

# TRANSFORMATIONAL ROLE OF LEADERS IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD: AN EXAMINATION OF CHANAKYA'S THEORY

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## ABSTRACT

For many years, there has been discussion about leadership among academicians and researchers, which has resulted in the development of various forms of leadership from time to time. These theories have their origins in the ancient knowledge system, which has been described by several researchers and has effectively demonstrated the traits that a leader must have while in office. However, no primary data study has been included in the studies to examine whether these attributes are still practiced by different individuals. In order to bridge the gap, the current study uses the Leadership Practices Inventory to

examine whether varied professionals possess Chanakya's leadership traits. The research exhibited the similarities between the variables of the LPI and Chanakya's qualities on leadership, and all the variables significantly influenced Transformational Leadership, except 'Challenge the process' and 'Enable others to act'. This is the first study of its kind, and the findings can help professionals in all fields comprehend and use the Chanakya approach to leadership in their everyday lives. The studies on the practical application of ancient wisdom on various subjects will enable us to revive Vedic techniques and practices. **Keywords:** Chanakya, Arthashastra, Leadership Practices Inventory, Transformational

*Leadership, Ancient Wisdom,*

## INTRODUCTION

The Indian Vedic era encompasses a vast array of topics that are both relevant and innovative. The Indian scriptures give insights into spirituality (Pallathadka and Roy 2025; Mishra 2025), management (Longkumer 2025; Shukla et al. 2025), leadership (Sethi et al. 2025; Thakur & Rana 2025), and various other pivotal subjects. Numerous studies have previously contrasted the ideas from different Indian knowledge writings with modern thinking. For instance, the management control methods used in the Mauryan empire, which also adhered to ethics, are comparable to those used in modern times (Murthy & Rooney, 2018). In addition, it was discovered that ancient texts can serve as the foundation for management ideas and concepts that have been established in contemporary society, such as Drucker's MBO (Anindo, 2012). The study's objective is to compare modern concepts with traditional knowledge, particularly in leadership, which allows for a more in-depth analysis because Indian wisdom may be used in any contemporary theory across a wide range of disciplines (Akriti, 2018; Kumar & Sengupta, 2023).

The central concern of leadership in ancient India is always to ensure that one must follow ethics and work according to Dharma (Righteousness) rather than personal gains (Chakrobarthy & Dewan, 2025). The insights of leadership in the Indian ethos are not bound by time and cultural differences; they are relevant in today's competitive world, and one could not only enhance performance on

an individual level but could also transform the world and society effectively and drastically (Banerjee, 2025).

The discipline of leadership texts of ancient India, such as the Gita, exhibited far-reaching influence on management and leadership (Malik, 2024; Ram & Daya, 2023). Leadership through the lens of Indian wisdom can be of great help in optimizing human resources and their development. The metaphysical ideas found in the *Upanishads* describe the concepts of inner change, integrity, and unselfish action (Nishkama Karma) (Muniapan & Rajantheran, 2008). These concepts can assist modern leaders in developing a framework for making decisions and directing their actions while carrying out their responsibilities (Srinivasan & Aithal, 2025). These researchers concluded that ancient writings like the Ramayana and Mahabharata can teach us about leadership since their characters embody the qualities that a leader should possess and the behaviors that one should avoid.

One of the ancient texts written by renowned Indian scholar Chanakya, known as Arthashastra, also offers insightful leadership lessons (Sonwalkar & Verma, 2022). Chanakya's Arthashastra was a wealth of knowledge that addressed a wide range of topics, including politics, accounting, economics, and military strategy. Niroula (2025) found the usefulness of *Arthashastra* for project management, focusing on ethical governance, flexibility, strategic planning, and continuous learning to handle today's complex projects.

Many studies have highlighted the works of Chanakya on leadership, investigating the qualities, real-life examples, relevance in

today's contemporary world, and comparing his philosophies with modern-day theories (Zinat and Swati, 2025; Puja and Ashutosh, 2025; Jhanvi et al., 2025). However, among the individuals, only a few researchers have conducted primary data examinations on the attributes of any part of conventional wisdom. This study looks into Chanakya's leadership theory as a means of closing this gap. Therefore, the research intends to assess the presence of qualities of leadership stated by Chanakya in the *Arthashastra* among the professionals working in diverse fields.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### II.1 Theoretical Framework

#### II.1.1 Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is the way by which a leader can develop and express a vision for the business and use their style to influence followers to perform better (Muniapan & Rajantheran, 2008). Burns was the first person to coin this term in his publication 'Leadership' in the year 1978, which helped researchers differentiate between extraordinary leadership and performance beyond expectations (Uzoechina & Oguegbu, 2015). Since then, this form of leadership has been studied by numerous academicians and researchers in a variety of fields, including the education sector (Grifth, 2004; Simin et al., 2014; Alzoraiki et al., 2024), the health sector (Apore & Asamoah, 2019; Goens & Giannotti, 2024; Eman et al.,

2025), the corporate sector (Chitiga, 2018; Hermawan et al., 2024; Agus Purwanto, 2022), and many more. Though this study aims to do so, previous research has not examined the qualities of transformational leadership among the wide range of professionals who hold leadership positions and must possess the traits of such leadership. The study's concept is significant since transformational leadership is the demand of the dynamic environment, where leaders must abandon the ideas of the past and inherit the capacity to forge a compelling vision, cultivate empathetic relationships, and stimulate innovation to deal with organizational changes (Rojak et al., 2024). As a result, it is crucial for the different professionals who work in various organizations and are in charge of their resources to ensure that their efforts are concentrated on boosting productivity and ensuring that their vision and subordinates have a positive and harmonious relationship (Rizvi & Sikand, 2020; Sadani & Goswami, 2023).

#### II.1.2 Chanakya's Theory of Leadership

Banerjee (2025) exhibited that the insights of leadership in the Indian ethos are not bound by time and cultural differences; they are relevant in today's competitive world, and one could not only enhance performance on an individual level but could also transform the world and society effectively and drastically. The 5,000-year-old Bhagavad Gita has the traits and attributes of a transformational leader, according to Muniapan & Rajantheran (2008), demonstrating how profound the topic of leadership was in the ancient Indian text and how its ideas are still applicable and relevant to transformational

leadership today. Similarly, the principles laid down by one of the ancient renowned scholars, Chanakya, are found to be significant in the era of transformational leadership. Firstly, Chanakya's depiction of a leader comprises an individual who is visionary. He must be goal-oriented, and the interests of his subordinates should be prior to his interests (Sonwalker & Verma, 2022). Second, the leader must be a law-abider, follow the right path, and stay away from wrongdoings (Sonwalker & Verma, 2022). A leader should be knowledgeable, and Chanakya also emphasized the proper education of the leader. By ensuring this, he achieves good results from his efforts and enjoys success (Sonwalkar & Verma, 2022; Radhakrishnan, 2015; Shabbir, 2012). Maintaining discipline is also an essential element for a leader, according to the philosophy of Chanakya, where achieving control over his senses allows one to gain control over himself. Thus, by ensuring proper sincerity towards responsibilities, one can achieve better commitment and consistency in approach (Sonwalkar & Verma, 2022). Chanakya believed a good leader should be people-oriented, giving work fairly based on ability, rewarding good performance, and addressing poor performance appropriately (Sonwalkar & Verma, 2022; Radhakrishnan, 2015).

### *II.1.3 Leadership Practices Inventory*

Since the beginning of leadership research, numerous theories of leadership have developed, resulting in many changes and methods, which ultimately led to the development of transformational leadership (Carmen & Mostafa, 2015). The main frameworks for this

particular form of leadership can be categorized into the theories of Burns (1978), Bass (1985), and Kouzes and Posner (2003). Being one of the first academicians to create the theory of transformational leadership, Burns (1978) discovered that this style of leadership necessitates having charismatic behavior, inspiring followers, and satisfying higher demands and expectations than those found in conventional methods. Extending Burns' (1978) findings, Bass (1985) put forth four characteristics of transformational leadership: intellectual stimulation, individual consideration, idealized influence, and inspirational drives. The leadership research benefited greatly from these characteristics, which also made it easier to evaluate the attributes of a broad population. Similarly, Kouzes & Posner (2003) proposed their theory of leadership, which was similar to the traits of transformational leadership in their book 'The Leadership Challenge'. Since they believed that transformational leadership could be taught, they created a scale to measure the specific leadership traits known as the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) (Louis, 2011). Kouzes & Posner (1988) identified five practices of exemplary leadership, which were named 'Model The Way', 'Inspire a Shared Vision', 'Challenge The Process', 'Enable Others to Act', and 'Encourage The Heart'. Following its inception, many studies have utilized this tool for assessing the level of transformational leadership among diverse research areas, including academic staff (Triantoro et al., 2011), chief nursing officers (Clavelle et al., 2012), radiology administrators (Melissa, 2015), graduate students (Edwards & Abogy, 2015), school principals and directors (Anne et

al., 2019; Lim et al., 2025), and many more. Since a well-structured framework was necessary to evaluate Chanakya's qualities among diverse professionals, the current study examined every facet of the LPI's traits and concluded that these transformational leadership qualities are fundamental to the ancient theories and beliefs of leadership that Chanakya expressed in his studies.

Chanakya's theory of leadership has significant similarities with the traits of the LPI, founded by Kouzes & Posner (1988). For instance, the Model The Way trait expects transformational leaders to be example setters for their followers, which aligns with the teachings of Chanakya as found in the study by Sonwalkar & Verma (2022, pp. 9, 10, & 11). Inspire a Shared Vision demands the leader to share a common dream with their followers, which is followed by Kautilya, as he cherished his long dream of a Unified India with the ruler of Magadh, Chandragupta Maurya, which inspired him to achieve this goal, as supported by the same

study (Sonwalkar & Verma, 2022, pp. 9, 10, 19, and 20). Similarly, Challenge The Process asks one to find new innovative methods and encourages followers to experiment with novel methods of doing similar or different tasks, which aligns with Chanakya's idea that a leader must update their knowledge or have the habit of seeking new information from their sources to help find new ways to achieve goals and set high standards (Sonwalkar & Verma, 2022, pp. 10, 15; Radhakrishnan, 2015). Consequently, other constructs also have roots in the ancient school of thought. Therefore, the Leadership Practices Inventory was found to be the most appropriate tool for evaluating Chanakya's traits among professionals from a variety of fields because of its resemblance to the ancient leadership principles. Studies in diverse cultural geographies such as Kenya (Anne et al., 2019), Anambra (Gladys & Adaeze, 2015), and Jordan (Abdullah et al., 2008) have found the qualities of the LPI significantly playing a major role in transformational leadership.

NAME OF THE ATTRIBUTE	EXPLANATION	CHANAKYA'S VISION
MODEL THE WAY	Leaders have to be that individual first, which he wants his followers to become.	<i>Yatha Raja, Tatha Praja</i> (Samashastry, 1915) <i>Example Setter</i> (Sonwalkar & Verma, 2022)
(Derived from Leadership practices of Kouzes & Posner)	If the leader fails to portray that energy in front of his subordinates, then they will also not act efficiently.	<i>Setting An Example</i> (Radhakrishnan, 2015)

### **INSPIRE A SHARED VISION**

(Derived from Leadership practices of Kouzes & Posner)

A leader should have a vision, and he should share his vision with his followers.

Having a shared vision that serves as motivation for everyone.

Questioning the present way of working and searching for innovative methods.

### **CHALLENGE the PROCESS**

(Derived from Leadership practices of Kouzes & Posner)

Developing risk-taking ability and using various strategies and tactics to address the various issues.

Leader to respect and give importance to the ideas and decisions that their subordinates make on their own.

### **ENABLE OTHERS TO ACT**

(Derived from Leadership practices of Kouzes & Posner)

A leader should give subordinates full independence to showcase their talent.

### ***Visionary & Goal Oriented***

(Sonwalkar & Verma, 2022)

***A leader must constantly seek new sources of wealth, alliances, and strategies.***

(Samashastry, 1915)

वजिगीषुरात्मनः

परस्यचबलाबलंशक्तदिशकालयात्रा-  
कालबलसमुद्धानकालपश्चात्कोपक्ष  
यव्ययलाभापदांजात्वावशिष्टबलोया  
यात्अन्यथासीते।

(Samashastry, 1915)

### ***Handling Competition***

(Radhakrishnan, 2015)

***sahāyasādhyam rājatvam cakramekam na vartate***

*Kingship is achieved with the help of associates; a wheel does not turn by itself.*

(Samashastry, 1915)

***mantrayamāno***

***hyekenārthakrcchresu niścayam nādhiḡacchet***

*One who deliberates alone does not arrive at a firm decision in difficult matters*

(Samashastry, 1915)

### **Teaming Up to Succeed**

(Radhakrishnan, 2015)

**ENCOURAGE THE HEART**

(Derived from Leadership practices of Kouzes & Posner)

Celebrate others by showing gratitude.

Let people know you appreciate their hard work and are glad to have them on your team.

***Aparādham sahetālpam tusyed alpe'pi codayet***

*One should tolerate minor offenses and be content with small contributions, but should also motivate even modest efforts to encourage greater participation.*

(Samashastry, 1915)

***Mahopakāram cādhyakam pragrahe-jnābhipūjayet***

*One should honour a supervisor (or manager) who performs a great service with due respect and reward.*

(Samashastry, 1915)

**Rewards & Recognition**

(Sonwalkar & Verma, 2022)

Following a thorough evaluation of all the literature on Chanakya's leadership attributes and the influence of LPI on transformational leadership, the study put forth a number of hypotheses. Thus, the current study utilized LPI to measure the influence of Chanakya's leadership traits on transformational leadership. The moderating effects of age and gender are also taken as objectives.

## II.2 HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

### II.2.1 Model The Way

Model the way refers to providing an illustration of behavior by the leader that he expects from others. The LPI has outlined this element as a collection of qualities that include the following: transformational leaders should set an example for others, have a clear ideology, develop consensus among their subordinates, set standards and get others to agree with them, and fulfill the commitments (Abdullah et al.,

2008). This variable perfectly aligns with the ancient Indian knowledge and Chanakya's insights on leadership, as it can be found in the famous quote of '*Yatha Raja, Tatha Praja*' (Sonwalkar & Verma, 2022). Numerous studies have examined his writings and concluded that Chanakya has placed a high value on the feature of a leader who is watched by his followers every minute and whose acts serve as an example for the entire organization. Chanakya stated that the administrator needs to monitor each department's head to make sure they are following the guidelines and not setting a poor example for others (Radhakrishnan, 2015). He clarified that a leader must abstain from all bad behavior and make sure that his followers have a single goal, which he is pursuing first. In his view, a leader repeating the same mistake deserves four times the penalty an ordinary person would get (Sonwalkar & Verma, 2022; Radhakrishnan, 2015). This demonstrates how much Chanakya has valued leading by example in the transformative leadership process. Based on the insights given by Chanakya and the

studies on transformational leadership, the study proposed that

**\*\*H1: 'Model The Way' significantly influences Transformational Leadership.**

### II.2.2 Inspire A Shared Vision

Transformational leadership significantly demands that a leader should have the quality of binding their people under a common and clear vision. Studies by Kouzes & Posner (2003) have found that transformational leaders influence the acts of their subordinates by inspiring them through their vision. They build enthusiasm and commitment by explaining the vision and each person's role in making it happen. Chanakya emphasized that a leader should unite people under a common vision to achieve great goals. He demonstrated this with Chandragupta Maurya, instilling in him a clear mission to overthrow the cruel ruler Dhananandha and establish *Akhand Bharat*. By defining this vision and ensuring it promised justice and happiness for all subjects (Sonwalkar & Verma, 2022). Previous analyses have shown that Chanakya discussed in the Arthashastra that a leader should be a great visionary, which exhibited that sharing a common vision among the subordinates can help in achieving unity and greater good for the organization (Sonwalkar & Verma, 2022). Thus, the following hypotheses are formulated.

**\*\*H2: 'Inspire a Shared Vision' significantly influences Transformational Leadership.**

### II.2.3 Challenge the Process

This trait of transformational leadership deals with the ability of leaders to seek to challenge traditional norms and use their risk-taking ability to achieve goals, which in turn results in novel and innovative methods or products. The specifications provided by Kouzes & Posner (2003) state that a leader must not pose the fear of taking risks, should not follow the normal way, but instead create their own, encourage their employees to do the same, and set higher expectations than what an organization has achieved (Uzoehina & Oguegbu, 2015). Chanakya advises the leader to constantly update his knowledge and keep a regular 360-degree assessment of his organization (Radhakrishnan, 2015). He believed that leaders should focus on knowledge, stay persistent, think positively, keep learning, and practice until the goal is achieved, while also taking calculated risks with the right attitude to ensure success (Sonwalkar & Verma, 2022; Radhakrishnan, 2015). Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis.

**\*\*H3: 'Challenge the Process' significantly influences Transformational Leadership.**

### II.2.4 Enable Others to Act

Enabling others to act signifies empowering people to take action by involving them in planning and decision-making (Abdullah et al., 2008). Allowing others to take action enables followers to fulfill their roles and reach their greatest potential. In today's era, transformational leadership requires leaving behind the thoughts of old school, where leaders were kings and subordinates were their

servants. This factor of leadership requires a leader to create an environment where he is not doing everything but enabling his followers to decide their actions on their own (Abdullah et al., 2008). This enables them to boost their confidence and create a sense of pride and belonging toward the organization and its vision. This attribute is also substantiated by Chanakya in his practice. He stated that a leader's satisfaction comes from the happiness of subordinates, showing his belief in giving them the freedom to make decisions. The analysis of his texts suggested that a leader should not interfere in the work of subordinates (Sonwalkar & Verma, 2022; Radhakrishnan, 2015). Thus, based on the aforementioned arguments, the following hypotheses are formed.

**\*\*H4: 'Enable Others to Act' significantly influences Transformational Leadership.**

### II.2.5 Encourage the Heart

One of the main things that inspire people to work tirelessly is recognition, particularly when it is given in front of a large audience. This variable of transformational leadership focuses on the aspect of leaders where they have to appreciate the work of their people and give them their due credit (Abdullah et al., 2008). Through his vision of leadership, Chanakya has supported this aspect of leadership too, where he advised leaders to develop a system of reward and recognition for all those people who contribute to the welfare of society. He stated that a leader's satisfaction comes from the happiness of subordinates, showing his belief in giving them the freedom to make decisions and recognizing their contributions.

This concludes that Chanakya believed that a leader should not take the limelight of others' success; rather, he should recognize it publicly (Sonwalkar & Verma, 2022; Radhakrishnan, 2015). Taking into account the studies, the following hypotheses are formulated.

**\*\*H5: 'Encourage the Heart' significantly influences Transformational Leadership.**

### II.2.6 Moderating Effect of Gender on Transformational Leadership

Gender is a critical factor influencing organizational variables, including leadership behaviors (Gielen & Roopnarine, 2005; Kim & Shin, 2017; Nawaz et al., 2024). Demographic characteristics such as gender are well-established predictors of workplace behaviors (Ng & Feldman, 2008; Shirom et al., 2008), with prior studies reporting notable differences between men and women in voluntary workplace behaviors (Whitley et al., 1999). Gender also shapes leadership emergence patterns, with men more frequently assuming task-oriented roles and women more often emerging as social leaders (Eagly & Karau, 1991). Historically, effective leadership has been associated with masculine, agentic qualities (Brenner et al., 1989; Schein, 1973, 2007; Sahin et al., 2017), though evidence also exists of no significant gender differences in transformational leadership (Brown & Reilly, 2008). Furthermore, gendered dynamics may influence employee perceptions, as women have reported greater dissatisfaction with promotion decisions when evaluated by male supervisors (Felisa et al., 2025). These findings collectively suggest that gender may moderate

the relationship between leadership practices and transformational leadership. Accordingly, this study proposes that:

**H6:**Gender significantly moderates the relationship between the five leadership attributes - *Model the Way (H6a)*, *Inspire a Shared Vision (H6b)*, *Challenge the Process (H6c)*, *Enable Others to Act (H6d)*, and *Encourage the Heart (H6e)* and transformational leadership.

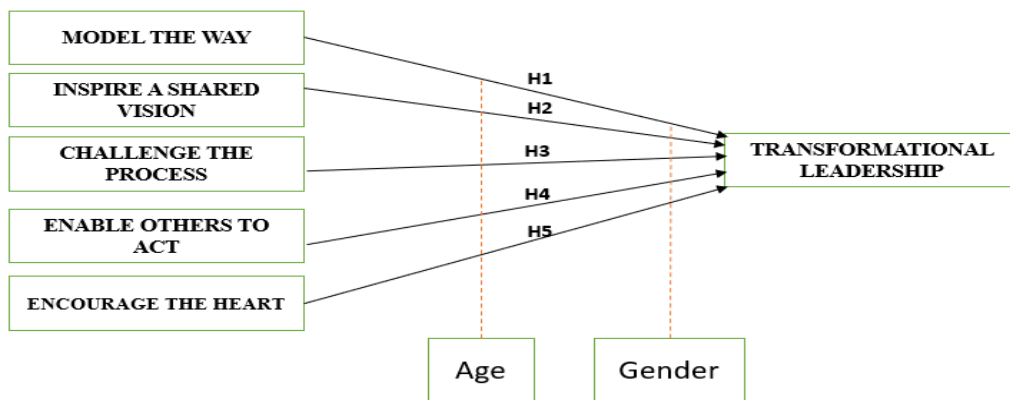
**II.2.7 Moderating Effect of Age on Transformational Leadership**

Research has examined age as a factor that influences leadership style, which has led to discussion on whether a leader’s age matters when using a certain style or inheriting any leadership traits (Sahin et al., 2017). According to a study by Fein et al. (2010), preferences for leadership styles vary by age. In a similar vein, elder leaders are less engaged and less inclined to embrace transformational leadership, according to Shakur et al. (2022). However, a study by Tziner and Shkoler (2022) revealed

that transformational leadership positively associates with organizational justice and work commitments irrespective of age differences. However, the outcomes could fluctuate depending on the organizational setting and culture (Shakur et al., 2022). When utilizing LPI to assess transformational leadership behaviors, it was found that the age of nursing officers considerably varied the results (Susan et al., 2017). Therefore, in light of the above-stated studies, the research proposed the following hypothesis.

**H7:**Age significantly moderates the relationship between the five leadership attributes - *Model the Way (H7a)*, *Inspire a Shared Vision (H7b)*, *Challenge the Process (H7c)*, *Enable Others to Act (H7d)*, and *Encourage the Heart (H7e)*, and transformational leadership.

**Fig. 1**



## *Conceptual Model*

Source: Author

## **METHODOLOGY**

Primary study is deployed in this research, so it was conducted in two stages: (1) qualitative research stage to adjust the scale, and (2) quantitative research stage to test research hypotheses and theoretical model.

The first stage is a qualitative study to adjust the items of the questionnaire. An online focus group interview was held via Google Meet with 10 professionals in Delhi and NCR. The discussion lasted for 90 minutes, chaired by the authors. The results of the discussion indicated that it was necessary to adjust the wording of items to be clear, easy to understand, and suitable for the context of Chanakya's traits of leadership. The insights derived from the discussion were used to modify the items. After the qualitative study, the second stage, i.e., quantitative study, was conducted to test the conceptual model.

### **III.1 Data Collection**

To achieve the research objective, a questionnaire was administered to assess the extent to which Chanakya's leadership traits are practiced. Data was gathered from higher education professionals. Convenience sampling was employed for the study. An online questionnaire was used to collect data from 306 participants in February-April 2025. Each variable was assessed using a 5-point Likert scale, where 5

indicates 'strongly agree' and 1 denotes 'strongly disagree'.

### **III.2 Measures**

To examine Chanakya's trait of leadership, we adapted LPI (Kouzes and Pozner, 2003), which consisted of five elements, namely 'Model the way', 'Inspire a shared vision', 'Challenge the process', 'Enable others to act', and 'Encourage the heart', each consisting of six items. 'Transformational leadership' was measured using three items adapted from Podsakoff et al. (1990, 1996) and Matzler et al. (2014).

### **III.3 Common Method Bias**

One major issue with research relying on primary survey data is common method bias. This issue has a number of causes, but the primary one is the reaction tendency, which the research participants score consistently (Robert, 2007). A model's VIF data demonstrate collinearity and common method bias, per (Kock, 2015). The model is said to be free of common method bias if the VIF values of a complete collinearity test of the model are equal to or less than 10. All of the VIF values in Table 5 are less than 10, indicating that there is no common bias in the research-measured model.

## **DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

Data were analyzed using Smart-PLS 4.0. Following Hair et al. (2012), partial least squares analysis was applied to evaluate both the measurement and structural models. The current research employed the PLS-SEM method due to its capability to elucidate

complex relationships between constructs, provide evidence for theoretical levels, and determine the relative values of path coefficients (Hair, Ringle & Sarstedt 2011; Fishbein & Ajzen 1974).

#### IV.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The participant profile is presented in Table 2. A total of 306 responses were collected,

**Table 2**

*Participant's Profile*

Demographic	Frequency	Percent
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	151	49.3
Female	155	50.7
<b>Age</b>		
21-25	16	0.52
26-30	52	17
31-35	91	29.80
36-40	79	25.90
41-45	30	0.980
46-50	16	0.520
51-55	2	0.065
56-60	14	0.388
Above 60	6	0.196

comprising 50.7% female and 49.3% male respondents. Participants' ages ranged from 21 to above 60 years, with the following distribution: 21–25 years (0.52%), 26–30 years (17%), 31–35 years (29.8%), 36–40 years (25.9%), 41–45 years (0.98%), 46–50 years (0.52%), 51–55 years (0.065%), 56–60 years (0.388%), and above 60 years (0.196%).

#### IV.2 Measurement Model

All variables underwent reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). Convergent validity was assessed using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with all reflective item loadings exceeding the

threshold value of 0.7. Convergent validity was further supported by AVE values exceeding 0.5 for all constructs. Discriminant validity was established by ensuring that the square root of the AVE was higher than the correlations between constructs (Table 4).

Table 3

*Validity and Reliability for all Constructs*

Measurement Items	Loadings	a	CR	AVE
<b>Model The Way</b>	.704	.787	.849	.512
<b>MTW1:</b> 'I set a personal example of what I expect from others. (like performing tasks on time, refraining from corrupt practices etc..	.714			.
	.587			
<b>MTW2:</b> 'I ensure that my Subordinate works with discipline & according to standards'	.703			
<b>MTW3:</b> 'I deliver the commitments & promised made to my team on time'.	.741			
<b>MTW4:</b> 'I constantly monitor the activities going under my supervision'.	.624			
<b>MTW5:</b> 'I ensure general agreement among my team under shared values or common agenda'.	.796			
<b>MTW6:</b> 'I train my team under a clear vision and principles'.				
<b>Inspire a Shared Vision</b>	.755	.850	.889	.571

<b>ISV1:</b> ‘I anticipate possible future outcomes that influences our activities’.	.723			
<b>ISV2:</b> ‘I outline the essential characteristics of our vision & future’.	.759			
<b>ISV3:</b> ‘I inspire others to believe in a collective dream rather than issuing orders’.	.780			
<b>ISV4:</b> ‘I myself passionate about the vision & future which may inspire my team-mates’.	.696			
<b>ISV5:</b> ‘I project confidence in our goals and vision to inspire my team’.	.793			
<b>ISV6:</b> ‘I ensure that my team-mates know their role in achieving the goals’.	.779			
<b>Challenge The Process</b>	<b>.707</b>	<b>.871</b>	<b>.872</b>	<b>.796</b>
<b>CTP1:</b> ‘I constantly challenge myself to grow and test my abilities & skills’.	.639			
<b>CTP2:</b> ‘I constantly update my knowledge in order to search new and innovative methods’.	.744			
<b>CTP3:</b> ‘I challenge my team-mates to experiment with the new innovative methods’.	.634			
<b>CTP4:</b> ‘I ensure welfare of my team-mates by praising their job well-done’.	.750			
<b>CTP5:</b> ‘I try to analyse and gain insights from my mistakes & failures’.	.722			
<b>CTP6:</b> ‘I give people great degree of freedom to decide the way of doing their work’.	.696			
<b>Enable Others to Act</b>	<b>.887</b>	<b>.869</b>	<b>.901</b>	<b>.603</b>

<b>EOA1:</b> ‘I build a strong network of team-mates that enables them to take decision on their own’.	.748			
<b>EOA2:</b> ‘I challenge myself to understand other person by listening to their diverse points of view’.	.730			
<b>EOA3:</b> ‘I take care of the respect & dignity of my team-mates’.	.814			
<b>EOA4:</b> ‘I respect the decision that my team-mates make themselves’.				
<b>EOA5:</b> ‘I foster trust among the team in order to maintain strong relationships’.	.767			
<b>EOA6:</b> ‘I support the projects created by my team-mates on their own’.	.817			
	.718			
<b>Encourage The Heart</b>	<b>.678</b>	<b>.810</b>	<b>.868</b>	<b>.569</b>
<b>ETA1:</b> ‘I praise people by recognizing their work and rewarding them’.	.811			
<b>ETA2:</b> ‘I have the ability to show confidence on my team-mate’s ability’.	.803			
<b>ETA3:</b> ‘I fairly recognise the works of my team-mates and reward them accordingly’.	.731			
<b>ETA4:</b> ‘I do not take the limelight of the success of my team-mates rather I let the world know who is the real hero’.	.672			
<b>ETA5:</b> ‘I add value to my personality by finding ways to celebrate accomplishments that make my team-mates happy’.	.311			
<b>ETA6:</b> ‘I my Self do not lose hope in failures dur to which I am able to motivate my team in their downtime’.	.745			

<b>Transformational Leadership</b>	<b>.822</b>	<b>.761</b>	<b>.862</b>	<b>.676</b>
<b>TL1:</b> 'I always seek new opportunities for the organisation'.	.816			
<b>TL2:</b> 'I inspire others with my future vision & plans'.	.827			
<b>TL3:</b> 'I draw a bigger picture of our future & organisation'.	.825			

*Validity and Reliability for all Constructs*

**Table 4**

*Discriminant Validity*

	<b>CTP</b>	<b>EOA</b>	<b>ETA</b>	<b>ISV</b>	<b>MTW</b>	<b>TL</b>
<b>CTP</b>						
<b>EOA</b>	<b>0.103</b>					
<b>ETA</b>	-0.007	<b>0.777</b>				
<b>ISV</b>	0.119	0.703	<b>0.754</b>			
<b>MTW</b>	0.113	0.735	0.68	<b>0.756</b>		
<b>TL</b>	0.144	0.591	0.517	0.654	<b>0.698</b>	<b>.822</b>
	0.004	0.6	0.594	0.668	0.655	

### IV.3 Structural model

After the measurement model was confirmed, the current research used PLS-SEM to assess the structural model, which includes the assessment of the coefficient of determination, effect size, and predictive relevance. To assess the relationships between the variables, a

5000-subsample bootstrapping was carried out (Hasan et al., 2025). A model's R square indicates how much of the variance in the dependent variable can be attributed to the independent variables included in the model (Lewis, 2003). Table 5 shows that 62.1% of the variance in transformational leadership is explained by the independent variables.

Further, effect size is calculated to assess the influence of latent variables on the dependent variable (Chin, 1998). As shown in Table 5, Age demonstrated a medium effect with an effect size of 1.199. Other latent variables exhibited a strong effect: Challenge the Process (3.591), Enable Others to Act (5.266), Encourage the Heart (5.298), Gender (6.071), Inspire a Shared Vision (7.063), and Model the Way (3.883).

A model's predictive relevance is evaluated by its Q square value (Hair et al., 2019). For a numerical analysis based on the primary data, the Q-squared value of a model must be greater than zero (Hair et al., 2019). Table 5 also pointed to Q2 values that are more than 0, i.e., 0.554, which suggests that the model has high predictive ability.

**Table 5**

*Results of VIF, f2, R2, and Q2*

	VIF	F <sup>2</sup>	Q <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup>
	Transformational leadership	Transformational leadership	Transformational leadership	Transformational leadership
Age	1.199	0.039		
Challenge The Process	3.591	0		
Enable Others to Act	5.266	0.007	0.054	0.621
Encourage The Heart	5.298	0.105		
Gender	6.071	0.008		
Inspire A Shared Vision	7.063	0.062		
Model The Way	3.883	0.04		

### IV.4 Hypothesis testing

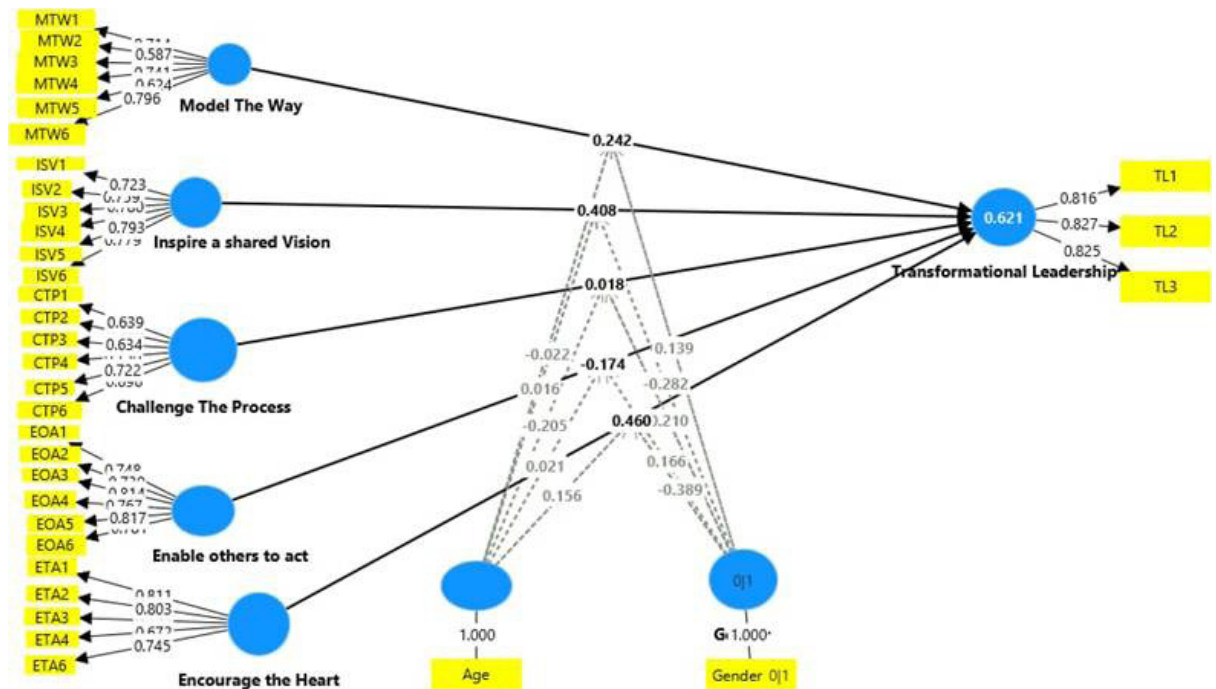
In the next stage, bootstrapping analysis was conducted to comprehend the relationships among the variables of the framework as indicated in Table 6 and Fig. 2. The findings supported the hypotheses H1, H2, and H5, as the results indicate substantial influence of ‘Model the Way’ ( $\beta = 0.242$ , T-Value = 3.628), ‘Inspire a Shared Vision’ ( $\beta = 0.408$ , T-Value = 4.816), and ‘Encourage the Heart’ ( $\beta = 0.46$ , T-Value = 5.525) on ‘Transformational Leadership’, respectively. However, the hypotheses H3 and H4 were not supported since the influence of ‘Challenge the process’ ( $\beta = 0.018$ , T-Value = 0.176) and ‘Enable

others to act’ ( $\beta = -0.174$ , T-Value = 1.408) on Transformational Leadership was not significant.

In addition to assessing the direct relationship between latent variables, the study also evaluated the moderating effect of age and gender on the direct connections, except for ‘Challenge the process’ ( $\beta = -0.205$ , T-Value = 2.039) and ‘Encourage the Heart’ ( $\beta = 0.156$ , T-Value = 2.269) for age, thus supporting hypotheses H7a and H7b.

For gender, ‘Encourage the Heart’ ( $\beta = -0.389$ , T-Value = 3.31) was the only moderating variable that demonstrated any effect on direct links, supporting hypotheses.

Figure 2.



Model

Source: Author

**Table 6*****Path Coefficient and Results***

<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Relationship</b>	<b><math>\beta</math> value</b>	<b>T-value</b>	<b>p-value</b>	<b>Hypothesis</b>
H1	Model The Way -> Transformational Leadership	0.242	3.628	0	Supported
H2	Inspire a shared Vision -> Transformational Leadership	0.408	4.816	0	Supported
H3	Challenge The Process -> Transformational Leadership	0.018	0.176	0.86	Rejected
H4	Enable others to act -> Transformational Leadership	-0.174	1.408	0.159	Rejected
H5	Encourage the Heart -> Transformational Leadership	0.46	5.525	0	Supported
H6a	Gender x Model The Way -> Transformational Leadership	0.139	1.166	0.243	Rejected
H6b	Gender x Inspire a shared Vision -> Transformational Leadership	-0.282	1.891	0.059	Rejected
H6c	Gender x Challenge The Process -> Transformational Leadership	0.21	1.445	0.148	Rejected
H6d	Gender x Enable others to act -> Transformational Leadership	0.166	1.011	0.312	Rejected
H6e	Gender x Encourage the Heart ->Transformational Leadership	-0.389	3.31	0.001	Supported
H7a	Age x Model The Way -> Transformational Leadership	-0.022	0.353	0.724	Rejected
H7b	Age x Inspire a shared Vision -> Transformational Leadership	0.016	0.213	0.832	Rejected
H7c	Age x Challenge The Process -> Transformational Leadership	-0.205	2.039	0.042	Supported
H7d	Age x Enable others to act -> Transformational Leadership	0.021	0.218	0.827	Rejected
H7e	Age x Encourage the Heart -> Transformational Leadership	0.156	2.269	0.023	Supported

## DISCUSSION

Based on Chanakya's theory, the study intends to investigate the presence of the attributes of leadership stated by Chanakya among the higher education professionals using LPI. Results in Table 6 exhibit a positive relation between the practices of exemplary leadership and Transformational Leadership, except in 'Challenge the Process' and 'Enable Others to Act'. In addition to that, moderation analysis of variables age and gender showed no significant moderating effect on the relationships, except for 'Challenge the Process' and 'Encourage the Heart' with Age, and 'Encourage the Heart' with Gender.

Firstly, 'Model the way' has a substantial influence on 'Transformational Leadership', which conflicts with the study of Anne et al. (2019) but is similar to the results of Balushi et al. (2025), Sabrine et al. (2025), Clavelle et al. (2012), and Edwards & Aboagye (2015). The finding suggests that 'Model the Way' plays a key role in the implementation of 'Transformational Leadership'. By setting a clear and positive example, leaders create a foundation that supports and encourages the adoption of broader leadership approaches, particularly transformational leadership.

'Inspire a shared vision' had the strongest relation with 'Transformational Leadership' and is in line with the research of Anne et al. (2019) and Eduardo et al. (2019). However, our current study contradicts the findings of Balushi et al. (2025), Sabrine et al. (2025), and Baviera-Puig et al. (2021), which reported that the attribute did not receive the average score among the study's target group during assessment. The findings indicate that 'Inspire

a shared vision' significantly contributes to the successful implementation of 'Transformational Leadership'. Specifically, the ability to unite followers around a shared vision appears to have a positive impact, facilitating the adoption and effectiveness of this leadership style.

Furthermore, 'Challenge the Process' had an insignificant impact and a low presence among professionals. The results are supported by the studies of Balushi et al. (2025), Edwards & Aboagye (2015), Clavelle et al. (2012), and contradict the findings of Sabrine et al. (2025) and Abdullah et al. (2008). Our results indicate that 'Challenge the Process' is not a preferred component within the 'Transformational Leadership' style. Leaders tend to avoid experimenting with new methods unless they are confident of a successful outcome, largely due to the risks associated with such changes.

In addition, 'Enable Others to Act' was observed to have a negative relation with Transformational Leadership, which is consistent with the study of Sabrine et al. (2025) but is not supported by the findings of Balushi et al. (2025), Baviera-Puig et al. (2021), Edwards & Aboagye (2015), and Abdullah et al. (2008). Our results show that transformational leaders are less inclined to adopt the practice of 'Enabling Others to Act'. This may be because granting subordinates greater independence is perceived as carrying significant financial risk, which discourages leaders from incorporating it into their leadership approach.

In contrast to the last variable, 'Encourage the Heart' was found to positively influence 'Transformational Leadership', which aligns with the studies of Balushi et al. (2025), María et al. (2023), Edwards & Aboagye (2015), and

Abdullah et al. (2008). However, our current study fails to align with the results of Sabrine et al. (2025). Our findings indicate that 'Encourage the Heart' is a key factor in practicing 'Transformational Leadership'. Providing timely encouragement and motivation to subordinates inspires leaders to make this approach an integral part of their leadership strategy.

The study included age and gender as moderating variables and found that, except for two instances in which age moderated 'Challenge the Process' and 'Encourage the Heart', and gender also moderated 'Encourage the Heart', the constructs were unable to moderate the relationship between leadership qualities and Transformational Leadership.

The moderating impact of gender on 'Encourage the Heart' aligns with the study of Jessica & Amy (2015), where significant gender differences were observed among the superintendents for the 'Encourage the Heart' practice. In our study, the practice of 'Encourage the Heart' within 'Transformational Leadership' appears to differ between male and female leaders. Female leaders tend to show a greater inclination toward encouraging subordinates, while male leaders, although supportive, may express such encouragement less openly, possibly due to their dominant nature and the demands of their position.

Similarly, the findings of the moderating variable age are supported by the results of Herman et al. (2017), in which age was observed to have a significant effect on Transformational Leadership qualities. In this study, age moderates 'Challenge the Process' and 'Encourage the Heart'. Our study shows that different age groups approach 'Challenge the

Process' and 'Encourage the Heart' differently within 'Transformational Leadership'. Younger professionals tend to prioritize praising subordinates while avoiding risks, likely due to limited experience. In contrast, older professionals offer praise less frequently but are more willing to take risks, relying on their knowledge and experience.

## CONCLUSION

The study was based on the ancient knowledge of leadership by Shri Vishnugupta, mononymously known as Chanakya, and examined the presence of the leadership qualities among the professionals operating in diverse fields. The Leadership Practice Inventory was utilized in order to fulfill the objectives and played a crucial role in providing the framework due to its similarities with the qualities of Chanakya on leadership. Also, age and gender were incorporated into the framework, and the results were significant for most of the leadership practices except 1) 'Challenge the Process' 2) 'Enable Others to Act', whereas gender was seen moderating 1) 'Encourage the Heart' and age moderating 1) 'Challenge the Process' 2) 'Encourage the Heart'. Additionally, the study utilized PLS-SEM in assessing the relation between the practices of exemplary leadership and transformational leadership, a gap fulfilled by the study. The results will help the leaders to know the qualities of leadership of Chanakya and practically implement them in their workplace. It will help in achieving effectiveness in their results and a sense of satisfaction among the followers, which should be the ultimate goal of the leader. Additionally, the findings'

implications will assist professionals assigned to leadership roles in reconsidering their methods of operation and applying the knowledge of ancient wisdom at work, not for their benefit but rather to maintain peace and harmony in the workplace. However, the limitations of the research should be kept in mind. First, due to the vast and complex nature of Arthashastra, the study could not fully explore its insights. Further, some elements of it are unavailable, which leaves the scope for future studies. Second, the study used a cross-sectional design, leaving space for longitudinal studies. Future studies could focus exclusively on the individuals who play a significant role in management. Scholars could investigate components that affect leadership and the way it can be tackled with the help of the insights provided for leadership in ancient literature.

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