

Transformational Leadership and Job Performance in Supply Chain Managers: The Mediating Role of Work Engagement

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ABSTRACT: This study evaluated the mediating role of work engagement in the relationship between transformational leadership and job performance among supply chain managers employed in industries across Pakistan to address a gap in the literature and provide practical implications. A cross-sectional correlational research design and purposive sampling were used to collect data from supply chain managers providing their services in several industries of Karachi and Lahore. A total of 248 supply chain managers, aged 24 to 60 years, participated in the study. All participants held at least a bachelor's degree and had a minimum of one year of managerial experience. The study administered three questionnaires: the 20-item Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (to measure transformational leadership), the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (to measure work engagement), and the Self-Assessment Scale of Job Performance Scale-Shorter Version (to measure job performance). The results demonstrated significant positive relationships among transformational leadership, work engagement, and job performance. The mediation analysis indicated that work engagement partially mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and job performance as the direct effect of transformational leadership on job performance remained statistically significant. The study provides culturally relevant implications and emphasizes the need for future research to further enrich the indigenous literature.

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Introduction

Leadership plays a central role in shaping organizational performance across various organizational settings, including service organizations (Azzahra et al., 2024) and sports organizations (Liu et al., 2024). However, the impact of leadership on organizational efficiency varies depending on the leadership style employed and the organizational context in which it is practiced. Among the various leadership approaches, transformational leadership has received substantial attention due to its potential to improve employees' motivation, engagement, and performance.

Accordingly, the present study focuses on transformational leadership and its relationship with the job performance of supply chain managers.

Transformational leadership is an effective leadership style for increasing employee motivation, performance and commitment towards the organizational objectives (Andoko et al., 2024; Carpio-Mendoza et al., 2023; Sanguanwongs & Kritjaroen, 2023). In supply chain management, managers are supposed to operate in an environment where they have to make timely, effective decisions, and such environments demand adaptability and innovation (Al Doghan & Sundram, 2023; Carvalho et al., 2012; Christopher & Holweg, 2011; Ivanov, 2010). Leaders who support and inspire their employees are more likely to be associated with higher employee motivation and improved attainment of organizational objectives (Bojovic & Jovanovic, 2020; Mohiuddin, 2017; Shahid et al., 2025).

Job performance can be defined as the effectiveness with which employees fulfill their responsibilities and contribute to the growth of the organization (Ahmad & Raja, 2021; Aldasem et al., 2022; Shahid et al., 2025). Prior literature has depicted that transformational leadership positively influences job performance by fostering trust, intrinsic motivation, and empowerment among employees (Fernet et al., 2015; Khan et al., 2020; Schuckert et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2011). However, the psychological underlying mechanism explaining this association requires further research.

This study is grounded in the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory, which posits that social job resources, such as transformational leadership, enhance work engagement, which is subsequently associated with improved job performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014; Demerouti & Bakker, 2011; Dhaneesh et al., 2025; Montenegro Méndez et al., 2025). Consistent with this theoretical perspective, organizational resources have also been shown to promote favorable employee outcomes. For example, according to a recent study perceived organizational support has been found to weaken the relationship between workplace loneliness and turnover intention among employees in Pakistan (Shahid et al., 2026). Within this framework, transformational leadership serves as a social job resource that facilitates work engagement.

Work engagement can be defined as the dedication, vigor, and absorption as a critical psychological mechanism associating leadership with employee performance (Attridge, 2009; Boonsiritomachai & Sud-On, 2022; Katsaros, 2024; Saks et al., 2022; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010). Supply chain managers who report higher levels of work engagement are more likely to report better job performance, even in demanding work environments (Harris & Fleming, 2017; Mamurov & Saparova, 2025; Suryanto, 2025; Yang, 2025). Therefore, work engagement may serve as an essential psychological factor that bridges the gap between transformational leadership and job performance among supply chain managers.

Although prior research has investigated transformational leadership and job performance, limited research has assessed the mediating role of work engagement among supply chain managers, particularly when it comes to the cultural context of Pakistan. Given the increasing operational hurdles that are faced by supply chain organizations, understanding this mechanism is critical for improving managerial effectiveness as well as organizational performance. Therefore, the present study aims to explore the relationship between transformational leadership and job performance through the mediating role of work engagement.

Hypothesis

H1: Work engagement significantly mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and job performance among supply chain managers.

Methodology

The study utilized a cross-sectional correlational study design to find the relationship between transformational leadership style and job performance through the mediator of work engagement. The reason for choosing this research design is that it allows timely measurement of variables, which is congruent with the study objective. Besides, the study has adopted a purposive sampling technique to collect the data from the participants.

Inclusion Criteria

The following criteria have been adopted to select study participants:

- ▶ Participants must be permanent employees as supply chain managers or in any other managerial positions within supply chain functions, for example, procurement, inventory, logistics, warehouse, distribution, or operations management, having at least one year of continuous managerial experience in supply chain-related roles in either the public or private sector.
- ▶ Participants must possess at least a bachelor's level of qualification.
- ▶ Participants must be between 24 and 60 years of age.

Sample Characteristics

The investigators approached 320 supply chain managers. Of these, 248 supply chain managers employed in public and private sector organizations in Karachi and Lahore, Pakistan, completed and submitted the questionnaire. The remaining participants either withdrew from the study, did not fulfill the inclusion criteria, or submitted questionnaire responses with missing details; therefore, they were not included in the final analysis. Participants ranged in age from 24 to 60 years ($M = 38.36$, $SD = 11.16$). The composition of men and women in the sample was 141 (56.9%) and 107 (43.1%), respectively. With respect to marital status, 127 (51.2%) participants were married, 82 (33.1%) were single, 23 (9.3%) were separated, and 16 (6.5%) were observed to be divorced. In terms of educational qualifications, 149 (60.1%) participants held a bachelor's degree, 90 (36.3%) held a master's degree, and 9 (3.6%) possessed a Ph.D. Most participants were employed in the private sector ($n = 153$, 61.7%), whereas 95 (38.3%) worked in the public sector. With respect to supply chain functions, 90 (36.3%) participants worked in procurement, 65 (26.2%) in logistics, 41 (16.5%) in warehouse management, 32 (12.9%) in operations management, and 20 (8.1%) in inventory management. Regarding managerial experience, 93 (37.5%) participants had 1–5 years of experience, 45 (18.1%) had 6–10 years, 49 (19.8%) had 11–15 years, 22 (8.9%) had 16–20 years, and 39 (15.7%) had more than 20 years of experience. Furthermore, 77 (31.0%) participants worked in organizations with fewer than 100 employees, 113 (45.6%) worked in organizations with 100–200 employees, 31 (12.5%) worked in organizations with 201–300 employees, and 27 (10.9%) worked in organizations with more than 300 employees. Finally, participants represented diverse industries, including FMCG ($n = 92$, 37.1%), manufacturing ($n = 63$, 25.4%), automotive ($n = 37$, 14.9%), retail ($n = 22$, 8.9%), pharmaceutical ($n = 20$, 8.1%), and textile ($n = 14$, 5.6%).

Instruments

The following instruments were used in the study:

The study employed the 20-item Transformational Leadership subscale of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire developed by Bass and Avolio (1996). The measure is rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 to 4, with higher scores indicating higher levels of transformational leadership. Cronbach's alpha for the transformational leadership subscale has been reported to range from .88 to .94 in previous studies, indicating high internal consistency (Bass &

Avolio, 1996). The Cronbach’s alpha for the 20-item transformational leadership subscale was .92 in the present study, indicating good internal consistency.

Job performance was measured using the Short Version of the Self-Assessment Scale of Job Performance. This instrument comprises 10 items assessing employees' self-perceived ability to perform their job tasks efficiently. Responses are rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), where higher scores reflect improved job performance. The original study reported a Cronbach's alpha of .91 (Andrade et al., 2020). The Cronbach’s alpha for this instrument was .77 in the present study, indicating satisfactory internal consistency.

Work engagement was measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-17) developed by Schaufeli and Bakker (2003). The scale comprises 17 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (Never) to 6 (Always/Every day), with higher scores indicating higher levels of work engagement. The scale’s Cronbach's alpha of .93 indicates high internal consistency (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). The Cronbach’s alpha for the scale was .92 in the present study, indicating good internal consistency.

Ethical Consideration and Procedure

The study adhered to the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct of the American Psychological Association throughout the research process. For instance, the participants were approached in the corporate sector in Karachi and Lahore as these places were accessible to investigators. The participants were given the consent form, which clearly stated voluntary participation, confidentiality of responses, use of data for research purposes only, and the right to withdraw at any stage without any sort of penalty. After having the written signatures on the consent form, the study participants were given the demographic questionnaire and instruments for data collection purposes. The collected data were entered into SPSS Version 27 for the purpose of analysis.

Results

Table 1

Correlational Analysis (N = 248)

Variables	1	2	3
Transformational Leadership	-	.87***	.65***
Work Engagement		-	.62***
Job Performance			-

Note: *** p < .001

The correlational analysis indicated that transformational leadership is positively and significantly related to work engagement (r = .87, p < .001) and job performance (r = .65, p < .001). Additionally, work engagement demonstrated a significant positive relationship with job performance (r = .62, p < .001).

Table 2

Mediation of Work Engagement in the Relationship of Transformational Leadership and Job Performance (N = 248)

Measures	B	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Step 1: (Path a) Outcome: WE	0.85***	0.03	28.12	< .001	0.79	0.91
Step 2: (Path b) Outcome: JP (WE → JP)	0.06*	0.03	2.06	.04	0.003	0.127

Measures	B	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Step 3: (Path <i>c'</i>)						
Outcome: JP (TL → JP Controlling for WE)	0.15***	0.03	4.92	< .001	0.09	0.21
Step 4: (Path <i>c</i>)						
Outcome: JP (Total Effect)	0.20***	0.01	13.72	< .001	0.17	0.23
Indirect Effect (TL → WE → JP)	0.05	Boot SE = 0.02	-	-	0.01	0.10

Note: *** $p < .001$, * $p < .05$, Path a (TL → WE): $R^2 = .7628$, $F(1, 246) = 791.04$, $p < .001$; Path b + c' (WE + TL → JP): $R^2 = .4436$, $F(2, 245) = 97.65$, $p < .001$; Path c (total effect, TL → JP): $R^2 = .4338$, $F(1, 246) = 188.51$, $p < .001$. TL = Transformational Leadership; WE = Work Engagement; JP = Job Performance.

The mediation analysis showed that transformational leadership was positively associated with work engagement (Path a, $B = 0.85$, $SE = 0.03$, $t = 28.12$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.79, 0.91]). Work engagement was positively associated with job performance (Path b, $B = 0.06$, $SE = 0.03$, $t = 2.06$, $p = .04$, 95% CI [0.003, 0.127]). The direct effect of transformational leadership on job performance remained significant after controlling for work engagement (Path c' , $B = 0.15$, $SE = 0.03$, $t = 4.92$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.09, 0.21]). The total effect was also significant (Path c, $B = 0.20$, $SE = 0.01$, $t = 13.72$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.17, 0.23]). The indirect effect was significant ($B = 0.05$, Boot SE = 0.02, 95% CI [0.01, 0.10]), indicating partial mediation.

Discussion

The findings of the study demonstrated significant relationships among transformational leadership, work engagement, and job performance among supply chain managers. These findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that supply chain managers who perceived themselves as demonstrating higher transformational leadership also reported higher levels of work engagement, which were positively associated with higher self-reported job performance (Jiatong et al., 2022). Evidence from Pakistan also indicated that transformational leadership and work engagement significantly predict job performance across multiple industries (Malokani et al., 2022). In the cultural framework of Pakistan, organizational relationships are described by collectivism and reverence for leadership. Managers who perceived themselves as exhibiting higher transformational leadership also reported greater work engagement and higher self-reported job performance.

The present study hypothesis is partially supported by the mediation analysis, as the significant indirect effect indicates that managers who reported higher transformational leadership also reported higher work engagement, which was positively associated with higher self-reported job performance. Nevertheless, the direct effect of transformational leadership stayed significant, showing partial rather than full mediation. The findings suggest that additional mechanisms, such as organizational commitment, psychological empowerment, employee motivation, and trust, may also explain the relationship between transformational leadership and job performance; however, these variables were not examined in the present study. These findings are consistent with the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory, which proposes that supportive leadership functions as a social job resource that is positively associated with work engagement and job performance. The findings are also consistent with those reported by Jiatong et al. (2022) and Malokani et al. (2022), both of which found positive associations among transformational leadership, work engagement, and job performance. Within the Pakistani organizational context, managers who perceived themselves as demonstrating stronger transformational leadership also reported higher levels

of work engagement. Therefore, they are more likely to achieve higher job performance while effectively addressing complicated operational challenges.

Limitations and Future Directions

Future studies are suggested to include more regions of Pakistan, such as Faisalabad, Sialkot, Peshawar, Quetta, Hyderabad, Multan, Sheikhupura, and Islamabad, as the data collected from supply chain managers employed in Karachi and Lahore may not be generalized to the whole population of supply chain managers working in different parts of Pakistan. Secondly, future studies should administer the questionnaires to employees to understand how they perceive their supply chain managers and how this impacts their work engagement and performance. This approach may offer superior discernment than collecting responses from supply chain managers, which may cause some self-confirmatory biases and defense mechanisms. Future research may also be conducted on supply chain management in a specific industry rather than testing the generalized impact.

Implications

The findings of this study provide several practical implications for organizations seeking to strengthen transformational leadership and work engagement among supply chain managers. For example, introducing leadership development programs and highlighting intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and inspirational motivation can benefit present-day organizations. The findings also emphasize the importance of implementing supportive organizational practices that may strengthen managers' work engagement and self-reported job performance. Consequently, the study provides empirical support for the application of the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory within the Pakistani context by demonstrating the mediating role of work engagement in the relationship between transformational leadership and self-reported job performance. Moreover, the study contributes to the literature on transformational leadership in supply chain managers and serves as a foundation for future research in the organizational perspective of Pakistan.

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