and adapt behavior to diverse and evolving contexts.

By clarifying these distinct yet complementary mechanisms, the findings extend prior research by offering a deeper explanation of how leadership influences international students' engagement and experiences within educational institutions. These results further support Goleman's (1998) argument that socially intelligent leaders foster trust and inclusivity, both of which are essential for promoting student engagement. In educational environments characterized by cultural diversity and complex interpersonal dynamics, social intelligence enables leaders to navigate group interactions effectively, manage classroom diversity, and cultivate environments conducive to collaborative learning (Boyatzis, 2018; Ebrahimpour et al., 2013). Moreover, the results of the mediation analysis indicate that transformational leadership functions as a key pathway through which emotional and social intelligence contribute to the development of supportive learning environments. These findings highlight leadership not only as a set of individual competencies but also as a dynamic process that links personal capabilities with broader institutional outcomes.

## **Theoretical Implications**

This study contributes to the leadership and education literature in several ways. First, it integrates emotional intelligence, social intelligence, and transformational leadership into a unified framework, addressing a gap in previous research where these constructs have often been examined in isolation (Mandell & Pherwani, 2003; Miao et al., 2017). The study comprehensively explains how personal competencies translate into educational leadership outcomes by demonstrating their interconnected effects on supportive learning environments. Second, the findings advance the theoretical discussion on transformational leadership by situating it within the unique context of education (Baum & Krulwich, 2016). The evidence that social intelligence exerts a particularly strong effect on leadership in this field underscores the need to extend existing leadership models to account for cultural diversity and relational demands in international education. Finally, this research strengthens the application of transformative learning theory (Mezirow 1991) by showing how leadership behaviors grounded in emotional and social intelligence create environments where theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and reflective capacities can be developed simultaneously.

## **Practical Implications**

The practical implications of these findings are significant for higher education institutions, particularly those offering an education with a diverse international student population. Faculty development initiatives should prioritize training in emotional and social intelligence, as these competencies are shown to enhance transformational leadership practices and, in turn, supportive learning environments (Chen & Garcia, 2017). Workshops, coaching programs, and reflective practices can be implemented to increase faculty capacity in terms of empathy, cultural sensitivity, and classroom inclusivity. Institutions should also embed transformational leadership principles into their professional development frameworks, encouraging faculty to provide individualized support for critical thinking and create collaborative learning experiences. By aligning leadership development with student-centered pedagogical approaches, universities can improve student engagement, satisfaction, and academic outcomes (Northouse, 2021). The significant direct effects of emotional intelligence and social intelligence on the supportive learning environment indicate that faculty members' socioemotional competencies contribute to supportive academic climates beyond formal leadership roles.

These findings suggest that universities should incorporate emotional and social intelligence training into faculty development programs, with emphasis on empathy, intercultural communication, and relational skills. Leadership training initiatives should also prioritize these competencies to strengthen everyday faculty–student interactions, particularly in multicultural classrooms. By embedding socioemotional skill development within teaching enhancement and

student support policies, institutions can foster more inclusive and supportive learning environments for international students. At a policy level, international higher education institutions should integrate leadership competency frameworks into quality assurance processes, ensuring that faculty are equipped not only with subject expertise but also with the interpersonal and leadership skills necessary to manage diverse classrooms.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

This study contributes to the leadership and education literature in several ways. First, it integrates emotional intelligence, social intelligence, and transformational leadership into a unified framework, addressing a gap in previous research where these constructs have often been examined in isolation (Mandell & Pherwani, 2003; Miao et al., 2017). The study comprehensively explains how personal competencies translate into educational leadership outcomes by demonstrating their interconnected effects on supportive learning environments. Second, the findings advance the theoretical discussion on transformational leadership by situating it within the unique context of education (Baum & Krulwich 2016). The evidence that social intelligence exerts a particularly strong effect on leadership in this field underscores the need to extend training in emotional and social intelligence, as these competencies are shown to enhance transformational leadership practices and, in turn, supportive learning environments (Chen & Garcia, 2017). Workshops, coaching programs, and reflective practices can be implemented to increase faculty capacity in terms of empathy, cultural sensitivity, and classroom inclusivity. Institutions should also embed transformational leadership principles into their professional development frameworks, encouraging faculty to provide individualized support for critical thinking and to create a collaboration. This study provides valuable insights into the relationships among emotional intelligence, social intelligence, transformative leadership and a supportive environment; some restrictions should be accepted. First, the study depended on a cross-sectional examination design, which prohibits the ability to establish a cause-and-effect relationship between the variables. Although it refers to the real registration pattern, it limits the generality of the findings of other national or institutional contexts where cultural and educational mobility may vary. The use of convenience sampling and the predominance of participants from Nepal and Bangladesh may limit the generalizability of the findings. Perceptions of emotionally and socially intelligent transformational leadership may differ across cultural groups that are underrepresented in the sample. The sample included a greater proportion of male students (60.1%) than female students (39.9%). Although prior research suggests that gender differences in emotional and social intelligence are generally modest and do not consistently influence the relationships between EI, SI, and leadership-related constructs (Mayer et al., 2008; Joseph & Newman, 2010), this imbalance should be acknowledged as a limitation. Gender may influence the expression and self-reporting of emotional and social competencies, and future studies should employ

gender-balanced samples or apply multigroup or moderation analyses to further validate the robustness of the observed relationships. Third, the study used self-reported measures, which may be subject to social desire or response bias, and the reliability of the emotional intelligence (EI) construct was slightly below the conventional threshold (Cronbach's alpha = 0.641). While values above 0.60 are considered acceptable for complex, multidimensional constructs, this lower reliability suggests that the EI measure may not have fully captured all aspects of emotional intelligence in the present context. Future studies should include data from multiple sources, such as assessments by colleagues or faculty, and structural validity. In addition, future research may extend the current model by incorporating food- and nutrition-related factors into the supportive learning environment. Previous studies have indicated that university students place considerable importance on nutritional knowledge, confidence in healthy eating, and health-related behavioral intentions, all of which influence well-being and overall satisfaction with campus life (Kim et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2012a; Lee & Kim, 2013).

Consistent with research emphasizing the role of supportive institutional contexts in shaping students' engagement and behavioral intentions (Jeon et al., 2011), future research on health-related behaviors may provide a more comprehensive understanding of how emotionally and socially intelligent leadership and supportive environments contribute to student satisfaction and engagement in higher education settings. Comparative studies in different cultural or disciplinary references, such as engineering science, business or health education, may explain whether these conditions are consistent or different across regions and whether stratified or random sampling across a broader range of nationalities is adopted to improve representativeness and external validity. The integration of qualitative insights, such as interviews or class observations, will help capture living experiences from both students and teachers, who create a supportive environment and continuously provide a rich understanding of how and future studies should also employ refined or alternative EI scales and further validate the construct across diverse cultural settings.

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