

Transformational Leadership on Job Engagement: A Person-job Fit Perspective

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Abstract

Employee job engagement has received a lot of attention since it's important for a company's efficiency and performance. The purpose of this study is to investigate the mediating role of person-job fit in the relationship between transformational leadership and employee job engagement. The findings of this study show that both transformational leadership and person-job fit impact job engagement. Data were collected using self-reported surveys from 193 full-time employees working in the healthcare sector in Makkah Province, Saudi Arabia, as well as analyzed using the Partial Least Squares technique. Furthermore, the findings suggest that the relationship between transformational leadership and job engagement is mediated in part by person-job fit. These findings suggest that transformational leaders improve employee perceptions of person-job fit, hence increasing job engagement. Implications, limitations, and future research directions are discussed.

Keywords: transformational leadership, job engagement, person-job fit.

Introduction

In an increasingly complicated and fast-changing environment, leaders require engaged members of the organization who will devote their entire attention and efforts to completing their tasks. In other words, employees must be willing to go above and beyond statutory job standards, which may be accomplished through job engagement (Lai et al., 2020). As a result, it is critical for leaders to understand the antecedent and underlying processes that boost the engagement of their followers in order to encourage them to perform well and make them eager to participate in positive conduct, especially those not covered by formal employment contracts.

Leaders have an impact on members' behavior in the workplace because they are seen as a representative of the organization and have the capacity to evaluate members' performance or make choices about their career advancement. Transformational leaders can impact members' attitudes and behaviors by employing four behaviors; idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1985). Much theoretical and empirical research has explored the efficacy of transformational leadership, which reveals that it improves and influences members' in-role performance and helpful behavior (e.g., Chun et al., 2016; Dust et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2011; Zhu et al., 2013). Furthermore, the advantages of transformational leadership for members' attitudes and behaviors are transmitted through a variety of underlying mechanisms, such as organizational justice (Khaola & Rambe, 2020), and job characteristics (Gillet & Vandenberghe, 2014), and many others.

Transformational leaders may improve followers' job engagement by changing followers' views of the working environment (Bakker et al., 2011). The study adds to the literature by responding to requests for explanations of the processes in which transformational leadership behaviors affect employee work-related attitudes and behaviors in non-western settings (Avolio et al., 2004). Furthermore, because it was established in a western cultural framework, the generalizability of the transformational leadership construct in diverse cultural settings has been a source of great controversy (Spreitzer et al., 2005). This assumption has recently piqued the interest of non-western scholars. Studies on leadership in non-Western societies have emphasized the importance of national cultures in shaping and explaining leadership in different societies, and the distinctions between

leadership traditions in Western and non-Western societies (Law, 2012). In this regard, the cross-cultural literature has generally stressed that there is a strong connection between culture and leadership, and how leadership practices, behaviors, and effects differ from one country to another due to cultural characteristics (Chhokar et al., 2007; Dorfman et al., 2012; Hofstede, 1980; House et al., 2002). Therefore, this study aims to investigate the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement while taking into consideration the mediating role of followers' perceptions of person-job fit in Saudi settings. The theoretical underpinnings for examining the mediating route interactions between exogenous and endogenous factors are used to build the conceptual model for this study (Figure 1). Thus, this study contributes to the current understanding of the impact of transformational leadership in Saudi Arabia.

Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

Fit Theory

The fit theory was first introduced in the seminal work of Frank Parsons's (1909). Since then, the theory has been refined, enhanced, and expanded in order to enhance our understanding of how personal qualities and work environments impact one another. The abovementioned theory concerns the term "person-environment fit" which refers to the compatibility of individuals with specific types of work settings (Bretz and Judge, 1994). Researchers and practitioners have paid close attention to fit theory in order to better understand employees' attitudes and behaviors (Chuang et al., 2005). Individuals and their surroundings have comparable features in supplementary fit, and complementary fit, in which individuals and their surroundings have distinct traits but are needed by each other to make whole or contribute to what is missing in complementary fit (Boon et al., 2011; Kristof-Brown, 1996). Several studies define person-job fit as a complementary fit (e.g., Edwards, 1991; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Lauver & Kristof-Brown, 2001).

This research focuses on person-job fit because the question being investigated is whether or not it acts as a mediator in the relationship between transformational leadership and job engagement among followers. According to Edwards (1991), person-job fit may be described as a match between an individual's capabilities and a job's expectations, or a person's needs or desires and what a job provides, which connects to complementary fit (Boon et al., 2011).

The current study utilizes the fit theory with a concentration on person-job fit to provide an adequate explanation for the relationship between transformational leadership and employee job engagement. A clear explanation requires mediating variables (e.g., person-job fit) that are determinants of the dependent variable (e.g., job engagement) and can be influenced by leadership behaviors (Yukl, 2013). Specifically, this study seeks to understand how transformational leadership can have an effect on employees' job engagement. This is accomplished by concentrating on how transformational leadership influences person-job fit, and in turn, enhances employee job engagement.

The purpose of this study is both a response to the requests of earlier research and an effort to fill a void in the literature. As a consequence, it would appear to be necessary to conduct additional research into the ways in which transformational leadership influences both the role of the leader and employees' perceptions of the jobs and organizations in which they are employed, in addition to the work engagement that is associated with these perceptions. By investigating the mediating role of person-job fit in the relationship between transformational leadership and employee outcomes, this study contributes to our understanding of the discussed link (Yukl, 2013).

The Relationship between Transformational Leadership and Job Engagement

Job engagement is defined in a variety of ways in the literature. Schaufeli et al. (2002) presented a widely accepted and frequently quoted definition: “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption” (p. 74). Vigor is defined as having more energy and psychological endurance while working. Dedication is defined by drive, excitement, pride, and a feeling of challenge. Absorption indicates that a person is entirely focused on their task and is unwilling to quit. These three aspects are described as physical, emotional, and cognitive respectively (May et al., 2004). Nevertheless, job engagement has been extensively studied in Western settings due to its relevance in organizational behavior (May et al., 2004), and the construct got less consideration in non-Western contexts (Wang et al., 2010).

Transformational leadership and job engagement are frequently discussed in terms of their positive relationship (Salanova et al., 2011). Despite the fact that transformational leadership is linked to followers' attitudes and behavior, there is little explanation of how transformational leaders affect workers' psychological states (Avolio et al., 2009).

Furthermore, several studies identified a favorable association between transformational leadership and employee job engagement (e.g., Ghadi et al., 2013; Hoon Song et al., 2012). When all components of transformational leadership are displayed, followers' job engagement is likely much higher (Raja, 2012). In addition, transformational leaders, according to (Breevaart et al., 2014; Tims et al., 2011), improve people's job engagement on a regular basis. Transformational leadership has been shown to have an even higher impact on employee job engagement when it is combined with follower characteristics such as initiative, creativity, and innovation (Zhu et al., 2009).

Previous studies have concentrated on determining how transformational leadership predicts employee job engagement and attempting to understand the underlying process. For two key reasons, job-related resources contribute to the transformational leadership-job engagement relationship. To begin, job-related resources include opportunities for growth, empowerment, varied duties, frequent feedback, and a supportive work environment (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Through fundamental job qualities, transformational leadership has a greater influence on organizational citizenship behavior, including work engagement (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006). According to Bakker et al. (2011), transformational leadership may favorably affect employees' job engagement by improving work meaning. Second, employees are more probably to like their jobs when they get encouragement and opportunities for advancement offered by their leaders (Tims et al., 2011). It is through supporting and developing transformational leaders may boost their followers' vitality, motivation, and engagement (Shamir et al., 1993).

Transformational leadership research has mostly been conducted in the western world; consequently, the transfer of western experiences to other countries requires more thought and discussion (Walumbwa & Lawler, 2003). There are scarce studies carried out in non-Western nations to evaluate the notion of transformational leadership and its relevance to employee work-related outcomes such as job engagement. In collectivist societies, transformational leadership is found to have a positive influence on several attitudinal outcomes (Walumbwa & Lawler, 2003). Transformational leadership is anticipated to have a major influence on job engagement based on current findings. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1. Transformational leadership influences employees' job engagement.

The Relationship between Transformational Leadership and Person-job Fit

The capacity of leaders to handle employees' demands may help explain the link between transformational leadership and person-job fit. When employees are treated individually, they are more likely to be driven to learn new skills (Sosik et al., 2004). Transformational leaders, according to Bass (1985), raise employees' needs on Maslow's hierarchy of needs from lower to higher levels. To be more specific, transformational leaders may influence employees' job-related attitudes through behaviors such as inspirational motivation (Purvanova et al., 2006), raising the meaningfulness at work (Arnold et al., 2007), and connecting the workplace to a wider purpose (Shamir et al., 1993). As a result, transformational leaders may increase employees' assessments of their job fitness. In light of the aforementioned argument, this study suggests the following hypothesis.

H2. Transformational leadership influences employees perceived person-job fit.

The Relationship between Person-job Fit and Job Engagement

Field theory (Lewin, 1939) explains the link between employees' perceived person-job fit and their job engagement. The abovementioned theory holds that to explain or anticipate behavior, every individual and his or her environment must be regarded as one cluster of interconnected components (Lewin, 1952). Therefore, when an employee has a positive perspective on the workplace environment, he or she might exhibit positive behaviors such as job engagement. Maslach & Leiter (2008) followed up with empirical evidence that person-job fit leads to lesser burnout and increased job engagement. Both supplemental and complementary fit were considered. However, there is a dearth of studies regarding the exact relationship between person-job fit and employee engagement. For example, Maden-Eyiusta (2016) evaluated the demand-supplies links as a moderator of job resources and job engagement relationships. Laschinger & Finegan (2005) appear to be the first to relate work engagement to person-job fit. They looked at the empowerment process at six stages of an employee's career and found that when they were empowered, they reported better degrees of job control (such as autonomy), indicating a match between their expectations and the reality of their job; this leads to job engagement. In accordance with this argument, this study proposes the following hypothesis.

H3. Employee perceived person-job fit influences their job engagement.

Person-job Fit as a Mediator

The above explanation sheds light on the direct and indirect relationships that exist between transformational leadership, employee engagement, and person-job fit. The purpose of this study is to test the hypothesis that transformational leadership has an effect on employees' perceptions of person-job fit and that these perceptions influence employees' levels of job engagement. That is to say, transformational leadership behavior may enhance employee fit in their jobs by merging the values, goals, and characteristics of the organization, which may result in increased employee engagement. In this regard, Baron & Kenny (1986) stated that a third variable may assess in developing a mediating model if it explains a relationship between exogenous and endogenous factors. Accordingly, this study proposes the following hypothesis.

H4. Employee perceived person-job fit mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and job engagement.

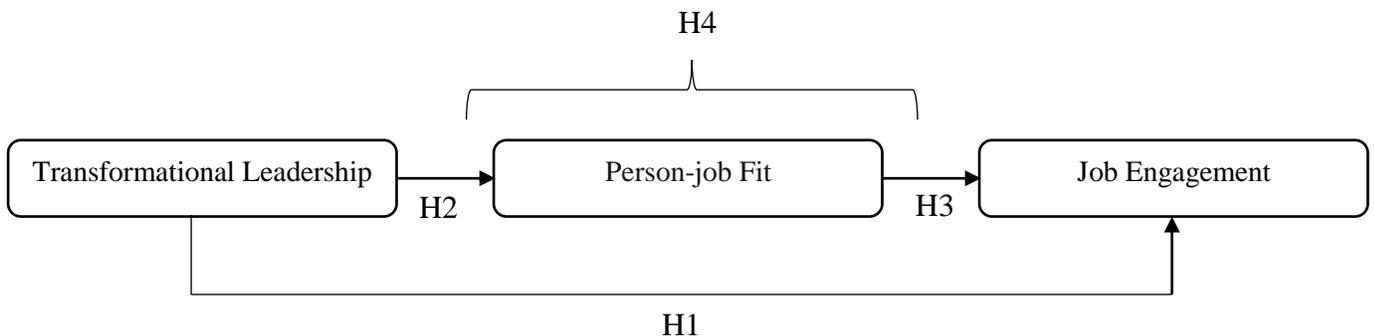


Figure1: Conceptual model.

Method

Sample and Procedure

This study adopted survey method using convenience sampling for data collection as it is very useful in collecting data from a large number of individuals in a relatively short period of time and at a better cost. This study conducted a survey of 250 employees who worked full-time in the healthcare sector in Makkah Province, Saudi Arabia. Of the participants surveyed, 193 individuals completed the survey, yielding a response rate of

77.2 percent. The characteristics of respondents are reported in Table 1 including gender, age, level of education, and organizational tenure.

Table 1 Sample Profile

Variable	Category	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	118	61.1
	Female	75	38.9
Age	20s	61	31.6
	30s	57	29.5
	40s	44	22.8
	50s	31	16
Level of education	High school	27	13.9
	Diploma	30	15.5
	Bachelor degree	121	72.7
	Postgraduate degree	15	7.7
Organizational tenure	Less than 5 years	67	34.7
	6-10 years	41	21.2
	11-15 years	46	23.8
	above 16 years	39	20.2

Measures

A 5-point Likert scale was used to assess dependent and independent variables ("strongly disagree," "disagree," "neutral," "agree," and "strongly agree"). In addition, all questionnaire translation procedures were used to avoid any methodological issues with translation from English to Arabic and vice versa (Brislin, 1970). To assess transformational leadership, the Global Transformational Leadership Scale (GTL) established by Carless et al., (2000) was used. GTL's internal consistency has been

established in the literature on a regular basis. The following is an example: “My supervisor communicates a clear and positive vision of the future”. Cronbach's alpha for transformational leadership was 0.885. In addition, six items from Cable & DeRue (2002) were used to measure perceived person-job fit. A sample item is “There is a good fit between what my job offers me and what I am looking for in a job”. This scale has a Cronbach's coefficient of 0.843. Last but not least, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, created by Schaufeli et al. (2002), was used to assess work engagement. The scale comprises nine items that represent the three traits used to describe work engagement in this study: vigor, dedication, and absorption. A sample item is “When I am working, I forget everything else around me“. This scale has a reliability of 0.904 in this study.

Data Analysis

SmartPLS (Ringle et al., 2005), a contemporary software version of the PLS technique, was used to analyze the data. In every regression run of the model, the goal of the PLS is to predict dependent variables, both latent and manifest, by maximizing the explained variance (R^2) of the dependent variables and minimizing the residual variance of endogenous variables (Wold 1985). An iterative technique fits observed measures to match latent variables and then calculates relationships among the latent variables to test the model against observed data. A least-squares fit between observed and modeled parameters is computed at each step of the iteration, and the model is deemed a best-fit solution when the least-squares function stabilizes between iterations.

PLS offers two advantages that make it a good fit for this research. First, PLS was created to eliminate the need for large sample sizes and strict normality assumptions. As a result, it's frequently referred to as "soft modeling" (Falk & Miller, 1992). Although PLS may be used to confirm theories, it is often advised for instances in which a theory or model must be established rather than confirmation proposals (Chin, 1998). Second, PLS takes measurement error into account, resulting in more accurate estimates of interaction effects like mediation (Chin, 1998).

Results

PLS results are presented in two parts: tests of validity and reliability of the measures (measurement model), and the tests of hypotheses (structural model). Both measurement and structural models are presented below.

Measurement Model

The measurement model concerns the relationship between the manifest indicators and the hypothesized latent constructs, as well as, it can be assessed through reliability and validity. The proposed model included loading 22 manifest indicators (measures) onto 3 latent constructs (see Table 1). The primary goal of this analysis is to determine how effectively the specified measures predict or build the latent variables.

The reliability (loading) of each indication was assessed to see if the manifest variables measured their intended targets. According to Hair et al. (2017), loading should be more than 0.70, and items with very low loadings (below 0.40) should be removed. Items with loadings between 0.40 and 0.70 should only be considered for removal if eliminating the item causes an increase in the composite reliability or the AVE over the threshold value. In addition, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability as in PLS were used to assess the construct internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha value guidance of at least 0.6 and composite reliability value guidance of at least 0.7 laid out by (Hair et al., 2017). The measurement model results are shown in Table 1 and reveal that the constructs of transformational leadership, person-job fit, and job engagement all met or surpassed the minimal requirements.

Table 1 Factor loadings, AVE, CR, and Cronbach's alpha of items in this study.

Variables & Measures	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Transformational Leadership		0.885	0.910	.592
TL1	0.743			
TL2	0.811			
TL3	0.753			
TL4	0.751			
TL5	0.701			
TL6	0.771			
TL7	0.849			
Person-job Fit		0.843	0.884	0.560
PJ1	0.736			
PJ2	0.715			
PJ3	0.757			
PJ4	0.75			
PJ5	0.76			
PJ6	0.771			
Jon Engagement		0.904	0.922	0.567
JE1	0.758			
JE2	0.768			
JE3	0.687			
JE4	0.753			
JE5	0.747			
JE6	0.7			
JE7	0.783			
JE8	0.829			
JE9	0.743			

Construct validity may be assessed through both convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity is the shared variance between the indicators and their construct and it means that a group of indicators has the same underlying construct (Henseler et al., 2009). Convergent validity may be demonstrated by examining the average variance extracted (AVE). A score of 0.50 demonstrates acceptability for AVE (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As shown in Table 1, the AVE for each construct was satisfactory. Discriminant validity indicates that each construct should share more variance with its own set of indicators than with another set of indicators represented by another construct (Henseler et al., 2009). Therefore, the AVE square root should be larger than the squared correlation with all other dimensions to establish discriminant validity among constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The associations between the constructs and the AVE square root are shown in Table 2. Given this information, there is discriminant validity among the studied constructs.

Table 2 Discriminant validity of the constructs

Constructs	Job Engagement	Transformational Leadership	Person-job Fit
Job Engagement	0.753		
Transformational Leadership	0.482	0.77	
Person-job Fit	0.582	0.541	0.895

Structural Model

Table 3 illustrates the results of the structural model's test. The PLS method in SmartPLS was used to calculate the standardized beta coefficient for each route in the model. The t-value for a particular bivariate relationship based on a bootstrapping approach with 2000 iterations was used to establish the statistical significance of each path in the theoretical model. Results showed that transformational leadership was positively related to employees' job engagement ($b = 0.46, p < 0.01$); thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported. The relationship between transformational leadership and person-job fit was also positive ($b = 0.74, p < 0.01$); thus, Hypothesis 2 was supported. Similarly, in support of Hypothesis 3,

there was a significant positive relationship between person-job fit and job engagement ($b = 0.55, p < 0.01$). Last but not least, the Q-square test (Geisser, 1975; Stone, 1974) was performed to validate the predictive relevance of the research model. The results of the Blindfolding procedure range from 0.306 to 0.499 which is greater than 0, which means the research model has a well predictive relevance.

Table 2 Path Coefficient and Hypotheses Testing (Direct and indirect Effects)

	Path Coefficients	STD	T Value	P Values	Decision
TL -> JE	0.462	0.038	12.173	0	Significant
TL -> PJ	0.744	0.078	9.528	0	Significant
PJ -> JE	0.551	0.042	13.161	0	Significant
TL -> PJ -> JE	0.410	0.044	9.226	0	Significant

In addition, The bootstrapping method is applied to examine this mediating effect. By dividing the indirect effect (ab) by the standard error of the indirect effect, the t values for the indirect effects can be obtained. The standard deviation of the repeated bootstrap estimates of the indirect effect is denoted by the standard error. The result shows that transformational leadership has a significant indirect effect on in-role performance ($\beta = 0.410, p < 0.001$).

Discussion

This study examines the relationship between transformational leadership and employee job engagement while taking into consideration the mediating roles of person-job fit conceptualized as complementary fit. The results of the data analysis revealed that all hypotheses are supported. The findings show that in the Saudi settings, both transformational leadership and person-job fit influence employee job engagement, and that person-job fit mediates the link between transformational leadership and employee job engagement. This contributes to the growing body of knowledge supporting the notion that several intermediating variables may provide a better understanding of the

impact of leadership on employee job-related attitudes and behaviors. Further implications of the study are discussed below.

Theoretical Implications

The current study supports the literature's findings that show a positive relationship between transformational leadership and employee job engagement (Ghadi et al., 2013; Salanova et al., 2011; Tims et al., 2011). This study also adds to the growing body of literature in non-western settings proving the favorable association between transformational leadership and employee work-related attitudes such as job engagement. According to the findings, transformational leaders have a considerable influence on their followers' level of involvement in both eastern and western contexts. As a result, this study adds to the larger appeal for research on the effectiveness of transformational leadership behavior in non-western cultures (Avolio et al., 2004).

In addition, the importance of person-job fit, according to this study, is as crucial as transformational leadership in influencing employee job engagement. Because it demonstrates that person-job fit, conceived as complementary fit, has an important influence on this important employee outcome, it contributes to our knowledge of the antecedents of work engagement.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the fit theory by proving that employees' perceptions of person-job fit, which may be improved by transformational leadership behavior, have a beneficial effect on their job engagement. These findings add to the research on transformational leadership and job engagement by addressing calls to investigate the processes by which the fit theory explains the influence of transformational leadership on employee job engagement (Bakker et al., 2011).

This study emphasizes the partial mediating role of employee perceived person-job fit in the studied relationship. This entails two favorable links between transformational leadership, person-job fit, and job engagement. The first relationship tackles the constraint that determinants of person-job fit have historically concentrated on the early phases of the employee lifecycle. This research adds to the current body of knowledge on fit by studying new determinants (Colquitt & Zapata-Phelan, 2007), such as transformational leadership. The second relationship indicates that the greater the compatibility between a person's personality and job, the greater their likelihood of being engaged at work (Hamid

& Yahya, 2011). In other words, an employee is more likely to be engaged if he or she perceives that they are a good match for the job.

Practical Implications

In terms of practice, this study sheds some light on various issues that have implications. In non-Western settings such as Saudi Arabia, it is critical for organizations, to recognize the benefits of transformational leadership. They must also consider employees' perception of person-job fit in order to maximize employee engagement. The following are some consequences. This study demonstrates to decision-makers that developing transformational leaders is a necessity for long-term organizational growth. Previous studies have demonstrated that transformational leadership characteristics may be cultivated (Kelloway et al., 2000). It is beneficial to organizations to implement development programs to help their executives acquire transformational leadership.

Moreover, matching individuals to particular job needs appears to demand more consideration in the creation of HR policies and practices. Recruiting choices should be based not just on applicants' experience, abilities, and talents that fit the job criteria, but also on how the job and its features might satisfy applicants' preferences. Transformational leadership may alter followers' perceptions of person-job fit (Chang et al., 2010). In addition, employee performance assessment and evaluation, as in HR practices, should be expanded to include feedback and opinions regarding person-job fit, and ways to improve it. Third, adopting transformational leadership behaviors and building knowledge of employees' perspectives of their jobs can help to increase employee engagement and guarantee that action is made to maximize person-job fit.

Limitation and Direction for Future Research

Despite its theoretical and practical implications, the current study is not without limitations. First, self-reported data were collected from the same source to assess all the studied constructs in this study. As a result, the findings might be affected by concerns of common method variation (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). Despite the fact that we followed methods to reduce the effect and checked for its occurrence, the study's relative risk continues to be a limitation. Future research might use multiple sources for data collection. Second, the cross-sectional study method, as opposed to the longitudinal study method, does not provide for a more accurate data collection analysis. As a result, future

research might use longitudinal analysis to duplicate the study in order to develop more consistent and accurate explanations for the causal influence of the variables, as well as to see if the hypothesized model evolves over time. Third, additional variables might be added to the suggested framework in future studies. Although the current study used person-job fit theory to examine the relationship between transformational leadership and job engagement, other types of fit might be considered in future research regarding the studied relationships. By evaluating many types of fit together, we may gain a better and more comprehensive understanding of how the social interaction of employees with their environments affects the effectiveness of leadership behaviors. It may also provide HR professionals with important information for assessing positions, choosing applicants, developing training plans, and enhancing rules and practices, all of which may aid in employee engagement.

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