

Transformational Leadership, Workplace Incivility, Emotional Intelligence, and Their Influence on Employee Work Engagement: A Systematic Review

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51583/IJLTEMAS.2025.1408000018>

Received: 30 June 2025; Accepted: 07 July 2025; Published: 23 August 2025

Abstract: This systematic review examined the influence of transformational leadership, workplace incivility, and emotional intelligence on employee work engagement. The study was motivated by the growing recognition of engagement as a key driver of organizational performance and employee well-being. The objective was to synthesize existing empirical evidence on how these three factors shape engagement levels in diverse workplace settings. The review followed the PRISMA 2020 guidelines and analyzed peer-reviewed studies published between 2010 and 2024. Databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, PsycINFO, and Google Scholar were searched, and relevant studies were screened based on predefined eligibility criteria. A narrative synthesis approach was adopted to integrate findings from quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research. The findings revealed that transformational leadership consistently enhanced work engagement by fostering inspiration, trust, and psychological safety. Workplace incivility, on the other hand, significantly undermined engagement by increasing stress and reducing employees' emotional investment in their work. Emotional intelligence emerged as a critical personal resource, helping employees sustain engagement by managing stress and maintaining positive workplace relationships. Despite these insights, limitations such as cross-sectional designs and self-report biases were noted. The study highlighted the importance of positive leadership, respectful workplace interactions, and emotional competence in promoting employee engagement. Organizations were recommended to invest in leadership development programs, implement policies to reduce incivility, and incorporate emotional intelligence training into employee well-being initiatives. Future research should explore longitudinal and cross-cultural studies to strengthen causal inferences and broaden practical applicability.

Keywords: Transformational leadership, Workplace incivility, Emotional intelligence, Work engagement, Organizational behavior

I. Introduction

In the contemporary workplace, the concept of employee engagement has garnered increasing attention as organizations recognize its critical role not only in enhancing individual well-being but also in driving concrete business outcomes such as productivity, performance, and organizational output. Work engagement—a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002)—is more than a feel-good construct: it is a powerful predictor of discretionary effort, creative problem-solving, and adaptive behavior under pressure (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). Employees who experience high levels of vigor demonstrate sustained energy and mental resilience, allowing them to maintain performance even when workloads are heavy or deadlines are tight (De Clercq et al., 2021). Dedication, with its sense of significance and pride, fosters deeper commitment to organizational goals and translates into higher quality work and fewer errors (Harter et al., 2002). Meanwhile, absorption—the state of being fully concentrated and happily engrossed—enables employees to work with greater focus and efficiency, often resulting in superior task completion and innovation (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

A wealth of empirical studies underscores the link between engagement and key performance indicators. For instance, units with higher aggregate engagement scores consistently report increased output and lower defect rates (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002), while organizations in the top quartile for engagement achieve up to 18 % greater productivity than those in the bottom quartile (Gallup, 2020). Beyond quantitative measures, engaged employees contribute to a more positive climate—collaborating more readily, proactively sharing knowledge, and sustaining customer satisfaction through attentive service (Saks & Gruman, 2014). Moreover, high engagement mitigates turnover intentions and reduces absenteeism, producing significant cost savings in recruitment and training (Albrecht, 2010).

Work engagement also plays a pivotal role in enabling organizations to adapt to change. Engaged employees are more likely to embrace new technologies, processes, and strategic initiatives; their intrinsic motivation and psychological investment make them champions of transformation rather than passive bystanders (Crawford, LePine, & Rich, 2010). In volatile or high-pressure environments—such as healthcare, education, or technology sectors—engagement acts as a buffer against burnout and stress, sustaining performance over time (Breevaart & Bakker, 2018).

However, fostering and maintaining high engagement levels is a complex endeavor. Engagement arises from the dynamic interplay of job resources (e.g., autonomy, feedback, social support) and personal resources (e.g., self-efficacy, resilience), as well as from the broader social and leadership context (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). It is this multifaceted nature that has led scholars to examine

the influence of interpersonal relationships, leadership dynamics, and employees' emotional competencies. In particular, transformational leadership, workplace incivility, and emotional intelligence have emerged as pivotal factors shaping the conditions under which work engagement can flourish—or falter. By unpacking how these variables contribute to or detract from the energetic, dedicated, and absorbed state we call “engagement,” we can develop more targeted strategies for enhancing both employees' well-being and organizational effectiveness.

Transformational leadership has emerged as a powerful construct in organizational behavior literature due to its association with positive work outcomes, including enhanced employee motivation, job satisfaction, and engagement. This leadership style, as introduced by Burns (1978) and further elaborated by Bass (1985), emphasizes vision, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Transformational leaders help create a compelling organizational vision, encourage innovation, support employee development, and foster a climate of trust and collaboration. These behaviors contribute to the psychological conditions necessary for engagement—meaningfulness, safety, and availability—thereby enhancing employees' emotional investment in their roles. Numerous studies have demonstrated a positive link between transformational leadership and work engagement, indicating that when employees perceive their leaders as transformational, they are more likely to experience higher levels of enthusiasm, energy, and dedication at work (Breevaart & Bakker, 2018; Han et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2022).

Conversely, workplace incivility represents a subtle yet pervasive threat to employee engagement. Defined as low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), workplace incivility encompasses rude, discourteous, or dismissive behavior that violates norms of mutual respect. Although such behaviors may appear minor or isolated, they often accumulate and create a toxic work environment characterized by stress, emotional exhaustion, and withdrawal. Research has consistently shown that exposure to workplace incivility can lead to negative emotional states, decreased job satisfaction, and reduced levels of engagement (Huang et al., 2020; Meier & Gross, 2021; Al-Atwi & Bakir, 2022). Unlike more overt forms of workplace aggression, incivility is often overlooked by management, making it harder to address and potentially more insidious in its long-term effects on employees' psychological states and productivity.

Emotional intelligence (EI), broadly defined as the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and regulate emotions in oneself and others (Mayer & Salovey, 1997), has also been identified as a crucial factor influencing employee engagement. Employees with high levels of EI are generally more adept at managing workplace stress, interpreting social cues, and maintaining positive interpersonal relationships. These capabilities are especially vital in emotionally demanding environments where interpersonal tensions or incivility are present. Studies have found that EI is positively associated with various indicators of well-being and engagement, suggesting that emotionally intelligent employees are better equipped to remain engaged even in challenging circumstances (Miao et al., 2018; Ghosh et al., 2020; Kaur et al., 2022). Moreover, EI may serve as a resource that enhances the positive impact of transformational leadership and mitigates the negative effects of workplace incivility.

While substantial research has investigated the individual relationships between transformational leadership, workplace incivility, and emotional intelligence with work engagement, the literature remains fragmented. Many studies have examined these constructs in isolation, while fewer have explored their interplay or considered the contextual variables that may shape their influence. For instance, the leadership-engagement link may be moderated or mediated by individual emotional competencies or organizational culture. Similarly, the detrimental impact of incivility may be buffered by supportive leadership or high emotional intelligence among employees. Emerging research has begun to examine these interactions, highlighting the need for integrated models that reflect the complexity of real-world organizational dynamics. A recent study by Nkan et al. (2025) contributes to this growing body of literature by examining how workplace incivility and emotional intelligence jointly influence work engagement, with transformational leadership acting as a significant predictor in this relationship.

In addition to these conceptual considerations, the literature also reflects methodological and contextual diversity, with studies varying widely in design, sample size, industry, cultural context, and measurement tools. While some research relies on cross-sectional survey data, others employ longitudinal or experimental designs. Moreover, cultural variables may influence how leadership is perceived, how incivility is experienced, or how emotional intelligence is expressed. For instance, in high power-distance cultures, certain behaviors may be interpreted differently compared to more egalitarian settings. This variability underscores the importance of conducting a systematic review to synthesize and critically evaluate the existing body of empirical evidence. By doing so, scholars and practitioners can gain a clearer understanding of consistent patterns, theoretical gaps, and practical implications across diverse contexts.

A systematic review of the influence of transformational leadership, workplace incivility, and emotional intelligence on work engagement is both timely and necessary. Such a review would help integrate findings across studies, assess the robustness and generalizability of observed relationships, and identify areas where further research is needed. It can also provide evidence-based guidance for organizational interventions aimed at improving leadership practices, fostering emotional intelligence, and reducing incivility to promote a more engaged and productive workforce. As organizations navigate the challenges of globalization, remote work, and increasing employee expectations, understanding the psychological and interpersonal dimensions of engagement becomes essential for sustaining performance and well-being.

II. Method

This systematic review was conducted in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Page et al., 2021), which provide a structured and transparent approach for identifying, selecting, appraising, and synthesizing relevant empirical studies. The purpose of the review was to evaluate existing literature on the influence of transformational leadership, workplace incivility, and emotional intelligence on employee work engagement.

Eligibility Criteria

To ensure relevance and quality, studies were included based on the following criteria:

- Population: Employees across various organizational contexts (e.g., public, private, formal, and informal sectors).
- Concepts: Empirical research examining at least one of the following relationships: transformational leadership and work engagement; workplace incivility and work engagement; emotional intelligence and work engagement.
- Context: Studies conducted in workplace environments (not student samples or simulated tasks).
- Study Types: Peer-reviewed empirical studies, including quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods designs.
- Language: Only studies published in English were considered.
- Time Frame: Studies published between 2010 and 2024.
- Exclusions: Editorials, opinion pieces, theoretical papers without data, dissertations, and conference abstracts were excluded.

Information Sources

The literature search was conducted across the following electronic databases:

- Scopus
- Web of Science
- PsycINFO
- Google Scholar

Additional manual searches were carried out by scanning the reference lists of relevant review articles and empirical papers to identify studies not captured in the initial database search.

Search Strategy

A comprehensive search strategy was developed using Boolean operators and a combination of keywords relevant to the constructs under review. The following search terms were used:

("Transformational Leadership" OR "Leadership Style") AND ("Work Engagement" OR "Employee Engagement") AND ("Workplace Incivility" OR "Incivility") AND ("Emotional Intelligence" OR "EI")

Search filters were applied to restrict results to peer-reviewed articles published between 2010 and 2024. The initial search yielded a total of 1,304 records.

Stage	Value / Notes
Records identified	1,304 (Scopus, Web of Science, PsycINFO, Google Scholar)
Duplicates removed	178
Records after deduplication	1,126
Records screened	1,126
Records excluded (titles/abstracts)	1,010
Full-text articles assessed	116
Full-text articles excluded	31 (15 not empirical, 16 wrong context)
Studies included in synthesis	85

Table 1: PRISMA 2020 Table showing records identified, screened, excluded (with reasons), and included in the systematic review.

Selection Process

All records were exported into a reference management software to manage duplicates and facilitate screening. Two reviewers independently screened titles and abstracts for relevance. Full texts of potentially eligible studies were then retrieved and assessed against the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Disagreements between reviewers were resolved through discussion or by consulting a third reviewer. The selection process was documented using the PRISMA flow diagram, showing the number of records identified, screened, excluded, and included in the final review.

Data Collection Process

A standardized data extraction form was used to record relevant information from each included study. The following data were extracted:

- Author(s) and year of publication
- Country of study
- Research design and methodology
- Sample size and characteristics
- Measurement tools for key variables (e.g., engagement, leadership, EI, incivility)
- Key findings related to the influence of transformational leadership, workplace incivility, and/or emotional intelligence on work engagement
- Theoretical framework (if stated)
- Limitations and recommendations

Extraction was independently carried out by two reviewers to enhance consistency and reduce bias.

Risk of Bias and Quality Assessment

Included studies were appraised for methodological quality using appropriate tools based on study design:

- For quantitative studies: the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) Critical Appraisal Checklists were used to assess criteria such as sampling, measurement validity, statistical analysis, and response rates.
- For qualitative studies: quality indicators included credibility, dependability, and confirmability.

Studies were rated as high, moderate, or low quality. Discrepancies in scoring were resolved through consensus.

Synthesis of Results

Given the anticipated heterogeneity in methodologies and outcome measures, a narrative synthesis was employed rather than meta-analysis. Studies were grouped according to the main variable(s) examined (i.e., transformational leadership, workplace incivility, emotional intelligence) and the strength or nature of their influence on work engagement. Themes were identified based on patterns, consistencies, and divergences in findings across studies.

Where applicable, subgroup comparisons (e.g., by sector, country, or sample characteristics) were noted to offer contextual insights. The final synthesis aimed to address the review's objectives and draw evidence-based conclusions about how these constructs affect employee engagement.

III. Results

Transformational Leadership and Work Engagement

A substantial number of the reviewed studies consistently demonstrated a positive association between transformational leadership and employee work engagement. A good number of the studies reviewed focused explicitly on the link between transformational leadership and engagement across diverse organizational settings and geographical contexts.

General Findings

The majority of studies found that transformational leadership significantly predicts higher levels of work engagement among employees. These studies highlighted that when leaders exhibit behaviors such as articulating a compelling vision, providing intellectual stimulation, offering individualized consideration, and modeling inspirational motivation, employees tend to respond with increased vigor, dedication, and absorption in their work (Breevaart & Bakker, 2018; Zhang et al., 2022; Han et al., 2021). For

instance, Breevaart and Bakker (2018), in a daily diary study among Dutch healthcare workers, observed that daily transformational leadership behaviors significantly enhanced daily work engagement, suggesting not only a trait-level but also a dynamic, situational influence.

Cross-Cultural Contexts

Studies conducted in non-Western contexts, including Asia and Africa, also confirmed this relationship, although cultural factors influenced the strength and expression of leadership behaviors. In a large-scale study in China, Zhang et al. (2022) found that transformational leadership had a stronger effect on engagement when mediated by psychological empowerment and job autonomy. Similarly, Nkan et al. (2025), in a Nigerian organizational context, found that transformational leadership was a significant predictor of work engagement, particularly in environments characterized by interpersonal tension and workplace incivility.

Mechanisms of Influence

Several studies identified mediating and moderating variables that explain how and when transformational leadership influences work engagement. Psychological empowerment, trust in leadership, organizational identification, and perceived organizational support were among the frequently reported mediators (Xu et al., 2022; Han et al., 2021). For example, Xu et al. (2022) found that the effect of authentic and transformational leadership on work engagement was partially mediated by employees' psychological capital and psychological safety.

Sector-Specific Patterns

In sectoral comparisons, transformational leadership was particularly effective in high-stress environments such as healthcare, education, and service sectors. In these contexts, transformational leaders provided emotional and motivational support, reducing burnout and fostering resilience, which in turn enhanced engagement. For instance, a study by Han et al. (2021) among South Korean teachers demonstrated that transformational leadership positively influenced work engagement by promoting a sense of community and professional autonomy.

Measurement Consistency

Most studies used standardized scales such as the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) and the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), ensuring comparability across findings. Despite methodological differences, including cross-sectional and longitudinal designs, the strength of the association between transformational leadership and engagement remained robust.

Workplace Incivility and Work Engagement

Across the reviewed studies, workplace incivility emerged as a significant negative predictor of employee work engagement. A total of 17 studies examined the relationship between exposure to incivility—characterized by rude, disrespectful, or dismissive interpersonal behavior—and the vigor, dedication, and absorption that define engaged work states.

General Findings

The overwhelming consensus across studies is that workplace incivility undermines work engagement by eroding psychological safety, increasing stress levels, and diminishing employees' motivation to invest emotionally or cognitively in their roles (Huang et al., 2020; Meier & Gross, 2021; Al-Atwi & Bakir, 2022). For example, Huang et al. (2020) found that repeated exposure to even low-intensity incivility created a hostile emotional climate that directly reduced employees' willingness to go beyond formal job expectations. Similarly, Meier and Gross (2021) observed that incivility triggered negative affective states such as frustration, which contributed to disengagement and emotional withdrawal from work.

Direct and Indirect Effects

Several studies highlighted both direct and indirect effects of incivility on work engagement. For instance, Al-Atwi and Bakir (2022) found that the relationship was partially mediated by psychological safety—employees who felt emotionally unsafe were less likely to remain engaged, regardless of their technical competence or job satisfaction. Similarly, incivility was linked to emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced job meaning, all of which contributed to disengagement.

Source and Frequency of Incivility

The impact of incivility was found to vary depending on its source (e.g., supervisor vs. peer) and frequency. Supervisor incivility had a more detrimental impact on engagement than peer incivility due to its perceived threat to job security and status. Meier and Gross (2021) emphasized that repeated exposure to low-level incivility had cumulative effects that rivaled the impact of more overt hostility. Even isolated incidents of disrespect—if left unaddressed—could initiate a downward spiral of disengagement.

Cross-Cultural and Sectoral Findings

Cultural and contextual differences were also noted. In collectivist cultures or hierarchical organizational settings, employees were more likely to tolerate or underreport incivility, although its psychological toll remained comparable. Studies from healthcare and

education sectors revealed particularly high vulnerability to incivility due to the emotionally demanding nature of the work and the presence of power imbalances. For example, De Clercq et al. (2021) reported that incivility in hospital settings was strongly linked to disengagement, especially when family or patient-related tensions spilled into the workplace environment.

Protective Factors and Buffering Mechanisms

Despite its negative influence, several studies suggested that workplace incivility does not uniformly lead to disengagement—certain personal and organizational resources can buffer its effects. Emotional intelligence, perceived organizational support, and strong team cohesion emerged as protective factors. For example, Nkan et al. (2025) found that transformational leadership reduced the impact of incivility by restoring trust, fostering emotional safety, and enhancing interpersonal respect. Similarly, Al-Atwi and Bakir (2022) emphasized the role of psychological safety and feedback culture in mitigating the damage caused by uncivil interactions.

Emotional Intelligence and Work Engagement

The reviewed studies collectively affirm that emotional intelligence (EI) plays a critical role in shaping employee work engagement. A total of 19 studies explicitly examined the relationship between EI and the components of engagement—vigor, dedication, and absorption—revealing a strong and positive association across diverse occupational and cultural settings.

General Findings

Emotional intelligence was consistently found to enhance work engagement by equipping employees with the emotional self-regulation and interpersonal competence necessary to manage stress, maintain positive relationships, and navigate workplace challenges (Miao et al., 2018; Ghosh et al., 2020; Kaur et al., 2022). Employees high in EI demonstrated greater resilience and optimism, which in turn promoted sustained energy (vigor), stronger work identification (dedication), and deeper task involvement (absorption). For instance, Ghosh et al. (2020) observed that emotionally intelligent employees maintained higher engagement even under high workload pressure due to their superior coping and social management skills.

Mechanisms of Influence

Several studies identified mediating and moderating mechanisms through which EI influences work engagement. Psychological well-being, interpersonal trust, stress tolerance, and emotional self-awareness were frequently cited as pathways linking EI to engagement (Miao et al., 2018). Kaur et al. (2022), in a meta-analytic review, concluded that EI indirectly fosters engagement by enhancing job satisfaction and reducing emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, emotionally intelligent employees tend to contribute to more cohesive and supportive team climates, which further reinforce individual and collective engagement.

Interaction with Other Variables

Emotional intelligence often interacted with other key variables, amplifying positive outcomes or mitigating negative ones. In several studies, EI acted as a buffer against the harmful effects of workplace incivility and emotional labor. For example, Nkan et al. (2025) found that employees with high EI were less affected by uncivil behaviors and better able to maintain engagement despite interpersonal stressors. Similarly, Miao et al. (2018) reported that EI moderated the relationship between role conflict and engagement, suggesting that emotionally intelligent individuals are better positioned to manage complex job demands.

Sectoral and Role-Specific Insights

EI's impact on engagement was particularly pronounced in emotionally demanding sectors such as healthcare, education, and hospitality, where the ability to regulate affective responses is central to job performance. Studies in these contexts demonstrated that EI not only promoted individual engagement but also contributed to greater organizational citizenship behavior, reduced turnover intention, and improved service delivery.

Limitations and Gaps in the Literature

While the body of literature exploring transformational leadership, workplace incivility, and emotional intelligence in relation to work engagement is substantial, it is not without significant limitations. A shortcoming across most studies is the predominant use of cross-sectional designs. These designs, while useful for identifying associations, do not establish causality or capture the dynamic, evolving nature of workplace relationships and engagement over time. Longitudinal and experimental studies are needed to unpack the temporal sequencing and long-term effects of leadership styles, emotional competencies, and interpersonal stressors on employee engagement.

Another recurring issue is the heavy reliance on self-report measures for all key constructs. Variables such as leadership behaviors, emotional intelligence, incivility, and engagement were often assessed using questionnaires completed by the same respondents, increasing the risk of common method bias and socially desirable responding. Few studies utilized multi-source data or objective performance indicators, which limits the methodological robustness of the findings. This also constrains the ability to triangulate perspectives—for instance, how employees perceive their leaders versus how leaders evaluate themselves.

Conceptually, the existing literature tends to explore each of the three variables in isolation, with limited focus on their interplay. Although emerging studies have begun to examine moderating or mediating relationships—such as how emotional intelligence may buffer the negative effects of incivility, or how transformational leadership fosters the psychological safety necessary for engagement—integrated frameworks that consider all three variables simultaneously are still rare. Moreover, broader contextual variables such as organizational culture, team dynamics, and job design are often not accounted for, despite their likely influence on how these variables interact in real-world settings.

Cultural and sectoral limitations also emerge from the review. Much of the literature is drawn from Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic (WEIRD) contexts, with fewer studies based in Africa, the Middle East, or Latin America. Given the influence of cultural norms on perceptions of leadership, emotional expression, and civility, the generalizability of findings across different regions remains questionable. In addition, some sectors—particularly in the public sector, informal economies, or creative industries—are underrepresented, which narrows the practical relevance of the findings.

Intervention-based research is also relatively scarce. While there is growing consensus on the theoretical significance of transformational leadership and emotional intelligence in fostering engagement, few studies have evaluated the real-world impact of leadership training, coaching programs, or civility-enhancing initiatives. The lack of evidence on what works in practice limits the utility of the literature for informing organizational policy and development strategies.

Finally, inconsistencies in the measurement of core constructs pose a challenge. Although validated instruments such as the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), and the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) are frequently used, other studies adopt modified or shortened tools without sufficient psychometric justification. This variability complicates efforts to synthesize findings or conduct meta-analyses. Furthermore, while demographic information such as gender, age, tenure, or job role is often reported, it is rarely analyzed in depth, leaving open questions about how individual differences may moderate the relationships under review.

IV. Discussion of Findings

This systematic review examined empirical evidence on the influence of transformational leadership, workplace incivility, and emotional intelligence on employee work engagement. Across the reviewed literature, a consistent pattern emerged: transformational leadership and emotional intelligence are positively associated with higher levels of engagement, while workplace incivility exhibits a strong negative association. These findings support the growing consensus in organizational psychology that employee engagement is not merely a function of task design or compensation, but deeply rooted in relational, emotional, and contextual dynamics.

Transformational leadership consistently emerged as a key driver of work engagement, particularly through its emphasis on inspiration, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation. Employees who perceive their leaders as transformational are more likely to experience psychological safety, trust, and meaning in their work—all of which are essential for engagement. These findings align with existing motivational and relational models of leadership, suggesting that transformational leaders foster a work environment conducive to vigor, dedication, and absorption. Importantly, studies conducted across sectors—especially in high-stress environments such as healthcare and education—highlight the buffering role of transformational leadership in mitigating burnout and sustaining engagement.

Workplace incivility, in contrast, was found to be a subtle yet powerful detractor from engagement. Though often low in intensity and ambiguous in intent, uncivil behavior erodes psychological safety, increases emotional exhaustion, and fosters withdrawal behaviors. Unlike overt aggression, incivility can persist undetected and unaddressed, gradually diminishing employees' emotional and cognitive commitment to their work. This review highlights that incivility, whether from supervisors or colleagues, has both direct and indirect effects on engagement, with some studies pointing to mediators such as job satisfaction and emotional strain. The findings underscore the urgent need for organizations to take interpersonal climate seriously, even when incivility may appear trivial or infrequent.

Emotional intelligence, meanwhile, emerged as a critical personal resource that enables employees to sustain engagement, especially in challenging or emotionally demanding work environments. High-EI individuals are better equipped to manage interpersonal stress, regulate their own emotions, and interpret social cues—all of which enhance their resilience, motivation, and connection to work. In some studies, emotional intelligence was found not only to directly predict engagement but also to moderate the effects of stressors such as role conflict or incivility. This positions EI as both a protective and promotive factor—essential for maintaining engagement in volatile organizational contexts.

While these individual relationships are well supported, the literature remains fragmented, with relatively few studies exploring the interplay among the three variables. Transformational leadership may serve to enhance emotional intelligence through role modeling and supportive feedback, while also counteracting the effects of incivility by fostering a respectful and inclusive climate. Similarly, emotionally intelligent leaders are likely to enact transformational behaviors more effectively and manage workplace tensions proactively. These interactions point to a need for more integrative, theory-driven research that reflects the complex realities of organizational life.

V. Conclusion

The findings of this review confirm that transformational leadership, emotional intelligence, and workplace incivility are powerful and interrelated forces shaping employee work engagement. While leadership and emotional skills act as catalysts that promote vigor, dedication, and absorption, incivility functions as an organizational toxin that undermines these positive outcomes. Engaged employees are more productive, creative, and resilient—qualities that are vital in today's dynamic and competitive work environments. Therefore, understanding and addressing the interpersonal and emotional dimensions of engagement is critical not only for individual well-being but also for organizational performance and sustainability. Despite the robust evidence base, limitations related to study design, cultural diversity, and measurement consistency highlight the need for more nuanced and methodologically rigorous research. Longitudinal, multi-method, and intervention-focused studies are especially needed to advance both theory and practice in this field.

VI. Recommendations

Based on the reviewed literature, several recommendations can be made for both organizational practice and future research. First, organizations should invest in leadership development programs that cultivate transformational behaviors, particularly those that emphasize emotional attunement, employee empowerment, and vision sharing. Such interventions can be especially effective when paired with emotional intelligence training, equipping leaders and employees alike with the skills to navigate workplace challenges and interpersonal dynamics.

Second, there is a need for structured policies and awareness campaigns aimed at preventing and addressing workplace incivility. Encouraging open communication, fostering a culture of respect, and implementing clear reporting channels can help mitigate the subtle but corrosive impact of uncivil behavior. Managers should be trained to recognize early signs of incivility and respond in a manner that supports both accountability and psychological safety.

Third, employee well-being initiatives should incorporate emotional intelligence development as a core component. Given its role in enhancing resilience and sustaining engagement under pressure, EI training can serve as both a preventive and promotive strategy, particularly in emotionally demanding roles.

For researchers, future studies should prioritize longitudinal and mixed-method designs that capture the temporal dynamics of engagement and its antecedents. More attention should also be paid to how contextual variables such as organizational culture, job complexity, and digital work environments shape these relationships. Exploring these variables across underrepresented popula

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