

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL SKILLS IN ENHANCING MANAGERIAL PERFORMANCE THROUGH TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS: A DEVELOPING COUNTRY PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Although a significant number of studies analyzing the impact of transformational leadership on job performance has been recognized, there is a lack of research considering this construct in the context of managerial performance, and along with interpersonal characteristics. To fill this gap, this paper has been built on Mintzberg's (1973) premise according to which interpersonal skills play an important role in achieving not only managerial performance but also their leadership styles. In other words, it has been argued that transformational leadership behaves as a mediator in the relationship between social skills and managerial performance. Given the main findings, the paper contributes to practical thinking by indicating the importance of including social skills training focused on building social flexibility and presentation skills, so that managers could have a greater positive impact on managerial performance. As a consequence, it is well known that their better performance increases overall organizational success, which is a valuable lesson for a developing country setting in which this research has been conducted. Contributions to theory and practice are offered after which direction for further research follows.

Keywords: *Social skills, Social presentation, Social flexibility, Transformational leadership, Managerial performance, Mediation*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The previous scientific achievements that address job performance and its determinants are largely incompatible (Chong and Zainal 2024; Rothmann and Coetzer 2003; Smayling and Miller 2012), regardless of the importance that this construct has not only in scientific but also in the practical sense (Whetten and Cameron 2007). Especially important is the construct of the performance in the context of managerial potentials as these potentials are connected with the growth and development of organizations (Azman et al. 2024; Braun et al. 2013). Although a significant number of studies analyzing the impact of transformational leadership (TL) on job performance has been recognized (e.g. Manzoor et al. 2019; Barling and Weber 1996), an extremely limited number of the research consider this construct in the context of managerial performance, and along with interpersonal characteristics. Also, it should be noted that very little is known about the predictors of transformational leadership (Klasmeier and Rowold 2020; Lim and Ployhart 2004; Rubin, Muntz, and Bommer 2005), while its role in moderation models was more often studied (e.g. Awan et al. 2023; Wang et al. 2011; Howell and Hall-Merenda 1999). Through the previous research, the construct has been mainly observed as an independent construct (Lowe, Kroeck, and Sivasubramaniam 1996; Piccolo and Colquitt 2006), although Bass (1988 p. 118) emphasized: "Can the tendency to be more transformational be accurately predicted? If so, how?"; thus supporting future research that addresses the diverse constructs as predictors of TL.

Transformational leadership is recognized as a desirable approach to managing the evolving environment that modern organizations face. It has been seen as an effective set of behaviors that presents challenges for followers, while at the same time requiring special manager skills (Bass 1990). This transformational behavior has been linked to high-performance levels, motivation, satisfaction, and the development of followers (Dvir et al. 2002), and many other interesting outcomes, which lead to the conclusion that this research area is over-researched. However, the gap still occurs in research that explores its antecedents and effects on managerial performance, which has been analyzed in detail in the following section and complemented with Table 1. Following Mintzberg's (1973) premise according to which interpersonal skills play an important role in achieving not only managerial performance but also leadership styles, this paper posits that social skills (social presentation and social flexibility) affect managerial performance through transformational leadership as a mediator variable. Previous

research has been primarily focused on Western contexts (e.g., Tran and Nguyen 2022; Cavazotte et al. 2012), whereas this study examines the proposed interplay in a developing country setting.

From a theoretical point of view, this paper presents an attempt to "change the course" of existing literature that illuminates additional characteristics needed for practicing transformational leadership. Since its positive role on performance is viewed as axiomatic (Lowe, Kroeck, and Sivasubramaniam 1996), this study focuses on examining the impact of social skills on TL and their impact on managerial performance. To our knowledge, this is the first paper that treats social skills and transformational leadership in this context. Therefore, the paper extends the existing literature by providing a deeper understanding of unexplored predictors (social skills) of TL and developing a further practice that should be organized in a way that explores not only the role of transformational leadership but also its predictors. Considering the trainable nature of social skills (Ke et al. 2020), this paper also contributes to practical thinking by indicating the importance of including social skills-oriented training, so that managers who display transformational leadership can achieve better managerial performance and consequently organizational performance.

The following section offers a literature review complemented by a table overview of available research that has investigated the role of transformational leadership in the context of managerial performance. It also emphasizes the gaps identified upon which this paper is built on. The hypotheses development sections follow, addressing three hypothetical relationships and presenting the conceptual model that applied a presented methodology which is related to the following section of this paper. After that, the result and conclusion sections follow, while the paper ends with theoretical and practical contributions, limitations and directions for future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

An analysis of existing literature in the context of managerial performance provides a quite limited number of predictors as the mechanisms through which transformational leadership accomplishes its effects. Table 1 presents an overview of available empirical research that illuminates the role of TL in this context. In the first place, it could be noted that all of the research is related to mediated (e.g. Walumbwa, Avolio, and Zhu 2008) or moderated (e.g. Sosik and Megerian 1999) models in which TL has been analyzed

more often as an independent and less as a dependent construct, except for research within which only a direct link between emotional intelligence and TL is assumed (Barbuto and Burbach 2006). It is also noteworthy that studies that combine a mixed-method approach have not been recorded, which is consistent with the attitudes of Alvesson (1996) and Conger (1998) according to which management researchers rely mainly on the quantitative approach to studying different phenomena. Also, most of the studies were conducted within the Anglo-Saxon speaking area, except those that included other research settings such as Norway, Iran, Germany, Vietnam, Brazil and Denmark. This is also supported by the meta-analytical investigation which presents additional evidence that the construct has been exclusively used in Western countries (Leong and Fischer 2011).

Additionally, one of the oldest available papers that empirically investigated TL in the context of unit-level performance is offered by Howell and Avolio (1993). Although managerial performance has not been analyzed directly, evaluation of unit-level performance was evaluated by managers. It has been proven that TL has not only a direct positive effect on unit-level performance, but also depends on the personality characteristics and the manager's locus of control. Perhaps the most important feature of this study is that TL is observed not only as an independent but also as a dependent construct, as recorded in a very limited number of studies, such as the one provided by Sosik and Megerian (1999). The model they proposed encompassed the moderation effect of self-awareness. In addition, their findings showed that four out of seven characteristics of emotional intelligence are the predictors of transformational managers who are in agreement, while for those managers who are overestimators self-awareness and emotional intelligence do not have a positive relationship with TL (this relationship is negative). They also proved that TL has a positive relationship with the performance of those managers who are in agreement. The results of the study offered by Rubin, Munz, and Bommer (2005) also illuminated the positive predictors of TL. In this sense, extraversion behaves as a moderator between emotion recognition and TL, while agreeableness and extraversion have a positive impact on TL. Barbuto and Burbach (2006) proved that emotional intelligence is the positive predictor of TL, while Cavazotte et al. (2012) found an identical relationship in the situation when this relationship is observed in isolation. In the paper offered by Van Woerkom and Reuver (2009), predictors of transformational leadership are cultural empathy, open-mindedness, and social initiative.

The findings of the study offered by Noruzy et al. (2013) show that TL, as an independent construct, positively influences the organization's innovation and performance. Besides, TL has a positive effect on organizational performance which has also been proven in the study conducted by Muterera et al. (2015), making it clear that instead of managerial performance, organizational assessments were evaluated, although it should be noted that all observed sample studies had managerial potentials. The results of the study published by Walumbwa, Avolio, and Zhu (2008) also demonstrated the indirect effect of TL on performance in the presence of interaction of identification and means of efficacy as a mediator variable. In addition, TL has a positive impact on schedule performance, technical quality, and speed to market (Keller 2006).

Nevertheless, according to Table 1, only one study has examined the mediation effect of TL in a managerial context. In addition to the fact that TL has a direct impact on leadership effectiveness, it is proven that it mediates the relationship between individual differences and the effectiveness of managers (Cavazotte et al. 2012), which is similar to this study. Finally, the direct positive relationship between TL and managerial performance has been offered by the recent research trends (e.g. Nguyen et al. 2017; Løvaas et al. 2020; Tran and Nguyen 2022), which reflects additional support to develop the model within which transformational leadership has not only a direct effect on managerial performance, but could be a strong mediator in different conceptualizations. Consequently, this study addresses these gaps and offers a quantitative model that illuminates the mediation role of transformational leadership predicted by social skills in a rarely explored managerial sample.

Table 1. Overview of the empirical studies of TL in the managerial performance context (1993-2024)

Author(s)	Type of study and type of TL variable*	Other variable(s) included in the study	Sample	Research setting	Findings
Howell and Avolio (1993)	Quantitative, DV and INV	Locus of control, support for innovation, personality characteristics, unit-level performance	Managers (n=78)	Financial institution (Canada)	TL has a direct and positive relationship with unit-level performance. Support for innovation behaves as a mediator between TL and performance, while personality characteristics and locus of control are positive predictors of TL.
Carless, Mann, and Wearing (1998)	Quantitative, INV	Work performance	Branch managers (n=249), their subordinates (n=498), and their superiors (n=66)	Australian bank (Australia)	There is a weak relationship between leadership and the performance of managers. The level of agreement is influenced by managerial performance, but not by the extent of acquaintance, and inconclusively by the age of the manager.
Sosik and Megerian (1999)	Quantitative, DV and INV	Self-awareness, emotional intelligence, managerial performance.	Managers (n=63) subordinates (n=192) superiors of focal managers (n=63)	IT company (USA)	The correlations between TL, emotional intelligence and performance are conditioned by managers' self-awareness.
Sosik (2001)	Quantitative, INV	Self-awareness, work attitudes, charismatic leadership, managerial performance	Managers (n=83), subordinates (n=249), superiors of focal managers (n=83)	IT consulting companies (USA)	Self-awareness behaves as a moderator between work attitudes, charismatic leadership and performance.
Rubin, Munz, and Bommer (2005)	Quantitative, DV	Emotion recognition, positive affectivity, agreeableness, personality, performance of TRL behaviour	Managers (n=145) and their followers (n=480)	Biotechnology/ agricultural company (USA)	Positive predictors of TL are positive affectivity, emotion recognition and agreeableness. Extraversion behaves as a moderator between emotion recognition and TL.
Barbuto and Burbach (2006)	Quantitative, DV	Emotional intelligence	Leaders as public officials (n=80) and their employees (n=388)	Public administration (USA)	A positive predictor of TL is emotional intelligence.
Keller (2006)	Quantitative, INV	Project team performance, initiating structure, type of RandD, substitutes for leadership	Project leaders (n=118) and professional employees (n=674)	RandD companies (n/a)	TL is a positive predictor of schedule performance, technical quality and speed to market.
Boerner, Eisenbeiss, and Griesser (2007)	Quantitative, INV	Organizational Citizenship Behaviour, debate, innovation, transactional leadership, performance	Leaders (n=91) and their followers (n/a)	Companies (Germany)	Leaders who practice TL boost the performance of their followers through the support of OCB. OCB does not behave as a mediator between transactional leadership and follower innovation and performance.
Walumbwa, Avolio, and Zhu (2008)	Quantitative, INV	Identification with work unit, means efficacy, self-efficacy, individual performance	Supervisors (n=83) and their employees (n=437)	Banking organizations (USA)	The interaction of identification and means efficacy behave as mediators between TL and performance.
Van Woerkom and Reuver (2009)	Quantitative, DV and IDV	Cultural empathy, open-mindedness, social initiative, emotional stability, flexibility, performance	Managers (n=138)	Multi-national company (Denmark)	Cultural empathy, open-mindedness and social initiative have a direct and positive impact on TL, while TL has a direct impact on performance.
Cavazotte et al. (2012)	Quantitative, DV and IDV	Leadership effectiveness, individual differences	Midlevel managers (n=134) and their subordinates (n=325)	Company from the energy sector (Brazil)	TL has a direct effect on leadership effectiveness. TL behaves as a mediator between individual differences and leadership effectiveness. Neuroticism has a negative effect on leadership effectiveness. Emotional intelligence has a direct and positive impact on TL (considered in isolation), while this relationship is non-significant in the presence of control variables (ability and personality).

Table 1. Continued

Follesdal and Hagtvet (2013)	Quantitative, DV	Emotional intelligence	Leaders (n=111) and their subordinates (n=459)	Educational organization and Norwegian municipality (Norway)	Emotional intelligence does not predict transformational leadership using control variables (general mental ability and the five-factor model of personality).
Noruzy et al. (2013)	Quantitative, INV	Organizational learning, knowledge management, organizational innovation	Managers (n=280)	Manufacturing companies (Iran)	TL is a positive predictor of organizational learning, organizational innovation, knowledge management and organizational performance. Organizational learning and knowledge management behave as mediators between TL and organizational innovation.
Muterera et al. (2015)	Quantitative, INV	Job satisfaction, organizational performance,	Chief executive officers (n=372) and followers (n=892)	Governments (USA)	TL has a direct and positive impact on job satisfaction and organizational performance. In the follower-perception model job satisfaction behaves as a mediator between TL and organizational performance.
Nguyen et al. (2017)	Quantitative, INV	Managerial performance, reward system	Department managers (n=152)	Companies (Vietnam)	TL has a direct and positive impact on managerial performance. Comprehensive PMS, reward system and BSA information behave as mediators between TL and managerial performance.
Løvaas et al. (2020)	Quantitative, INV	Prosocial motivation, intrinsic motivation, Innovation	Managers (n=252)	Church (Norway)	A positive relationship between intrinsic motivation and transformational motivation was significant and transformational leadership was not significant. TL was positively associated with innovation.
Alegbeleye and Kaufman (2021)	Quantitative, INV	Building trust, identifying with leaders, embracing change and working with others	Middle managers (n=139)	Companies (USA)	Significant positive relationships exist between transformational leadership behaviors and effective followership behaviors (building trust, identifying with leaders, embracing change and working with others).
Tran and Nguyen (2022)	Quantitative, INV	Emotional capacity, knowledge sharing and corporate social responsibility	Managers (n=632)	Companies (Vietnam)	The emotional capacity has a positive relationship with transformational leadership through knowledge sharing and corporate social responsibility.
Juyumaya and Torres (2023)	Quantitative, INV	Creative performance and work engagement	Managers	Companies (n/a)	Practicing transformational leadership positively influences creative performance and work engagement.
Zheng et al. (2023)	Quantitative	Double-dimensional creativity and individual psychological security	Managers	Retail companies (n=258)	TL has a positive impact on double-dimensional creativity and psychological security.
This research	Quantitative, DV, INV and mediator	Social skills and managerial performance	Managers (n=285)	Private companies (Bosnia and Herzegovina)	Social skills (social presentation and social flexibility) are positive predictors of TL. TL has a positive effect on managerial performance, while its mediation role between social skills and managerial performance is partial.

*Relates to dependent (DV) or independent variable (INV)

3. HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

3.1. Social skills as predictors of transformational leadership

Social skills (SS) undoubtedly deserve to receive the attribute of a separate and unique construct, since it is not possible to identify the researchers' unique attitude when it comes to definitions and dimensions from which it has been made (Ross et al. 2024; Trower

1982; Phillips 1985; Witt and Ferris 2003). Although this construct is not unknown, research has not advanced much, as the attention given has not progressed enough in the industrial context (Hochwarter et al. 2006) while in this century presents an important pillar in managerial success (Wilczynska et al. 2023; Zařková and Poláček 2015). According to the trait approach, social skills are personality characteristics or predispositions that are stable through time and

applicable in every circumstance (McFall 1982). Patrick (2008) believes that social skills are a set of skills that people use for interaction and communication with other people. Libet and Lewinshon (1973) defined SS as a complex ability to produce behaviors that should be socially strengthened and accepted.

In other words, it means that this desirable behavior is a matter of appropriate presentation skills that display flexible personality characteristics and capabilities to manage different issues. This is additionally supported by the view suggested by Rubin and Martin (1994) according to which social skills include the ability to present and communicate, sense to others, and adaptability. In the context of managers, it means that they should be able to be flexible by applying desirable behavior as a result of adopted and appropriate interpretation of the real-time environment. In addition, social skills encompass the specific abilities of an individual who effectively solves their relationship with other people by achieving personal goals and not ignoring the interests of other people (Schneider and Byrne 1985). The authors consider SS as a flexible concept whose application can be found and used within a wide range of situations. Finally, it could be concluded that social skills are inevitable skills that managers should own so they can achieve better outcomes, and among others, they include possessing presentation skills and a flexible attitude toward an environment.

Since transformational leadership behavior is seen as an efficient behavior (Bass and Avolio 2003; Juyumaya and Torres 2023), through this paper we assume that social skills positively impact this leadership style. Although the literature does not record many predictors of TL, which according to Bass (1988) leads to job performance, still we do not neglect the need for their identification (Rubin, Munz, and Bommer 2005). In the context of diversity, the authors from this field generally advocate the consideration of individual characteristics as predictors of this leadership style (Bass et al. 2003), suggesting that TL should be considered as a dependent but not independent construct.

Social interaction (social skills) is one of the most important elements of TL (Ferris, Perrewé and Douglas 2002), while Groves (2006) demonstrated that emotional expression is the key predictor of TL. A similar attitude was also suggested by Riggio et al. (1987), by arguing that expression is closely related to charismatic leadership, while Ukwuije and Uki (2020) advocate that social skills are made out of social flexibility and social presentation and predict leadership competencies. With higher flexibility and presentation skills, managers can adjust to unpredictable circumstances to get the best outcome, while their effective and productive functioning comes as a result

of using appropriately presented ideas and thoughts they would like to implement. According to Gardner (1993), it is noted that individuals who have a high level of social skills have a capacity not only to better understand their environment but they are capable of creating their own opinions regarding their capacities to function more efficiently. Besides, Higgs and Aitken (2003) argue that emotional control, which includes self-monitoring and acting (Riggio 1986), has a positive relationship with TL. Finally, to achieve better managerial performance possessing skills such as social flexibility and social presentation are inevitable skills in a business environment (Vieira et al. 2023). Hence we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: Social skills are positive predictors of transformational leadership.

3.2. The relationship between transformational leadership skills and managerial performance

When it comes to the relationship between transformational leadership skills and managerial performance, we believe that the stream provided by Avolio and Bass (1991), and later supported by Yukl (1999), offers reasonable choice since they argue that transformational leaders record higher work-related performance. This relationship is also supported by other authors (Shamir et al. 1993; Kirkpatrick and Locke 2000; Eliyana et al. 2019; Vieira et al. 2023). Summing up the results of their study, Lowe, Kroeck, and Sivasubramaniam (1996) concluded that there is a relationship between TL and job performance, while only a few years later Bass (1998) offered the same findings. In the context of novel research, Nguyen et al. (2017) have proved that transformational leadership style contributes to better managerial performance. Research by Juyumaya and Torres (2023) indicates that practicing transformational leadership positively influences both creative performance and work engagement. However, Deinert et al. (2015) in their meta-analysis have shown that this relationship is indirect, meaning that other constructs should come as a support to their connection.

Besides, TL has a positive relationship with job satisfaction (Puni et al. 2018; Bryman 1992). Furthermore, extant literature shows that the research is mainly focused on the analysis of the influence of transformational leadership on employee satisfaction (Weller et al. 2019; Mujkić et al. 2014; Rothfelder et al. 2013), motivation (Løvaas et al. 2020; Ahmad et al. 2014; Barbuto 2005) and organizational culture (Lasrado and Kassem 2020; Bass and Avolio 1993; Tipu et al. 2012). The behavior of this leadership style is focused on a positive

transformation of the employees in the process of achieving organizational goals (Bass and Avolio 2003). Taking into consideration the above-mentioned, we propose that:

H2: Transformational leadership has a positive impact on managerial performance.

3.3. The mediating effect of transformational leadership skills

Katz (1955) emphasized that managerial skills have long been recognized as extremely important for leadership, and are therefore considered to be an essential resource in order to achieve individual and organizational effectiveness (Castanias and Helfat 2001). However, an extremely limited number of research exists that merge intrapersonal skills with certain leadership skills, in particular transformational, and impact on performance in general (Mencl, Wefald, and Ittersum 2016). On the other hand, a solid number of research is focused on transformational leadership as a mediation construct (e.g., Bayraktar and Jimenez 2020; Gong, Huang, and Farh 2009), which seemed to be an adequate basis for including TL as a mediator, probably because it is considered to be a stable predictor of leadership outcomes within the many contexts (Judge and Piccolo 2004).

Hogan and Shelton (1998) argued that the SS are an important component of business efficiency, since they enable employees to achieve both individual and organizational goals. Using SS along with the general mental abilities construct, Ferris et al. (2001) have proven that the relationship between social skills and business efficiency is stronger in the presence of strong mental abilities. Hence, it is natural to assume that TL is based on strong mental abilities, since it necessarily implies the empowerment of employees which is not possible without mental abilities.

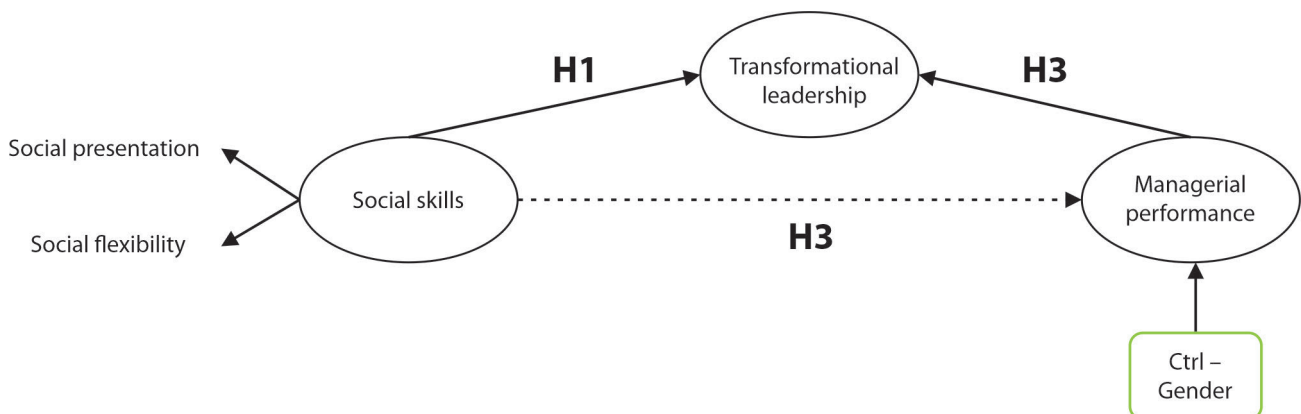
Transformational leaders must therefore have the ability to interact with their employees and be able to adjust their behavior to obtain the desired results. Moreover, this type of leader must understand and adequately manage the emotions of other people (Riggio and Reichard 2008), since it requires managers to understand not only their emotions but the emotions of their followers (Zheng et al. 2023; Mencl et al. 2016). It follows from this that social skills are the predictors of TL, which managers need to realize their effectiveness. Thus, we propose the third hypothesis of the paper:

H3: Transformational leadership behaves as a mediator in the relationship between social skills and managerial performance.

Therefore, Mintzberg’s (1973) premise provides a sufficient argument to reasonably assume that TL acts as a mediator between social skills and managerial performance. The premise states that interpersonal skills (SS) have an important role not only in managerial performance, but their leadership styles (TL). Effective leadership relies on people interaction and good relationships (Judge and Piccolo 2004) and different kinds of behaviors such as reading social situations and empathizing (Ferris, Davidson, and Perrewé 2005). Hence we propose the conceptual model, presented in Figure 1, which includes two direct relationships (TL→MP, SS→TL) and one mediation effect (SS→TL→MP), including gender as a control variable.

It turns out that practicing transformational leadership skills necessarily involves intensive contact with employees. To fulfill this need, managers should be aware of the influence they have on employees and the specified results they offer. Hence, building these skills should be one of the main managerial concerns and a constant need required for positive organizational improvement.

Figure 1. The conceptual model with a control variable included



4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Data collection and participants

This paper has employed an online survey based on a self-reported type of questionnaire conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since in most countries there are no official databases of specific samples (especially managerial), the authors of this paper created an email address database of companies collected from various sources such as the Chamber of Commerce, Internet search and through a network of personal contacts (Panagopoulos et al. 2011), assuming that within each company there must be at least one managerial potential. The final list offered 1.229 email addresses that we used to obtain answers from the main sample. This became a snowball sampling, which is often used in situations where the sample can not be directly contacted or identified (Sharma 2017). The first call for participation in the survey resulted in 67 completed questionnaires, after which we sent two more calls in the form of reminders. This process lasted for 7 months, resulting in 285 valid questionnaires ready for further analysis. Of the total sample, the female population had a slightly higher response compared to the male population (55.8% and 44.2% respectively). Most managers live in a marital union ($n=208$), while over 20 years of total work experience was reported by 75 respondents. Most of the respondents are most likely to be employed in the private sector ($n=172$). Approximately the same statistics are recorded by respondents working within the companies that have between 11 and 50, and 51-249 employees (76 and 72 respectively). The industry that belongs to the most examined managers is Information and Communication ($n=37$ or 13%).

4.2. Measures

Likert scale with grades 1 to 5 was applied for all selected constructs. For the transformational leadership assessment, we used the Portuguese version of the Global Transformational Leadership (GTL) seven-item scale by Beveren et al. (2017). We defined the construct of social skills as two-dimensional with the

dimensions of social flexibility ($n=10$) and social presentation ($n=10$) (Wu 2008). Furthermore, Wang et al. (2011) in their meta-analysis proved that TL has a stronger impact on contextual performance in comparison to task performance. Hence, we used a 10-item scale named contextual performance (Koopmans et al. 2014) to measure managerial performance. We included gender as a control variable. In the process of adaptation of the final instrument, we used the recommendations offered by Beaton et al. (2001), due to the need to adapt the measurement instrument to a transitional, socially changing context of the research setting. Therefore, we hired experts from different fields who were able to contribute that the final instrument is understandable, applicable and adequately translated into the language of the country within which the research was carried out.

5. RESULTS

5.1. Measurement model

Using LISREL 8.8, we checked the psychometric properties of the scales. CFA offered satisfactory CR values that should be $>.70$ (Hair et al. 2010), while the AVE values, as recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981), were $>.50$ for all constructs. Furthermore, the appropriateness of the fit was also identified, as follows: $\chi^2/df=2.31$ ($\chi^2=386.74$; $df=167$), $RMSEA=.068$, $NFI=.971$, $NNFI=.950$, $CFI=.956$, $IFI=.957$; $SRMR=.042$, and the composite and convergent validity have been proven. Discriminant validity is also proved and presented in Table 2. The procedure for checking discriminatory validity was made according to the recommendations of Fornell and Larcker (1981), which implies a higher value of the square root of the average variance (AVE) of correlations between the constructs (the square root of AVE is presented on the diagonal and bolded).

The values presented in Table 2 show that all constructs satisfy the requirements of the following recommendations, and therefore it can be argued that the discriminant validity of the measurement model has been achieved. To minimize the problem of bias, respondents were advised that there were no good

Table 2. Discriminant validity of the measurement model

	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV	SS	TL	MP
SS	0.945	0.615	0.299	0.257	0.784		
TL	0.822	0.540	0.477	0.346	0.464	0.735	
MP	0.854	0.540	0.477	0.388	0.547	0.691	0.735

Table 3. The results of Harman's one-factor test in comparison with the full measurement model

Model	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	RMSEA	CFI	NNFI	SRMR
Measurement model	386.74	167	2,31	.068	.956	.950	.042
Harman's test	1762.30	189	9,32	.171	.813	.793	.119

or bad answers and that we only needed their honest answers. Before testing the structural model Harman's single-factor test was also used to determine that the problem of the common method bias does not exist (Podsakoff et al. 2012). This technique involves loading all manifest variables into a latent construct, which should result in unsuitable values of the model. The application of this test has proven that respondents did not have a problem with bias when expressing their attitudes on questions defined by the final measurement instrument. The results of this test are presented in Table 3.

5.2. Hypotheses testing

Generally speaking, the structural model testing included the application of the Maximum Likelihood Estimation (MLE) method (Ding, Velicer, and Harlow 1995), using LISREL 8.8 software tool (Jöreskog and Sorbom 1993). In addition, according to the practices of previous research (Short, Ketchen, and Palmer 2002), the model included the control variable gender, since it is believed that gender can affect managerial roles (Cavazotte et al. 2012). We tested the model in two phases: testing of direct relationships (Model 1: TRL \rightarrow MP; SS \rightarrow TRL) and testing of mediation effect (Model 2: SS \rightarrow TRL \rightarrow MP).

Testing H1 and H2: Model 1

The testing of hypotheses with direct relationships involved the analysis of two direct effects. It is assumed that social skills have a positive impact on transformational leadership (H1), and that TL has a positive impact on managerial performance (H2). The inspection of the results of model 1 has included insights into the indices and parameters. In that sense, it can be concluded that they are all within reference intervals. Hoxmeier et al. (2000) suggested that the ratio of Chi-Square and Degree of Freedom should be less than 3 ($\chi^2 / df < 3$), which makes it clear that the model is acceptable ($\chi^2/df=2.11$). In addition, all other values showed good model fit as follows: $\chi^2=474.55$; $df=224$; $p=.000$; $RMSEA=.063$; $CFI=.957$; $NNFI=.951$; $NFI=.921$; $IFI=.957$; $RMR=.0408$; $SRMR=.0806$, which showed that the model perfectly matches the data.

The analysis showed the confirmation of hypotheses H1 and H2 ($t=5.58$, $t=7.59$ respectively). Here we should emphasize the result of a non-significant test ($t=0.42$) for the control variable (gender). In other words, this particular model corresponds to the collected data regardless of the presence of the control variable with a non-significant and positive effect on the dependent construct (MP). However, the structural model also assumed an analysis of the mediation effect, so, consequently, the estimating model 1 is not accepted as a final, but as a model that is compared with the next estimated, to determine better similarity. Therefore, within Model 2 mediating effect of transformational leadership has been analyzed.

Testing mediating effect: Model 2

Model 2 tested the H3 hypothesis which assumed that transformational leadership behaves as a mediator between social skills and managerial performance. Due to the importance of transformational leadership should have in this model, we cross-validated the results of each test, since we applied the tests suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986) and Preacher and Hayes (2004).

Applying the procedure according to Baron and Kenny (1986), the first step requires the assessment of direct relationships (model 1), after which the mediation effect is added and followed by a comparison of two models (model 1 VS model 2). Model 2 with the mediation effect offered the better values ($\chi^2=462.31$; $df=223$; $\chi^2/df=2.07$; $p=.000$; $RMSEA=.061$; $CFI=.959$; $NNFI=.953$; $NFI=.923$; $IFI=.959$; $RMR=.0352$; $SRMR=0.717$) in comparison with the values of Model 1 ($\chi^2=474.55$; $df=224$; $p=.000$; $RMSEA=.063$; $CFI=.957$; $NNFI=.951$; $NFI=.921$; $IFI=.957$; $RMR=.0408$; $SRMR=.0806$). Furthermore, the determination of the difference between the Chi-Square and df values of models 1 and 2 was calculated, which is an additional confirmation of the better appropriateness of model 2 ($\Delta df=1$; $\Delta \chi^2=12.24$). Therefore, Model 2 with the mediation effect included has a better fit. It should be mentioned that this is a partial mediation, since adding this effect did not result in a non-significant relationship between SS \rightarrow MP ($t=3.45$). The results of both models are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. The fit of models with direct and mediation effect

Relationship	Hypothesis	St. solution	t-value	Result
Model 1				
Gender→MP	Ctrl	0.01	0.42	not significant
SS→TL	H1	0.43	5.58***	confirmed
TL→MP	H2	0.69	7.59***	confirmed
Model fit: $\chi^2=474.55$; $df=224$; $\chi^2/df=2,11$; $p=.000$; $RMSEA=.063$; $CFI=.957$; $NNFI=.951$; $NFI=.921$; $IFI=.957$; $RMR=.0408$; $SRMR=.0806$.				
Model 2				
Gender →MP	Ctrl	0.01	0.30	not significant
SS →TL	H1	0.38	4.98***	confirmed
TL →MP	H2	0.57	6.54***	confirmed
SS →MP	H3	0.23	3.45***	confirmed
Model fit: $\chi^2=462.31$; $df=223$; $\chi^2/df=2.07$; $p=.000$; $RMSEA=.061$; $CFI=.959$; $NNFI=.953$; $NFI=.923$; $IFI=.959$; $RMR=.0352$; $SRMR=0.717$.				
* $p<0.0025$, ** $p<0.005$, *** $p<0.0005$ → critical values 1.645, 2.326, 3.090 respectively				

Table 5. Analysis of mediation effect using Preacher and Hayes procedure

Effect	SE	t value	LLCI	ULCI
Total: SS → MP	0.564	7.8402***	.3314	.5537
Direct: SS → MP	0.552	5.2043***	.1785	.3956
Indirect: SS → TRL → MP	0.335	4.6417***	.0978	.2293
* $p<0.0025$, ** $p<0.005$, *** $p<0.0005$ → critical values 1.645, 2.326, 3.090 respectively				

In addition, the next procedure presents a second analysis of the mediation effect, as an alternative to the one offered by Baron and Kenny (1986). This is a bootstrapping method proposed by Preacher and Hayes (2004), which in the first place requires the application of one of two types of data: a scale score or a factor scale. Due to its ease of use, the scale score was calculated in the SPSS 22 software tool. We choose the Model 4 option, confidence interval of 95% and an indirect procedure with 5000 samples. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 5.

According to the results, the total effect between SS and MP is significant ($t=7.8402$), while the same significant relationship has been achieved when it comes to their direct effect ($t=5.2043$). With the indirect effect (SS→TL→MP) it has been proven that TL has a significant mediation role. The interval between LLCI and ULCI values does not record 0 value, which provides an additional fact that hypothesis H3 should be accepted. Finally, the mediation role of TL is partial, as proven by applying both procedures. Given the results, we can accept H3 according to which transformational leadership partially mediates the relationship between social skills and managerial performance.

6. DISCUSSION

The main purpose of this paper is to offer a better understanding of the mediation role of transformational leadership between social skills and managerial performance. More specifically, we have confirmed that social skills, consisting of a social presentation and social flexibility, are positive predictors of transformational leadership and thus have proved H1. Further, our H2 has also been confirmed according to which transformational leadership predicts managerial performance. Finally, our structural model has included the mediation role of transformational leadership confirming that social skills have a partial effect on managerial performance that is accomplished through transformational leadership (H3). The paper has original contributions to the literature by examining the under-researched social skills concept in the context of a usually unreachable sample and thus highlights the concept's relevance to managerial performance.

6.1. Theoretical contributions

The originality of this paper lies in examining interpersonal features (social presentation and social flexibility) of managerial individuals who through efficient behavior (transformational leadership) accomplish managerial performance. First, the paper contributes to the present body of literature on management and leadership by concurrently investigating the role of social skills as predictors of a substantial feature (transformational leadership) of managerial performance (Bass and Avolio 2003). It has been proven that transformational leadership represents a partial mechanism in transmitting the effects of social skills on managerial performance, although this relationship could be accomplished directly. However, it should be noted that our mediation model performs better model fit, meaning that including TL in this interplay results in better managerial performance. This additionally supports the view that managerial performance, inevitable including managing different profiles of employees, rises when managers invest in the development of interpersonal characteristics (Issah 2018) such as social skills. Our findings confirm that socially skilled-oriented managers can practice pure transformational leadership behavior, proposing that they can build these skills as requirements for inspiring, motivating, influencing, and stimulating other people (transformational leadership). To do that, socially skilled-oriented managers are fully aware of the importance of how to present and to adjust other people to get the best possible outcome. As a final consequence, these managers know that having and building these skills lead them to accomplish desirable results which are a consequence of a constant upgrade of social skills and transformational leadership behavior.

Second, our findings enrich the existing literature according to which the identification of TL predictors is still at an unsatisfactory level (Rubin, Munz, and Bommer 2005). More specifically, our findings show that social skills are important individual features of managers in practicing their transformational leadership style, which complements the prior evidence suggesting interpersonal characteristics as its vital precondition (Bass et al. 2003). In other words, it would be hard to imagine that managers who are practicing transformational leadership behavior do not own conspicuous skills of adjustable behavior (social flexibility) and the capability to present their ideas (social presentation) needed for business development. Hence, these findings augment the current evidence on transformational leadership antecedents and present a possible course change in attracting

similar concepts to be similarly important in practicing this leadership style in the context of managerial potentials.

Lastly, this paper highlights the current very limited research on the matter suggesting the relevance of a different range of interpersonal characteristics as important antecedents and outcomes of TL in the context outside of developed research settings, as the overview given through this paper shows that the most of the studies have been conducted in developed countries. To our knowledge, the model of this paper has been grounded in a novel research setting (a European developing country), which represents the first academic managerial research in this region.

6.2. Practical contributions

The findings of this paper provide relevant practical implications for managerial potentials and human resource professionals, especially in the developing country context such as Bosnia and Herzegovina. Socially skilled managers accomplish appropriate results when using specific social skills, which are a powerful asset in practicing transformational leadership. These skills include building managers' understanding of their capability to change the environment they are working in, as one of the main features of TL is employee transformation (Siangchokyoo et al. 2019), leading to a better market position. This issue is crucial for developing countries facing economic challenges due to unpredictable market changes, that come as a consequence of: a) increasing demand by consumers and b) increasing level of imported products that are well-established brands preferred by consumers over domestic products.

Further, a special focus should be given to the training that builds skills regarding presentation and flexibility such as the enunciation style in speech (diction) and other communication skills. Further, saying the right words at the right time and place should also be of immediate importance in conducting such training. It inevitably comes as a result of professional communication training which is adjusted following employees' characteristics and needs, on the one hand, and organizational aims, on the other hand. In this sense, organized training should encourage managerial potential to be sufficient to increase their performance. However, it should be mentioned that the success of such training depends on the level of monitoring and evaluation. Besides financial indicators that should be taken into consideration, an additional measure could include the outcomes obtained

by employees and clients involved in overall business processes.

Also, the results suggest that effective managers are those who are socially competent. This competence is visible through their ability to present and be flexible toward changes in the environment. In other words, socially competent managers are aware of their behavior, know how to react to the external and internal environment of the organization, and know when, how and what they communicate. As stated by Gardner and Avolio (1998), extroverted individuals (possessing social skills) confidentially delegate duties and are therefore seen as transformational leaders. Hence, the findings could help human resource professionals in the recruiting process which should include evaluation of these skills together with the capability of practicing transformational behavior.

When it comes to training, it is well known that investing in leadership skills is not so widely used (Lacarenza et al. 2017), probably because it does not yield desirable results quickly and requires substantial financial investment. On the other side, the findings of this paper show that managerial performance comes as a direct or indirect result of higher social skills, while leadership skills behave as an additional mechanism in achieving better business results. Carefully chosen training that aims to enhance social skills, such as social presentation and flexibility, should come as a first and/or only choice in selecting the appropriate education. This is even more noticed in developing economies, which are still struggling to survive under the increased pressure of the global trends that consumers usually accept too fast. Still, investing in social skills and transformational leadership-building training is highly recommended, as the interplay of these skills creates a suitable environment for growth and development for employees, managers, and companies. This is why companies operating in developing countries, like Bosnia and Herzegovina, should seize the opportunity to compete equally with international companies in this country.

6.3. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Akin to many different research, this paper has several limitations as well. First, our empirical research has been based on self-report methods, which could result in common method bias (Podsakoff et al. 2003). We conducted certain steps to provide honest responses, while Harman's one-factor test has shown

that the problem with a potential bias does not exist. However, future research could include more reliable measures into account, such as financial indicators. In this way, it is possible to capture a real effect on overall organizational success as the result of appropriate managerial performance influenced by enhanced social skills.

Second, we measured social skills as a construct consisting of social presentation and social flexibility. As the consensus regarding the definition of the construct has not been reached yet, we still cannot discuss the exact nature from which it has been made, and hence there is a huge potential to explore its additional dimensions. Additionally, the existing research records only a few studies that treat social skills in the context of leadership, although Riggio (2020) has argued that they are crucial skills for leaders and managers. Consequently, it is highly recommended that further research from the field of management should be concentrated on building additional and valid measures that could attract and build more socially skilled-oriented research in the field.

Third, this paper has included a limited number of social skills outcomes. Further discussion is needed to reveal additional results of socially skilled managers, which could start with applying a qualitative approach. In this sense, upcoming research could include interviews with managerial potentials aiming to reveal the hidden and additional skills that help them achieve better performance. It does not mean, however, that each managerial potential should be included in this process. Instead, prior investigation regarding their success in leading companies is required, while this information could come from many sources such as an insight into the financial performance they achieved and the opinion of employees.

6.4. Conclusion

This paper has examined the impact of social skills as an under-researched construct within the mediation role of transformational leadership in achieving managerial performance. It has been shown that transformational leadership partially mediates the relationship between social skills (social presentation and social flexibility) and the performance of managers, which sheds light on the relevance of possessing adequate skills needed for the best outcomes for companies.

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