

Emotional Intelligence and Transformational Leadership as Pillars of Excellence in Mauritius' World-Class Hotel Sector

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Abstract *This study explores how Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Transformational Leadership (TL) among managers from the top-ranking hotel sector of Mauritius can boost motivation, strengthen team cohesion, resolve conflicts, and foster harmonious work environments, ultimately driving organizational excellence that is vitally needed in the competitive tourism industry of Mauritius. Using a quantitative approach, data was collected with a sample size of 350 managers from the longest-running and most luxurious hotel groups in Mauritius. Anova testing, Multilinear regression and Pearson product-moment correlation were used to test the hypotheses. The main findings of this study by analyzing the literature and real-world evidence from Mauritius' hotel industry, highlight that emotionally intelligent, transformational leaders drive organizational excellence by fostering team cohesion, enhancing motivation, and effectively managing conflicts, with team cohesion and conflict management serving as critical mediators by transmitting the positive effects of EI and TL for achieving organizational excellence. This paper uniquely addresses a critical research gap, revealing how the synergy between Emotional Intelligence and Transformational Leadership can be strategic tools for hospitality managers to drive organizational excellence in the ferociously competitive tourism industry of Mauritius especially for the world-renowned hotel sector of Mauritius.*

Keywords: *Emotional Intelligence, Transformational Leadership, Team Cohesiveness, Conflict Management and Organizational Excellence*

INTRODUCTION

As the global economy continues to evolve, a striking shift is taking place, we are entering what acclaimed restaurateur and author Will Guidara describes as a “hospitality economy.” No longer confined to traditional service industries, the principles of hospitality such as human connection, personalized engagement, and the co-creation of meaningful experiences are emerging as vital differentiators across sectors. This transformation is underscored by the hospitality global market's surge to \$4.9 trillion in 2024 and its record \$11.1 trillion contribution to global GDP, accounting for 10% of total economic output (WTTC, 2024). With international tourism rebounding to 1.1 billion travelers in just the first nine months of 2024 and the sector projected

to grow at 5.8% annually more than double the global economic rate, thus hospitality is no longer ancillary, it is foundational (EHL, 2025). This places huge challenges on those who are employed in this vibrant and expanding sector. Hotel employees are often seen as emotional laborers, tasked not only with providing service but with embodying it emotionally. Their roles demand constant, face-to-face interaction where they must display cheerfulness, warmth, and empathy regardless of their true feelings (Moreo et al., 2019; Shani et al., 2014). This emotional performance requires them to monitor their own moods, read guests' expressions, and regulate responses accordingly. In essence, hotel work is not just physical or technical it is deeply psychological and emotionally charged (Miao, 2020). Thus, Emotional Intelligence and authentic leadership is a necessity

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in hospitality workers as well as leaders and managers in the hotel industry. Emotional Intelligence in conjunction with Transformational leadership inspires through vision, models ideal behavior, unites teams around shared goals, sets high expectations, supports individuals emotionally, and encourages fresh thinking to drive performance and innovation and emotional intelligence that both enhance employee engagement and commitment, essential for the hospitality sector (Adams, 2021). However, the combined impact of the relationship between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership remains underexplored, highlighting a key gap in existing research (Khalili, 2017). This research study seeks to fill this gap by investigating how manager's Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Transformational Leadership (TL) can be leveraged to enhance managerial effectiveness, facilitate conflict resolution, and foster team cohesion, thereby contributing to organizational excellence in the hotel industry of the Tourism Sector of Mauritius. The Tourism sector is considered to be one of the four pillars of the Mauritian economy and is a key driver of socio-economic growth in Mauritius, contributing 8.1% to GDP in 2019. The Mauritian tourism market has seen a vigorous recovery, post pandemic with 2023 tourist arrivals reaching 95% of 2019 levels, totaling 1.3 million visitors with luxury hotels like LUX, Sunlife, and New Mauritius Hotels reporting a 6% growth in revenues for the first half of FY2024. Average hotel occupancy rates for 2023 stood at 67%, with revenue per available room (RevPAR) outnumbering 2019 levels in the 4-star and 5-star segments (Knightfrank, 2024). Thus, tourism continues to create job opportunities and promotes business across the island (Ministry of Tourism, 2019) supporting 62,000 jobs (11% of total employment) that is projected to reach 83,000 in the future (Statistics Mauritius, 2020). To maintain its competitive edge, Mauritius as a high-end tourist destination needs to offer world-class service quality but faces persistent employee turnover which leads to costly skill losses, inefficiencies, and higher expenses (Hinkin & Tracey, 1994; Charoenboon & Chankaew, 2022) affecting service quality that is vital for survival of the hotel sector (Day et al., 2022). Employing a diverse work-force with challenges of delivering high-quality customer satisfaction and maintaining service excellence at all times often leads to stress, conflict, weak team cohesion and emotional exhaustion of its employees. The 2023 National Employee Engagement Survey by Business Mauritius where the food and accommodation sectors were major participants revealed major challenges in the tourism sector, including unfair rewards, poor feedback, unheard employee voices, and uninspiring leadership. Furthermore, challenges like emotional exhaustion, low wages, and high stress undermine performance and retention (Yanga et al., 2021; Mohammad et al., 2018; Sun et al., 2020). Ineffective leadership further hinders engagement and innovation despite the sector's

growth (Smith, 2023). Emotional Intelligence and Transformational Leadership are critical to address these challenges by promoting empathetic communication, constructive feedback, inclusive decision-making, and an inspiring shared vision for long-term success (Business Mauritius, 2023). Managers' adoption of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Transformational Leadership (TL) fosters resilience and adaptability, crucial for a hospitality sector strongly reliant on quality of human resources, positive employee attitudes and exceptional service for sustained growth (Tourism Authority of Mauritius, 2022; Úbeda-García et al., 2014). For instance, recent studies on Chinese hospitality corporations revealed that transformational leadership fosters a work-promotion mindset among employees, reducing emotional exhaustion (Zheng et al., 2023). As emotions play a central role in workplace dynamics, effective leadership increasingly requires emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2020). Successful leaders proactively and reactively manage employees' emotions, enhancing job satisfaction and resilience (Surucu et al., 2021). Leaders' supportive behavior directly improves employee well-being, trust, and openness (Han et al., 2020). In the service sector, prioritizing job engagement boosts employee performance, underscoring the value of emotionally intelligent leadership (Aydin & Erkilic, 2020). In today's uncertain global business environment, EI distinguishes effective leaders by fostering team cohesion, adaptability, and creativity, extending leadership capabilities beyond technical skills (Wang et al., 2023) thereby driving success and resilience (Ikart, 2023). In the hospitality industry, few studies on this topic highlight transformational leaders boost employee performance and commitment by clearly communicating a compelling vision and helping followers see their vital role in achieving it (Hinkin & Tracey, 1994). However, there is a lack of empirical evidence specifically addressing how managers in the Mauritian tourism sector can effectively leverage EI to achieve transformational leadership and drive organizational excellence, highlighting the urgent need for EI-driven transformational leadership strategies (Johnson, 2022; Mohammad El Salam & Ammar, 2018) in this vibrant and growing sector. Studies in the hospitality sector of Mauritius show that conflicts are a prevalent issue impacting organizational dynamics and hospitality management development is generally disorganized and fragmented (Ramphul et al., 2024; Naidoo, 2022). Despite the growing body of evidence supporting the benefits of emotional intelligence, there remains a paucity of research focused specifically on the hotel sector of Mauritius. This study seeks to fill this gap by focusing on three top luxury hotel groups of Mauritius that are from the island's longest-running luxury brand, known for setting the hospitality benchmark, and a well-known brand offering five exquisite island escapes, delivering unparalleled luxury experiences, that has

contributed to reinforcing the island's status as a premier destination for refined and unforgettable stays. The names of the hotels & the participants have been concealed to guard anonymity of the participants. The managers involved in this study were drawn from these distinguished hospitality providers with a total of 350 managers who participated in this study. This study focused on understanding managerial perceptions of the role of emotional intelligence and transformational leadership in fostering team cohesiveness, effective conflict handling, and collaboration and how these factors can drive organizational excellence in the competitive tourism sector of Mauritius. It is envisaged that the findings of the study can have relevance to other hotels of the country and wholistically to the tourism sector of Mauritius.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional Intelligence and Transformational Leadership

There are two key EI frameworks: the ability model and the trait model - the former focusing on emotion management, highlighting the pure form of emotional intelligence, and excluding personality traits (Cherniss, 2020; Dlamini et al., 2017). The latter, i.e., the Goleman's trait model, emphasizes self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills. EI is strongly related to authentic leadership (Miao et al., 2018). Emotional Intelligence is a paradigm that differentiates a transformational leader from an average leader (Kark et al., 2003). Scholarly research on transformational leadership theories emphasizes a shared vision between leaders and followers in order to achieve organizational objectives (Felfe & Schyns, 2006; Hater and Bass, 1988). In the same vein, Castro et al. (2008), Casserley and Megginson (2008) suggest that Transformational Leadership (TL), and as postulated by Lan, Wong and Zeng (2021), encompasses four main elements termed as the 4 I's: i) intellectual stimulation, ii) idealized influence, iii) individualized consideration, and iv) inspirational motivation. Transformational leadership (TL) inspires employees to transcend self-interest for organizational success by fostering meaningful work, personal growth, and coaching (Bao & Jolly, 2024). Its focus on intrinsic motivation empowers teams during change (Belias et al., 2021). The hospitality industry is a labor-intensive sector, where success and improved performance depend on satisfied and motivated employees who, in turn, provide service qualities to customers thus authentic leadership is essential in helping hospitality workers perform emotional labor (Wang et al., 2023). Therefore, it is vitally important that leaders in the hospitality sector should be able to keep the employees satisfied and gratified while also enabling them to deliver excellent service which represents a combination of Emotional Intelligence and

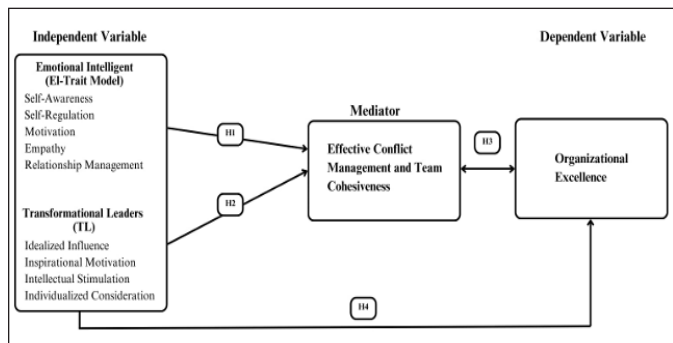
Transformational Leadership (Kark et al., 2003; Belias et al., 2024; King, 2010; Okoro, 2012). Integrating Emotional Intelligence (EI) with Transformational Leadership enhances cohesion, conflict resolution, and innovation for competitive advantage (Supramaniam & Singaravelloo, 2021). As such, the capacity to leverage employees' emotional intelligence with transformational leadership has increasingly become a cornerstone of organizational excellence and sustainability (Mukhtar & Yuen Fook, 2020). This is vitally needed in the hotel sector where managers have to behave in emotionally positive ways prescribed by the organization for the benefit of clients and employees and display a climate that all is working well at all times (Vasilagos et al., 2017; Yanti et al., 2021).

The Trait Model of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and the Four I's of Transformational Leadership have been Used for this Study

The four attributes of the Trait model of Emotional Intelligence (EI), Self-awareness, Self-regulation, Motivation and Empathy and Relationship Management have been used for this study. Self-awareness posits that emotional intelligence consists of a set of personality traits or self-perceptions that influence how individuals perceive and manage their emotions and those of others. This plays an important role in aiding leaders in understanding their strengths and weaknesses, crucial for personal and professional growth (Goleman et al., 2021; Guo & Hou, 2022). Self-regulation, which involves managing disruptive emotions and adapting to change, ensures stability and consistency in leadership, particularly during crises, and is linked to better stress management (Bao & Jolly, 2024). Motivation drives leaders to pursue goals energetically, inspiring similar commitment in teams and enhancing organizational performance (Petrides, 2021). Empathy, the ability to understand and share others' feelings, is essential for effective communication and conflict resolution, promoting team cohesion and job satisfaction (Miao et al., 2021). Finally, relationship management, encompassing influence and conflict resolution, is vital for transformational leadership, enabling leaders to inspire and guide their teams effectively (Goleman et al., 2021; Sung et al., 2019). Another area where EI is very important is team cohesion. Teams headed by people with high EI show more cohesiveness and cooperation. Furthermore, for this study, the four attributes of Transformational Leadership termed as the four I's i.e., Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration have been considered (Smith, 2023; Yucel, 2021). Idealized Influence involves leaders acting as role models, instilling trust and respect among followers through ethical standards, integrity,

and commitment to organizational goals (Yang et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2023; Lan et al., 2021). This behavior fosters a positive work culture, aligning individual aspirations with organizational objectives. Inspirational Motivation is characterized by articulating a compelling vision that energizes employees and promotes heightened performance. Leaders set high expectations and inspire a shared vision, driving employees to exceed expectations (Adams, 2021; Martinez, 2022; Kumar et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2023; Patel et al., 2024). Intellectual Stimulation encourages innovation by challenging the status quo, fostering critical thinking, and promoting continuous learning and improvement to keep organizations competitive (Miller & Miller, 2020; Clark & Kayes, 2021; Nguyen, 2023; Kumar & Patel, 2024). Finally, Individualized Consideration focuses on personalized support and mentorship, addressing employees' unique needs to foster development and enhance job satisfaction (Furstenberg et al., 2020; Thomas, 2021; Edwards, 2022; Singh, 2024). Together, these dimensions create a committed and high-performing workforce, essential for organizational excellence. The research framework developed for this study is based on these theories (as seen in Fig. 1) and the subsequent hypotheses that have been developed.

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK



Source Authors compilation.

Fig. 1: Research Framework

As based on the extensive literature review the subsequent hypotheses that have been proposed. This study proposes a research framework as illustrated in Fig. 1. This research framework examines the relationship between Emotional Intelligence (EI-Trait Model) and Transformational Leadership (TL) (independent variables) and Organizational Excellence (dependent variable). Effective Conflict Management and Team Cohesiveness act as mediators, explaining the indirect pathways linking EI and TL to organizational outcomes. Hypotheses (H1 and H2) propose that Higher emotional intelligence (EI) among managers enhances conflict management and team cohesiveness, fostering a collaborative work environment.

Transformational Leadership (TL) further strengthens these dynamics by inspiring and motivating teams. H3 tests the mediator's impact on Organizational Excellence such that effective conflict management and team cohesiveness act as mediators by transmitting the positive effects of EI and TL toward achieving organizational excellence thereby bridging the gap between leadership qualities and superior organizational outcomes. H4 investigates a direct relationship between EI, TL, and Organizational Excellence, indicating partial mediation. The combined influence of EI and TL significantly drives organizational excellence by nurturing a harmonious and productive workplace. The framework highlights how transformational leadership traits and emotional intelligence foster cohesive teams and conflict resolution, driving organizational success.

HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Emotional Intelligence, Team Cohesiveness and Conflict Handling

Team dynamics are vital to organizational success. Emotionally intelligent leaders understand team members' strengths, weaknesses, motivations, fostering cohesive and goal-driven teams (Goleman et al., 2021). By connecting personally and emotionally, they inspire and motivate more effectively. Transformative leadership enhances decision-making, conflict resolution, communication, and resilience, driving organizational excellence in today's competitive landscape (Bao & Jolly, 2024). Managers with high emotional intelligence (EI) excel at understanding emotions, addressing root causes, and fostering open communication. This approach leads to healthier work environments and better conflict resolution. Research highlights that emotionally intelligent leaders adopt collaborative strategies, benefiting all parties involved (Jordon & Troth, 2022; Bhardwaj et al., 2023; Guo & Hou, 2022). Management experts emphasize various conflict management strategies, with the Thomas-Kilmann model being widely referenced (Madalinaa, 2016) that proposes five approaches— avoidance, competition, accommodation, collaboration, and compromise; balance assertiveness and cooperation. Avoidance can offer time for gathering information but may lead to unsolved conflicts. Competition transpires when one party prioritizes winning, while accommodation sees one party yielding to the other. Collaboration fosters win-win outcomes, while compromise offers partial solutions. Research highlights that integrative strategies enhance employee commitment (Wanyonyi et al., 2015), while a supportive conflict climate boosts satisfaction (Rabiul, 2023). Rabiul et al. (2022) argue that cooperative conflict resolution strengthens relationships,

benefiting both companies and customers, while advising against avoidance as a management style. Together, these insights underscore the critical role of effective conflict management in fostering organizational success and lasting relationships. Therefore, based on empirical evidence, transformational leaders leverage Emotional Intelligence (EI) to inspire teams, resolve conflicts, and drive superior outcomes. This synergy fosters team harmony, innovation, and competitive advantage in complex business environments (Supramaniam & Singaravello, 2021). By empowering individuals to collaborate and seek resolutions, transformational leadership enhances job satisfaction, performance, and organizational sustainability (Mukhtar & Yuen Fook, 2020).

Based on the above, Hypothesis 1 and 2 have been developed:

(H1): Higher levels of managers' EI are positively associated with Effective Conflict Management and Team Cohesiveness.

(H2): Transformational leaders significantly affect Effective Conflict Management and Team Cohesiveness.

Effective Conflict Resolution and Team Cohesiveness Leads to Organizational Excellence

Organizational excellence demands strong leadership, teamwork, and conflict management to sustain competitive advantage and ensure lasting success. Studies show that emotionally intelligent leaders foster engagement, reduce turnover and improve team cohesion (Miao et al., 2021). During organizational change, EI helps sustain morale (Vakola & Petrou, 2023; Gunkel et al., 2015), while promoting conflict resolution, better relationships, and reduced stress (Liang et al., 2017), the cumulative effect of all these contributes towards organizational excellence. Ikart (2023) highlight that organizations led by emotionally intelligent, transformational leaders excel in performance, foster innovation, and sustain excellence through enhanced financial outcomes, employee satisfaction, and customer loyalty in competitive environments (Gui et al., 2020). A meta-analysis by Joseph and Newman (2022) further confirmed that EI is a salient predictor of conflict resolution effectiveness, highlighting its role in enhancing organizational excellence. Leaders with high EI shape positive climates, boosting productivity and driving organizational excellence (Lee et al., 2023; Wang & Ma, 2024). Effective conflict resolution relies on transparent communication, listening, and understanding the perceived focus of disagreement (Chen & Fellenz, 2020) that are mostly attributes of EI and TL. Transformational leadership will help prevent or resolve conflict positively by exploring individual views and establishing commonalities, building

team harmony and enhancing employee morale with the ultimate aim being to push forward thereby contributing towards organizational excellence (Bao and Jolly, 2024). Drawing from the above, the hypothesis 3 is generated that serves as a critical mediator, wherein the cumulative effect of effective conflict management and team cohesiveness drives organizational excellence through improved performance and innovation.

(H3): Effective Conflict Management and Team Cohesiveness are positively associated with Organizational Excellence.

The Use of the Trait Model of EI and TL Leads to Organizational Excellence

Emotional intelligence, rooted in self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and relationship management, empowers leaders to navigate change, inspire teams, and drive performance. By recognizing and managing emotions (Goleman et al., 2021), fostering resilience (Petrides, 2021), and nurturing relationships (Bao & Jolly, 2024). Such leaders enhance decision-making, team cohesion, and organizational success (Collins et al., 2023). Transformational leadership thrives on these competencies, enabling leaders to inspire, influence, and resolve conflicts while guiding teams toward shared goals (Yuan et al., 2021). Cumulatively these dimensions of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and relationship management form a robust framework for effective leadership enabling leaders to navigate complex challenges, inspire their teams, and foster a positive and productive workplace culture thereby leading to organizational excellence. Transformational leadership, anchored in the Four I's—Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration—drives organizational excellence by fostering trust, inspiring vision, encouraging innovation, and nurturing individual growth (Calisto & Sarkar, 2022; Yucel, 2021). Leaders act as ethical role models (Aftab et al., 2022), motivate teams through compelling visions facilitates critical thinking and innovation, enabling organizations to adapt to change and maintain competitiveness by promoting a culture of continuous learning (Miller & Miller, 2020; Nguyen, 2023) and provide personalized support for employee development (Bao & Jolly, 2024; Edwards, 2022; Singh, 2024), creating a dynamic, committed, and future-ready workforce. Together, these dimensions create a leadership approach that inspires, challenges, and nurtures employees, driving organizational excellence. From the above, review Hypothesis 4 has been generated.

(H4): The relationship between Effective EI and TL positively leads to Organizational Excellence.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Ethical Consideration, Data Collection, Sample Size, Sampling Technique and Descriptive Statistics

The research team strictly adhered to established ethical guidelines, ensuring participants' confidentiality, informed consent, avoidance of harm, and a commitment to transparency and honesty. Ethical approval was obtained from the Human Resources departments of the participating hotels. A comprehensive cover letter outlining the study's objectives, benefits, and the voluntary nature of participation was provided to all participants. Full anonymity was maintained through the use of coded identifiers, and all data collected were securely stored, accessible only to the research team for academic purposes. Hotel affiliations were kept confidential throughout the study. The researcher safeguarded transparency while ensuring participants were not exposed to risk or discomfort. This study adopted a mixed sampling strategy, combining probability and non-probability methods in line with contemporary research standards (Guo & Hou, 2022). Stratified sampling enhanced representativeness by dividing the population into homogeneous subgroups, while purposive sampling allowed for the intentional selection of participants with specific and relevant traits (Gui et al., 2020). Together, these approaches ensured a balanced, rigorous methodology that strengthened the reliability, depth, and validity of the findings. Given the scope of the research, a structured questionnaire was chosen for its ability to systematically capture perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors essential to understanding Emotional Intelligence and Transformational Leadership (Jones et al., 2022; Bao & Jolly, 2024). The questionnaire was pilot tested with a sample of 15 managers who responded to the Google form that the researcher emailed them. This was done to refine clarity, identify issues, and ensure relevance and to improve the questionnaire thereby also ensuring completion likelihood for participants. This study used a quantitative research approach with a structured Google-based questionnaire which was used to collect quantitative data from a large number of respondents efficiently, that was distributed via email. It was administered and distributed electronically (Google Form) to ensure a broad reach. The survey link was distributed via email and professional networks such as E-mail, Messenger, Business WhatsApp, and LinkedIn, inviting them to participate in the survey. The researchers approached the managers and executives, and the prominence of the study was communicated to potential respondents (Johnson, 2022). Proper guidelines were given to fill out the questionnaires. The survey link (Google Form) was sent to those who expressed interest in filling out the questionnaire. The online option allowed managers to fill

out the questionnaires at their own pace howbeit, although participants were urged to do the submission within two days. Follow-up reminders were sent to maximize response rates and ensure representative sample. Data collection emerged in the last week of July 2024 and was completed in the last week of August 2024. Data was collected at different time points based on the availability of the participants. Data collection was monitored regularly to track progress and address any issues promptly. The questionnaire consists of several structured sections that consisted of various types of questions, such as closed-ended questions (e.g. multiple-choice and Likert 5-point Scale) that were tailored to the specific research context and objectives. Demographic Information gathered details on respondents' age, gender, education, position, and experience to understand sample diversity. The structured questionnaire developed explored the four key hypotheses through targeted questions. Emotional Intelligence—covering self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and relationship management—was assessed via three sub-questions. The impact of Transformational Leadership, including inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, were examined similarly. Conflict types and sources were explored through four direct questions, while each of the five conflict management strategies (Avoidance, Accommodation, Competition, Compromise, Collaboration) was addressed with three focused questions. The strength of Team cohesiveness was evaluated with five targeted items. Finally, Organizational Excellence measured through transformational leadership and emotional intelligence used elements such as vision, engagement, customer satisfaction, innovation, and accountability were explored using three questions per dimension, capturing managers' practical insights. Out of 350 managers invited to partake in the research, a total of 301 respondents completed the questionnaires resulting in a positive response rate of 86%. Once the data collection period ended, responses were exported from Google Forms and imported to a statistical software package (SPSS, Excel) for analysis. In this research, the investigators opted for secondary sources of data and pursued peer-reviewed scholarly online journals using various search engines such as Google Scholar, Science Direct, Emerald Insight, ResearchGate, Academia, JSTOR, SCI-HUB, and others to acquire pertinent information necessary for the study. For this research, a Cronbach's alpha of 0.783 was generated that is considered acceptable and indicates that the 63 items in the scale are reasonably correlated and measure the same underlying construct resulting a good reliability. It is viewed as the most appropriate measure of reliability when making use of Likert scales. No absolute rules exist for internal consistencies, however most agree on a minimum internal consistency coefficient of 0.7 (Furstenberg et al., 2020). Slovin's Formula was used to calculate the sample

study based on the size of the whole population (2800) with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%. Thus, a manageable sample size of 350 managers from Mauritius' tourism industry was set for this study. This sample size can account for non-responses and still retain a strong sample size for proper analysis, as per the researcher's observation that non-responses in surveys might distort results if the sample is too small (Bao & Jolly, 2024). To ensure that the study's findings are comparable with those of other studies in the field, a sample size of 350 is frequently employed as a benchmark in the context of previously published literature and comparable studies. The timing criteria employed in the prior study by Chen and Fellenz (2020), titled 'Impact of Transformational Leadership on Work Performance, burnout, and Social Loafing: A Mediation Model', are aligned with this methodology.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Data analysis involves systematically applying statistical and logical techniques to describe, summarize, and compare data. For this research, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 was employed to calculate the data. Descriptive and Inferential statistics were used to determine the biographical profile of the respondents and

the latter was used to predict the relationships between the dependent variable and independent variables as elucidated in the hypotheses. Multiple regression, Anova test and Pearson Correlation were used to measure the relationship between the variables, assess significant differences between the means of three or more independent groups (Furstenberg et al., 2020; Obinwanne & Kpaji, 2022). Pearson correlation measures the existence (given by a p-value) and strength (given by the coefficient r between -1 and +1) of a linear relationship between two variables (Chen & Fellenz, 2020). This test was relevant for this study as it allowed for comparison among the variables under the study and provide a clear insight about the validation of the hypotheses. The descriptive statistics of the respondent is displayed in the Table 1, Majority of the respondents were female (57.5%), with almost half the respondents holding a Bachelor's degree (49.5%) and another large segment having a Master's (46.2%). The majority were aged 30-39 (48.2%), with a smaller proportion aged 40-49 (32.9%). More than half of the respondents (56.5%) occupied the position of Senior Manager and (20.3%) were in the position of Executive. Majority of the respondents (44.9%) had 4-6 years of experience, followed by (27.6%) with 7 to 10 years' experience and (14.6%) with more than 10 years' experience.

Table 1: Demographic Profiles of the Respondents

Variable	Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	125	41.5%
	Female	173	57.5%
Age	20-29 years old	23	7.6%
	30-39 years old	145	48.2%
	40-49 years old	99	32.9%
	50 and above	34	11.3%
Qualification	Diploma	9	3%
	Bachelor's Degree	149	49.5%
	Master's Degree	139	46.2%
	Doctorate	4	1.3%
Current position	Manager	69	22.9%
	Senior Manager	170	56.5%
	Executive	61	20.3%
Years of Experience in the Tourism Sector	Less than 1 year	10	3.3%
	1-3 years	29	9.6%
	4-6 years	135	44.9%
	7-10 years	83	27.6%
	More than 10 years	44	14.6%

Hypotheses Testing, Discussion and Analysis

This section will examine the hypothesis by analyzing the relationship between the dependent, mediator and independent variables using different types of testing.

Hypothesis 1

H1: Higher levels of managers' EI are positively associated with Effective Conflict Management and Team Cohesiveness.

Table 2: Anova Testing (Managers' EI and Effective Conflict Management & Team Cohesiveness)

Model Summary ^b				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.825 ^a	.681	.675	.173

a. Predictors: (Constant), Team Cohesiveness5 [I feel that conflicts within my team are handled constructively.], Team Cohesiveness2 [My team members and I are committed to our shared goals.], Team Cohesiveness3 [I inspire team members to participate equally in discussions and tasks.], Team Cohesiveness1 [I encourage a strong sense of unity within my team.], Team Cohesiveness4 [I am satisfied with the level of communication within my team.]

b. Dependent Variable: Self Awareness3 [I demonstrate a high level of emotional intelligence in my interactions with team members and it positively impacts my ability to lead in a transformative manner.]

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	18.735	5	3.747	125.810	.000 ^b
	Residual	8.786	295	.030		
	Total	27.522	300			

a. Dependent Variable: Self Awareness3 [I demonstrate a high level of emotional intelligence in my interactions with team members and it positively impacts my ability to lead in a transformative manner.]

b. Predictors: (Constant), Team Cohesiveness3 [I inspire team members to participate equally in discussions and tasks.], Team Cohesiveness2 [My team members and I are committed to our shared goals.], Team Cohesiveness5 [I feel that conflicts within my team are handled constructively.], Team Cohesiveness1 [I encourage a strong sense of unity within my team.], Team Cohesiveness4 [I am satisfied with the level of communication within my team.]

Table 3: (Pearson Correlation Managers EI, Effective Conflict Management & Team Cohesiveness)

Coefficients ^a														
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations			Collinearity Statistics		
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF	
1	(Constant)	-5.633	.632		-8.919	.000	-6.876	-4.390						
	Team Cohesiveness1 [I encourage a strong sense of unity within my team.]	.105	.152	.034	.688	.492	-.195	.405	.319	.040	.023	.432	2.316	
	Team Cohesiveness2 [My team members and I are committed to our shared goals.]	-.528	.160	-.174	-3.298	.001	-.843	-.213	.319	-.189	-.109	.391	2.558	
	Team Cohesiveness3 [I inspire team members to participate equally in discussions and tasks.]	.633	.126	.268	5.041	.000	.386	.880	.671	.282	.166	.384	2.604	
	Team Cohesiveness4 [I am satisfied with the level of communication within my team.]	.746	.150	.282	4.988	.000	.452	1.040	.752	.279	.164	.337	2.963	
	Team Cohesiveness5 [I feel that conflicts within my team are handled constructively.]	1.169	.173	.443	6.775	.000	.830	1.509	.752	.367	.223	.253	3.948	

a. Dependent Variable: Self Awareness3 [I demonstrate a high level of emotional intelligence in my interactions with team members and it positively impacts my ability to lead in a transformative manner.]

A multilinear regression analysis was conducted to assess the relationship between managers' Emotional Intelligence (EI), Effective Conflict Management, and Team Cohesiveness. The independent variable was team cohesiveness, while the dependent variable was manager's high emotional intelligence in interactions with team members which enhances transformative leadership and significantly improves managers' conflict management abilities. The regression analysis confirmed the link between team cohesiveness and emotional intelligence, showing that strong team cohesiveness significantly is associated with managers' conflict management skills and their ability to lead transformational through high emotional intelligence. In this analysis, an Anova test was carried out to determine whether the overall regression model is a good fit for the data. The Anova table shows that the

independent variables statistically significantly predict the dependent variable, $F(5, 295) = 125.810, p < 0.0001$ (i.e. the regression model is a good fit of the data). Moreover, based on the p -value < 0.05 , the null hypothesis can also be rejected. The analysis confirms that managers with higher emotional intelligence (EI) are significantly more effective at managing team conflicts, especially when team cohesiveness is strong, which amplifies the positive impact of EI. The regression model proved statistically robust ($5, 295) = 125.810, p < 0.0001$), validating the hypothesis that EI plays a critical role in enhancing conflict management and transformational leadership. Notably, the beta values reveal that constructive conflict resolution is more strongly driven by managers' Emotional Intelligence ($\beta = 0.433$) than by team communication ($\beta = 0.262$), underscoring EI as the more powerful predictor of effective conflict outcomes.

These findings hold critical significance for the hotel sector in Mauritius, where team-based service delivery and high-pressure environments are the norm. Managers with high emotional intelligence can more effectively resolve interpersonal conflicts and foster cohesive teams, ultimately enhancing service quality and guest satisfaction. Prioritizing EI in leadership development can thus drive both employee

harmony and operational excellence in the hospitality industry.

Hypothesis 2

H2: Transformational leaders have a significant effect on Effective Conflict Management and Team Cohesiveness.

Table 4: Correlation Transformational Leaders Effective Conflict Management and Team Cohesiveness

Correlations			
		Inspirational Motivation3 [I believe that my approach to leadership helps inspire and motivate my team to achieve organizational excellence.]	Compromise 3 [I often suggest splitting the difference to resolve disagreement.]
Inspirational Motivation3 [I believe that my approach to leadership helps inspire and motivate my team to achieve organizational excellence.]	Pearson Correlation	1	.358**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	301	301
Compromise 3 [I often suggest splitting the difference to resolve disagreement.]	Pearson Correlation	.358**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	301	301

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The hypothesis testing aimed to determine the relationship between Transformational Leadership, Effective Conflict Management, and Team Cohesiveness using the Pearson product-moment correlation. The variable utilized was the managers’ perception of the extent to which their leadership approach serves to inspire and motivate their team toward achieving organizational excellence. As such this is an essential facet for transformational leaders as they seek to lead in an inspirational manner and focus on motivating their subordinates to do their daily duties. The other variable that was used was effective conflict handling with the main means of handling conflict was splitting of differences as a means to reach a compromise to resolve disagreements which is considered as an effective means to resolve conflict and build team cohesiveness. The Pearson product moment correlation was used to determine the relationship between transformational leaders and its impact on effective conflict management and team cohesiveness. Based on the correlations table, as the P-value is less than 0.05, the analysis shows that Transformational leadership has a statistically significant, moderately positive impact on effective conflict management and team cohesiveness. This means leaders who inspire and motivate are more likely to foster harmony and collaboration within their teams.

In Mauritius’s hotel sector where teamwork and service quality are vital such leadership is not just beneficial, but essential for sustained excellence and guest satisfaction. It also highlights the need for more management development and the need for executive leadership education in the vibrant hotel sector of Mauritius. Thus, the hypothesis was validated and the null hypothesis was rejected. This has also been supported by existing research findings which affirm that emotionally intelligent managers excel at conflict resolution, fostering cohesive teams (Lee et al., 2023; Wang, Tsai & Tsai, 2014). The findings underscore that in the tourism sector, specifically hotels in Mauritius, emotionally intelligent leadership is crucial for managing conflicts and promoting team cohesion, as emphasized by studies (Naidoo, 2022) on employee dynamics in hospitality. Similarly, transformational leadership enhances team collaboration and conflict management, even amid challenges (Zhang et al., 2023; Smith, 2023). EI and TL drive employee engagement, customer satisfaction, innovation, and team cohesion (Chen et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023).

Hypothesis 3

H3: Effective Conflict Management and Team Cohesiveness are Positively Associated with Organizational Excellence.

Table 5: Anova Test Conflict Management, Team Cohesiveness and Organizational Excellence

Model Summary^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.935 ^a	.873	.870	.041	

a. Predictors: (Constant), Innovations and Continuous Improvement3 [I feel that innovation is a key focus in our environment.], Leadership and Vision1 [As a leader, I feel confident in the direction I set to drive organizational success.], Employee Engagement and Customer Satisfaction3 [I believe that my understanding and addressing my employees' emotional needs, I can significantly increase their engagement at work.], Leadership and Vision3 [I inspire and guide my team towards achieving excellence in tourism.], Innovations and Continuous Improvement2 [I encourage and support my team to propose new ideas for improving our services.], Leadership and Vision2 [I am confident that my leadership has a clear and strategic plan for the future of our tourism operations.], Employee Engagement and Customer Satisfaction2 [I am proud of the way I interact and support employees and customers.], Employee Engagement and Customer Satisfaction1 [I feel motivated to contribute to improving both employee engagement and customer satisfaction in our organization.]

b. Dependent Variable: Team Cohesiveness5 [I feel that conflicts within my team are handled constructively.]

ANOVA^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3.447	8	.431	251.620	.000 ^b
	Residual	.500	292	.002		
	Total	3.947	300			

a. Dependent Variable: Team Cohesiveness5 [I feel that conflicts within my team are handled constructively.]

b. Predictors: (Constant), Innovations and Continuous Improvement3 [I feel that innovation is a key focus in our environment.], Leadership and Vision1 [As a leader, I feel confident in the direction I set to drive organizational success.], Employee Engagement and Customer Satisfaction3 [I believe that my understanding and addressing my employees' emotional needs, I can significantly increase their engagement at work.], Leadership and Vision3 [I inspire and guide my team towards achieving excellence in tourism.], Innovations and Continuous Improvement2 [I encourage and support my team to propose new ideas for improving our services.], Leadership and Vision2 [I am confident that my leadership has a clear and strategic plan for the future of our tourism operations.], Employee Engagement and Customer Satisfaction2 [I am proud of the way I interact and support employees and customers.], Employee Engagement and Customer Satisfaction1 [I feel motivated to contribute to improving both employee engagement and customer satisfaction in our organization.]

The hypothesis testing examined the relationship between Effective Conflict Management, Team Cohesiveness, and Organizational Excellence using multilinear regression. This hypothesis acts as a key mediator between Emotional Intelligence, Transformational Leadership and Organizational Excellence. Effective conflict management enhances team cohesiveness, which in turn leads to better organizational performance. Leaders with high EI and transformational leadership skills are more likely to manage conflicts effectively, which leads to better team cohesiveness, ultimately driving to organizational excellence. Additionally, the dependent variable used was the handling conflicts in a constructive manner which is an essential component in effective conflict management and team cohesiveness. The independent variables were innovations and continuous improvement, employee engagement and customer satisfaction, leadership and vision that are essential factors for achieving organizational excellence. To confirm the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variable, a multilinear regression analysis was done. In this analysis, an Anova test was carried out to determine whether the overall regression model is a good fit for the data. The Anova table shows that the independent variables

statistically significantly predict the dependent variable, $F(8, 292) = 251.620, p < 0.0001$ (i.e. the regression model is a good fit of the data). Moreover, based on the p -value < 0.05 , the null hypothesis can also be rejected. Furthermore, it can be concluded that innovations and continuous improvements have more impact on conflict management and team cohesiveness than leadership and vision based on the beta figures (i.e. $1.500 > 0.864$). However, it can also be determined that leadership and vision have much greater impact than employee engagement and customer satisfaction (i.e. $0.864 > 0.353$). In the hotel sector of Mauritius, leaders with strong emotional intelligence and transformational leadership drive effective conflict management, enhancing team cohesion and boosting service excellence. Innovation and continuous improvement play a stronger role in managing team dynamics than leadership alone. However, visionary leadership remains the most critical factor in achieving long-term organizational excellence.

Hypothesis 4

H4: The relationship between Effective Emotional Intelligence and Transformational Leadership Positively Leads to Organizational Excellence.

Table 6: Anova Test Emotional Intelligence, Transformational Leadership & Organizational Excellence

Model Summary ^b					ANOVA ^a						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	.963 ^a	.928	.926	.082	1	Regression Residual Total	25.535 1.986 27.522	8 292 300	3.192 .007	469.233	.000 ^b

a. Predictors: (Constant), Innovations and Continuous Improvement3 [I feel that innovation is a key focus in our environment.], Leadership and Vision1 [As a leader, I feel confident in the direction I set to drive organizational success.], Employee Engagement and Customer Satisfaction3 [I believe that my understanding and addressing my employees' emotional needs, I can significantly increase their engagement at work.], Leadership and Vision3 [I inspire and guide my team towards achieving excellence in tourism.], Innovations and Continuous Improvement2 [I encourage and support my team to propose new ideas for improving our services.], Leadership and Vision2 [I am confident that my leadership has a clear and strategic plan for the future of our tourism operations.], Employee Engagement and Customer Satisfaction2 [I am proud of the way I interact and support employees and customers.], Employee Engagement and Customer Satisfaction1 [I feel motivated to contribute to improving both employee engagement and customer satisfaction in our organization.]

b. Dependent Variable: Self Awareness3 [I demonstrate a high level of emotional intelligence in my interactions with team members and it positively impacts my ability to lead in a transformative manner.]

Table 7: Multilinear Regression Emotional Intelligence (EI), Transformational Leadership (TL), and Organizational Excellence

Coefficients ^a														
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations			Collinearity Statistics		
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF	
1	(Constant)	-1.622	.342		-4.748	.000	-2.295	-.950						
	Leadership and Vision1 [As a leader, I feel confident in the direction I set to drive organizational success.]	-.007	.083	-.005	-.083	.934	-.169	.156	.392	-.005	-.001	.073	13.715	
	Leadership and Vision2 [I am confident that my leadership has a clear and strategic plan for the future of our tourism operations.]	-.663	.096	-.485	-6.926	.000	-.852	-.475	.379	-.376	-.109	.050	19.858	
	Leadership and Vision3 [I inspire and guide my team towards achieving excellence in tourism.]	.667	.051	.436	12.962	.000	.565	.768	.537	.604	.204	.218	4.584	
	Employee Engagement and Customer Satisfaction1 [I feel motivated to contribute to improving both employee engagement and customer satisfaction in our organization.]	1.670	.172	.894	9.711	.000	1.332	2.009	.866	.494	.153	.029	34.265	
	Employee Engagement and Customer Satisfaction2 [I am proud of the way I interact and support employees and customers.]	.326	.136	.175	2.398	.017	.058	.594	.866	.139	.038	.047	21.479	
	Employee Engagement and Customer Satisfaction3 [I believe that my understanding and addressing my employees' emotional needs, I can significantly increase their engagement at work.]	2.223E-13	.117	.000	.000	1.000	-.230	.230	.710	.000	.000	.072	13.834	
	Innovations and Continuous Improvement2 [I encourage and support my team to propose new ideas for improving our services.]	-1.344	.208	-.441	-6.462	.000	-1.753	-.934	.540	-.354	-.102	.053	18.875	
	Innovations and Continuous Improvement3 [I feel that innovation is a key focus in our environment.]	.674	.234	.255	2.877	.004	.213	1.134	.752	.166	.045	.031	31.808	

a. Dependent Variable: Self Awareness3 [I demonstrate a high level of emotional intelligence in my interactions with team members and it positively impacts my ability to lead in a transformative manner.]

The hypothesis testing aimed to explore the relationship between Emotional Intelligence (EI), Transformational Leadership (TL), and Organizational Excellence using a multilinear regression analysis. The dependent variable used was a high level of emotional intelligence in interactions with team members positively impacts the ability to lead in a transformative manner. The independent variables were innovations and continuous improvement, employee engagement and customer satisfaction, leadership and vision that are essential factors for achieving organizational excellence. With a, P-value < 0.05 and an F-value of 469.23, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating a positive association between EI, TL, and organizational excellence. The beta values show that employee engagement and customer satisfaction ($\beta = 0.894$) have a stronger impact on EI and TL than leadership and vision ($\beta = 0.436$), while leadership and vision also have a more substantial impact than innovation and continuous improvement ($\beta = 0.255$). In this analysis, an Anova test was carried out to determine whether the overall regression model is a good fit for the data. The Anova table shows that the independent variables statistically significantly predict the dependent variable, $F(8, 292) = 469.233, p < 0.0001$ (i.e. the regression model is a good fit of the data). Moreover, based on the p-value < 0.05, the null hypothesis can also be rejected. Furthermore, it can be concluded that Employee engagement and customer satisfaction are the strongest influencers on EI and TL (beta = $0.894 > 0.436$), having more impact than leadership and

vision. While leadership and vision still have a significant effect, which is greater than the influence of innovation and continuous improvement (i.e. $0.894 > 0.255$). The findings, confirm a powerful, statistically significant relationship between Emotional Intelligence, Transformational Leadership, and Organizational Excellence. Leaders with high emotional intelligence are more effective at inspiring teams, driving engagement, and enhancing customer satisfaction. The strongest predictor of excellence was employee engagement and customer satisfaction ($\beta = 0.894$), far outweighing other factors. In Mauritius's hotel sector where guest experience and team synergy are everything emotionally intelligent, transformational leaders are the cornerstone of sustainable excellence. These results make a compelling case for prioritizing emotional intelligence in leadership development strategies across the industry. Moreover, continuous innovation and improvement strategies are vital for maintaining a competitive edge and enhancing service quality, aligning with studies that stress the need for adaptability in the evolving tourism sector.

SUMMARY OF HYPOTHESES RESULTS

As based on the summary of the hypotheses results the research framework has been validated as seen Fig. 2 (Summary of hypotheses results).

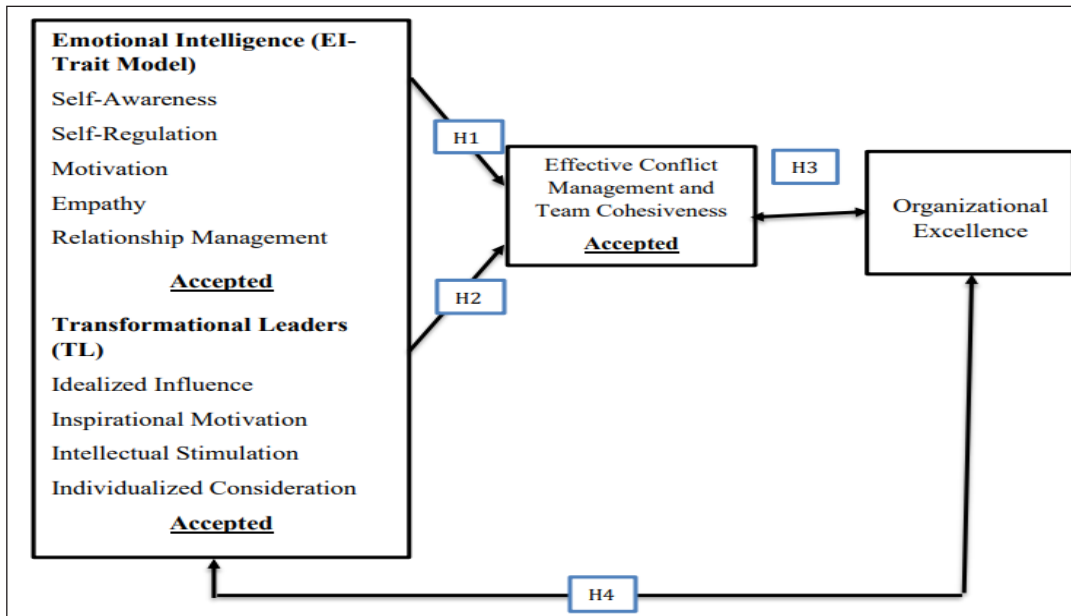


Fig. 2: Summary of Hypotheses Results

The validated research framework developed for this study confirms the four proposed hypotheses, as illustrated in Fig. 2, and demonstrates that Emotional Intelligence and

Transformational Leadership are not just complementary forces, they are essential drivers of effective conflict management, team cohesiveness, and ultimately

organizational excellence. Each hypothesis has been statistically proven, illustrating how emotionally intelligent and transformational leaders create harmonious teams that resolve conflicts effectively and deliver exceptional service. Conclusively all these facets are essential in tourism, where teamwork and resolving customer-related conflicts are key with much needed Emotional Intelligence coupled Transformational leadership that inspires, motivates, and supports employees in high-stress environments like tourism. Thereby ensuring smooth operations and exceptional service delivery, critical for the competitive tourism industry creating a robust foundation for superior service, innovation, and adaptability in the dynamic tourism sector of Mauritius. In the hotel sector of Mauritius, where human interaction is at the heart of the guest experience, this model offers a path to achieving success. Emotionally Intelligent Managers who develop self-awareness, empathy, and transformational leadership can foster team unity, reduce workplace conflicts, and ignite motivation across all levels. This, in turn, translates directly into better employee engagement, higher customer satisfaction, and continuous improvement in service delivery essential for the hotel sector of Mauritius. By adopting this framework, hotel leaders are equipped not only to manage people better but to build emotionally resilient teams that are aligned with the hotel's vision and capable of consistently delivering outstanding guest experiences. It is not just a model it is a strategy for sustainable excellence in the hotel industry where people make all the difference. This framework is particularly relevant to Mauritius as a tourism hub, where employee relations, leadership style, and organizational performance directly influence customer satisfaction and the nation's global reputation as an emerging epicenter for tourism excellence.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND FUTURE SCOPE

Despite the strengths, this research has some limitations, the findings were based on managerial perspectives only. Hence, the perceptions of non-managerial employees about Emotional Intelligence remain abundant in the organizational setting. Furthermore, qualitative studies that allow for the collection of in-depth insights on the subject matter are essential. Besides, the study was focused exclusively on the most popular and high-end luxury Resorts and Hotels of Mauritius. This narrow scope may limit the generalizability of the findings to other hotels in the region.

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