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The impact of transformational leadership on employee's performance: the mediating role of job satisfaction and employees' commitment

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Abstract: The telecom industry in Pakistan is in high demand and competition, and leaders need to have the ability to flexibly adjust organisational goals in response to a rapidly changing environment and motivate employees to achieve organisational goals. This empirical study aims to analyse the relationship between transformational leadership (TL) and employee performance with the mediating effect of job satisfaction and employee commitment (EC). This study used random sampling; a sample of 220 is selected from the telecom industry of Pakistan. Data were analysed through a partial least squares analysis technique using SmartPLS software. The study's results found that TL significantly affects job satisfaction, EC, and performance. Thus we can conclude That TL is an effective leadership style in the workplace which can enhance employees' performance. This study significantly contributes to the

TL theory and can be generalised to Pakistan's telecom sector. This study also contributes to the research method, as the current study used the SEM approach through SMART-PLS.

Keywords: transformational leadership; TL; job satisfaction; JS; employee commitment; EC; employee performance; EP.

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1 Introduction

There are numerous service sectors in Pakistan, and the telecommunication sector is one of the growing service sectors. With the increase in cell phone penetration, the demand for mobile data services in Pakistan is increasing, and the market potential is vast (Imtiaz et al., 2015). However, the telecommunication industry in Pakistan is in a fully competitive market with many competitors, and the market is highly competitive (Khurram et al., 2011). Moreover, the rapid change in telecommunication products requires the leaders of the organisation to be sensitive to the changes in the market and to be able to adjust the organisation's strategy according to the market demand and competition to gain competitiveness in the market (Khan et al., 2014). In this 21st century, in rural Pakistan, such as district Malakand, Bajour agency and many others, internet speed is very slow. Sometimes they are providing 3G, while the world is moving toward 6G technology. This is the biggest challenge for mobile companies to satisfy the customer needs.

According to Kouzes and Posner (2008), leadership is essential to the success of organisations. However, according to Bass (1990), leadership is necessary for organisations that are forced to deal with a significant amount of change and uncertainty because leadership affects employee commitment (EC) to change (Waldman et al., 2001). Leadership style also differs from person to person according to different situations and requirements. As discussed by De Jong and Den Hartog (2007), explained leadership as it is a way of persuading and convincing people to achieve what they aim for. Andersen (2016) highlighted leaders who show the road map to their followers and encourage them to achieve the aims and objectives of their targeted goals. Different types of leaders use different methods of leadership to encourage their followers. Lok and Crawford (2004) stated that leaders could easily see and guess an organisation's future. Leadership is one of the most crucial topics discussed by researchers from different parts of the World (Kuchler, 2008). De Jong and Den Hartog (2007) explained leadership in a way that it is the phenomenon that inspires people so that they perform well and get the desired output. Lok and Crawford (2004) claimed that leadership is essential in identifying the organisation's success and failure.

Among them, transformational leadership (TL) is considered to be superior to transactional leadership in enhancing organisational accomplishment (Bass and Bass, 2009). A transformational leader is often a passionate person who is good at facing challenges and can motivate and inspire employees according to the needs of organisational change and lead change to make the organisation better able to meet the challenges (Yukl, 1999). Budur (2020) found that the impact of TL varies across cultural contexts. The current literature on TL in the context of Pakistan is mainly based on the banking industry (Bushra et al., 2011; Riaz et al., 2011; Batool, 2013), educational institutions (Abbas et al., 2012; Asad et al., 2021), etc., with TL in the telecommunication industry receiving limited attention (Ghafoor et al., 2011; Ahmad et al., 2014). However, Rawashdeh et al. (2020) pointed out that due to the telecommunication industry's characteristics, the company's survival and the employees' performance depend largely on the leadership style. Although, most current research has concluded that TL has significant results in increasing employee job satisfaction (JS) and improving organisational performance (Braun et al., 2013; Para-González et al., 2018), Hansbrough and Schyns (2018) argue that TL is not always effective. Therefore, this study focuses on the telecommunication industry in Pakistan and wants to investigate the impact of TL on employee performance (EP) and the mediating role of JS and employee committee in this context.

2 Literature review

2.1 Transformational leadership

Burns (1978) was the one who first brought the concept of 'TL' to the table. A transformational leader will change the current or present situation after looking at the problem and align his activities with the company's goals by encouraging his followers, motivating them, boosting their morale, identifying their strengths, and assisting them in correcting their weaknesses as well as their perceptions and beliefs to achieve the desired results (Burns, 1978; Kirkland, 2011). According to Schepers et al. (2005), transformational leaders encourage team members to think creatively, give them the

freedom to consider all possible solutions to a problem and encourage them to try them out. They also provide them with access to technology so they can find and explore better solutions. Additionally, TL lessens employee stress and reduces work workload and burnout (Gill et al., 2006).

Transformational leaders are the one who creates a vision and then guides and encourages their employees to achieve the desired results. They also convince their followers to think beyond the limit (Bass, 1988). These kinds of leaders always try to show first a vision to their employees. Transformational leaders somewhat fall into the category of charismatic leaders because they motivate their followers by showing them their charismatic powers. As Tajasom et al. (2015) and Rouche et al. (1989) discussed, transformational leaders guide, persuade, convince and encourage their employees to achieve and accomplish the organisation's goals. This is evident when we see the followers do everything the leader says. Followers start liking their leader and respect him. They are ready to do whatever the leader says (Barbuto, 1997).

2.2 Job satisfaction

In the field of organisational management, JS is a necessary construct. Among the definitions of JS, the one proposed by Locke (1976) is widely accepted. He believes JS is the positive emotional state produced by individuals through the evaluation of work experience. Some scholars believe that JS includes not only positive emotional states but also negative emotional states. Spector (1997) thought that JS refers to the degree to which employees like or dislike their jobs. Armstrong (2006) believed that this kind of positive attitude towards work and a negative attitude could be further divided into two concepts, JS and job dissatisfaction. Employees who are satisfied with the work they do tend to have some positive behavioural outcomes. JS results in employees' excellent performance, and their commitment to the organisation guarantees organisational success and development (Spector, 2021). If employees are dissatisfied with the job they are doing, it will bring some negative behaviour, such as absenteeism, produce turnover intention, job slack, etc. (Aziri, 2011).

2.3 Employee commitment

The definition of EC has not yet reached an academic consensus (Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001). EC reflects the degree of an employee's identification with the organisation and commitment to organisational goals (Beloor et al., 2017). There are different types of EC, among which the classification proposed by Meyer and Allen (1991) is widely accepted, they subdivide EC into three types: 'affective commitment', 'normative commitment' and 'continuance commitment'. Based on this, many scholars have carried out much empirical research and found that different types of EC will have other impacts on the organisation (Meyer et al., 2012; Schwepker and Dimitriou, 2021).

Most studies agree that EC can positively affect employees and the organisation, such as lower turnover rates, increased loyalty to the organisation, and high attendance rates (Ashar et al., 2013). However, some scholars hold a different view; for individuals, high EC may cause them to over-commit to their work at the expense of their personal lives; for organisations, employees who are too compliant with organisational norms may be conformist and less innovative (Janis, 1973).

2.4 *Employee performance*

Performance at the workplace, also known as EP ‘in research, refers to the activities and behaviours that contribute to achieving organisational goals and the results they bring (Viswesvaran and Ones, 2000). Some studies have also given a more concrete definition, thinking that EP is related to a given task and only the performance of completing work related to the task (Pawar, 2013). Employees are the core competency of a company’s development, and EP is crucial to the development of an organisation, which scholars have richly researched in different research contexts, most of which are devoted to exploring the antecedent variables of EP (Atatsi et al., 2019). Employees’ characteristics, work attitudes, and organisational climate can significantly impact EP (Karatepe et al., 2006; Robertson et al., 2012; Tsai et al., 2015).

2.5 *Hypotheses proposed*

Transformational leaders clearly understand the organisation’s future development, can make employees understand and agree with the development goals of the enterprise, and are willing to work towards this goal (Burns, 1978). Unlike other leadership styles, TL can exist at all levels of the organisation and is not limited to the top leadership. Transformational leaders often express different personalised concerns for different employees and can develop tasks based on each employee’s different characteristics and areas of expertise (Braun et al., 2013). Transformational leaders are skilled at motivating employees and linking organisational goals to individual employee interests (Abouraia and Othman, 2017). Transformational leaders do not order their employees, but instead encourage them by caring for and supporting them and building trust and identity with them (Cheung and Wong, 2011; Buil et al., 2019). According to Braun et al. (2013), the determination and identification of followers and their attachment to the leader increase the employee’s commitment. Because transformational leaders manage employees more from the perspective of understanding, support, and motivation, employees are more willing to take the initiative to make efforts under the encouragement of transformational leaders (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Therefore, employees will generate higher satisfaction at work and have a higher identification and commitment to the organisation. After findings this evidence, this study makes up the following hypotheses:

H1 TL has a significant and positive impact on JS.

H2 TL has a significant and positive impact on EC.

Employees that are content and satisfied with their jobs are more interested in and enthusiastic about attaining the organisation’s goals (Mangkunegara and Huddin, 2016; Mujkić et al., 2014). Additionally, Rezvani et al. (2016) pointed out that happy workers frequently perform well and take part in problem-solving and decision-making activities. Voon et al. (2011) highlighted that a TL style increases employees’ JS and contentment. Transformational leaders can motivate their employees to become more accountable and autonomous towards work tasks, increasing their job contentment and making them capable of accomplishing goals (Long et al., 2014). Based on this, this study makes the following hypotheses:

H3 JS has a significant and positive impact on EP.

H4 JS has a significant mediating role between TL and EP.

Lowe et al. (1996) argue that transformational leaders have strong personal charisma and can make subordinates want to follow, emulate and identify with them. Tian and Zhai (2019) argue that involving employees in decision-making and giving them more power can lead to better performance. Transformational leaders tend to involve employees in the decision-making process, enabling employees to fully utilise their individual strengths and increase their enthusiasm for participation, generating higher organisational commitment (Avolio, 1999; Rhodes and Steers, 1981). Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) suggest that EC to change is a better predictor of supportive behaviour than organisational commitment in the face of organisational change. Qureshi et al. (2019) studied the impact of affective, normative, and continuance commitment on organisational performance using JS as a mediating variable in a Pakistani FMCG company. They found that all three types of EC indirectly affect organisational performance through the mediating role of JS. Based on this, this study makes the following hypotheses:

H5 EC has a significant impact on EP.

H6 EC significantly mediates between TL and EP.

Figure 1 Conceptual framework



3 Methodology

The deductive research approach is used in this research. The research design of this study is explanatory to test the hypothesis. The study's target population was the Telenor telecommunication organisation in Pakistan employees, and a sample of 220 respondents was taken. Non-probability sampling technique is used in this study. According to Hair et al. (2019), the sample size should be ten times the number of items in the instrument. The questionnaire in this study is adopted from past studies. This study examined outer loadings, composite reliability method for internal consistency, and average variance extracted (AVE) for convergent validity to evaluate the reflective measurements model. This study used SmartPLS 3.2.8 to test the model and justify the hypotheses. According to Khan et al. (2017, 2018, 2020), Mubarik and Bontis (2021) and Farrukh et al. (2019), SmartPLS is a suitable software for testing a conceptual framework and prediction process.

This study used a probability sampling technique. According to Hair et al. (2019), the sample size needs to be ten times as large as the instrument's total number of items. The questionnaire used in this study was adopted from past research. To assess the convergent validity of the reflective measurements model, this study used outer loadings, the composite reliability technique for internal consistency, and the AVE for convergent validity. To test the hypotheses, this study used SmartPLS software, used by several researchers and recommended by Khan et al. (2017, 2018, 2020), Mubarik and Bontis (2021) and Farrukh et al. (2019) all claim that SmartPLS is an appropriate piece of software for evaluating a conceptual framework and prediction process.

4 Results

4.1 Measurement model

For the analysis of the measurement model, we conducted the reliability and validity analysis. The Cronbach's alpha value, factor loading value, CR value and AVE value of the construct were tested, and the specific indicators are shown in Table 1. Table 1 shows that the Cronbach's alpha of all constructs ranges from 0.879–0.932, all above 0.7; the CR value is above 0.7; hence, the data is reliable (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 1 Construct reliability and validity

<i>Constructs</i>	<i>Cronbach's alpha</i>	<i>CR value</i>	<i>AVE value</i>
Transformational leadership (TL)	0.932	0.931	0.732
Job satisfaction (JS)	0.879	0.878	0.547
Employee commitment (EC)	0.909	0.908	0.665
Employee performance (EP)	0.882	0.881	0.597

Table 2 Cross-loadings analysis

	<i>Transformational leadership (TL)</i>	<i>Job satisfaction (JS)</i>	<i>Employee commitment (EC)</i>	<i>Employee performance (EP)</i>
TL1	0.934	0.395	0.568	0.321
TL2	0.793	0.456	0.412	−0.265
TL3	0.762	0.204	0.356	0.562
TL4	0.927	0.221	0.245	0.475
TL5	0.847	0.136	0.352	0.265
JS1	0.256	0.809	0.145	0.241
JS2	0.346	0.076	0.256	0.263
JS3	0.364	0.726	0.556	0.556
JS4	0.123	0.704	0.265	0.402
JS5	0.356	0.749	0.486	0.365
JS6	0.235	0.683	−0.254	0.265
EC1	0.421	−0.231	0.829	0.145
EC2	0.235	0.256	0.855	0.612

Table 2 Cross-loadings analysis (continued)

	<i>Transformational leadership (TL)</i>	<i>Job satisfaction (JS)</i>	<i>Employee commitment (EC)</i>	<i>Employee performance (EP)</i>
EC3	0.256	0.524	0.816	0.213
EC4	0.255	0.541	0.777	0.265
EC5	0.562	0.352	0.811	0.356
EP1	0.421	0.654	−0.521	0.807
EP2	0.253	0.452	−0.325	0.73
EP3	0.265	0.264	0.241	0.755
EP4	0.265	0.124	0.526	0.752
EP5	0.112	0.512	0.451	0.812

Average variance extraction is used to check the convergent validity, which is above 0.5 for all constructs; the threshold for the convergent validity is ≥ 0.5 (Hair et al., 2019). Table 1 shows the factors loadings (FLs) for all the items; all factors for each item were above 0.7, which is the desired level as explained by Hair et al. (2010); FL should be above 0.7; hence the scale is reliable and valid to measure the model. According to Table 2, we can find that the loading of each variable's scale items on that variable is more significant than its loading on the other constructs, thus indicating good discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015).

4.2 Structure model

Figure 2 shows the value of the adjusted R square of JS, EC, and EP is 0.473, 0.333, and 0.443, respectively, it shows that TL can explain 47.3% of JS and 33.3% of EC; two mediating variables can explain 44.3% of the dependent variable (EP), and overall, the model of this study has strong explanatory power.

Figure 2 Measurement model (see online version for colours)

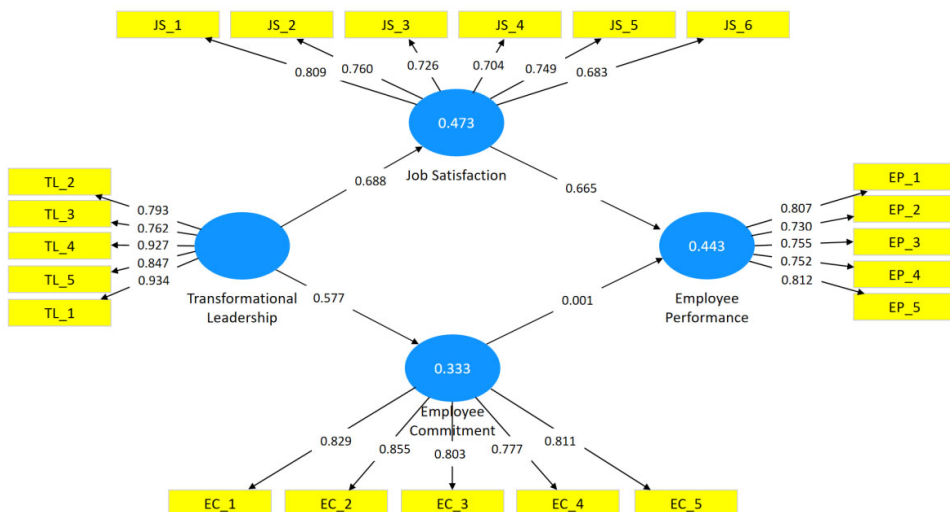


Table 3 also shows a significant and positive relationship between TL and JS ($\beta = 0.624, p = 0.000$), which supports H1. There is a significant relationship between TL and EC ($\beta = 0.532, p = 0.000$), which support H2. There is a significant and positive relationship between JS and EP ($\beta = 0.504, p = 0.000$), which support H3. There is an insignificant relationship between EC and performance ($\beta = 0.115, p = 0.290$), which rejects H5. The results show that all direct influence paths are significant except for the effect of EC on EP, which is not substantial.

Figure 3 Structure equation model (see online version for colours)

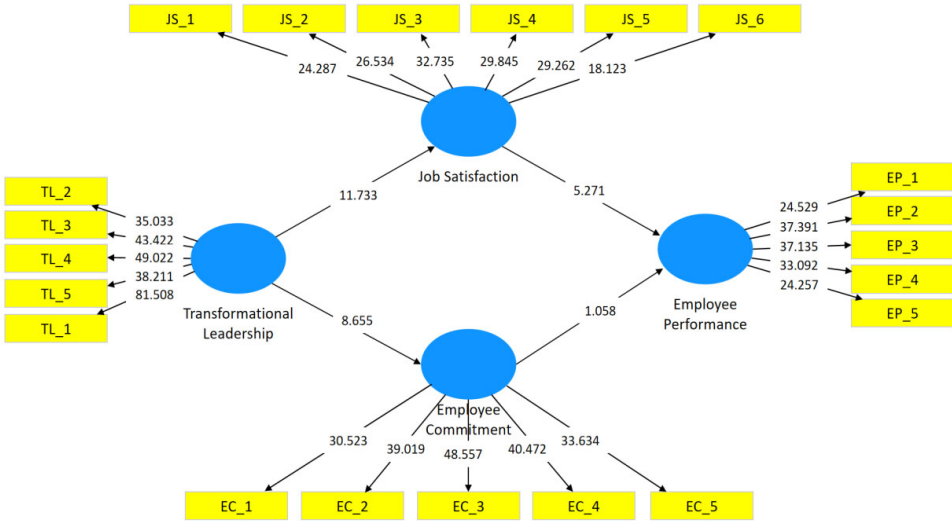


Table 3 Hypothesis testing

No.	Hypotheses	Original sample	Sample mean	Std.	T value	P value	Decision
H1	TL → JS	0.624	0.625	0.053	11.733	0.000	Supported
H2	TL → EC	0.532	0.534	0.061	8.655	0.000	Supported
H3	JS → EP	0.504	0.508	0.096	5.271	0.000	Supported
H4	EC → EP	0.115	0.113	0.109	1.058	0.290	Not supported

4.3 Mediation effect

In this study, there are two mediating variables, JS and EC; however, the study also examined the direct path. According to the results in Table 4, the indirect effect of TL on EP mediated by JS is significant ($\beta = 0.314, p = 0.000$), which supports H4, indicating that JS plays a mediating role in the effect of TL on EP. The indirect impact of TL on EP, mediated by EC, is insignificant ($\beta = 0.061, p = 0.296$), which rejects H6, indicating that EC did not mediate the effect of TL on EP.

Table 4 Specific indirect effects

No.	Path	Path coefficient	T value	P value	Decision
H5	TL → JS → EP	0.314	4.607	0.000	Supported
H6	TL → EC → EP	0.061	1.046	0.296	Not supported

5 Discussion and implications

5.1 Discussion of finding

This study takes the employees of Telenor Telecom Company in Pakistan as the research object and explores the relationship and impact path among TL, JS, EC, and performance. According to the research results, this study draws the following research conclusions:

First, TL significantly impacts employee JS and EC. This is consistent with previous research findings (Braun et al., 2013; Mujkic et al., 2014; Puni et al., 2021). The main reason is that transformational leaders understand organisational goals and can fully motivate their employees, manage them individually according to their individuality, and give full play to their charisma so that they are willing to follow and achieve organisational goals together.

Second, the relationship between TL and work performance is mediated by employee JS, which significantly impacts EP. Prior studies have also emphasised the significance of JS since satisfied employees perform their duties with more significant commitment and zeal (Rezwani et al., 2016; Fisher, 2003).

Third, EC cannot directly and significantly impact EP. Currently, there are conflicting academic opinions regarding the impact of EC on organisational performance. Some scholars believe that organisational commitment can positively and significantly affect organisational performance (Andrew, 2017; Almeida and Coelho, 2019; Qureshi et al., 2019). Some scholars also argue that different types of EC have other effects on organisational performance (Meyer et al., 1989). Mathieu and Zaja (1990) claimed that organisational commitment is having a negligible impact on performance in most cases. Becker et al. (1996) argued that organisational commitment does not directly affect job performance, and the results of this study support this view. The main reason why EC does not directly affect job performance may be that people generate identification to promote relationships. This will only directly impact if interpersonal relationships are a prerequisite for employees to improve organisational performance (Becker et al., 1996), but most organisations do not have this condition. Therefore, most studies would argue that the relationship between the two requires the role of mediating variables (Qureshi et al., 2019).

5.2 Theoretical implications

Budur (2020) argues that there are differences in the impact of TL in different cultural contexts. Thus, this study validates the relationship between TL, JS, EC and EP in the telecommunication industry in Pakistan, complementing the lack of academic research in this context and also validates the impact of TL in the context of the telecommunication

industry in Pakistan. This study identified the mediating role of JS in the relationship between TL and job performance and emphasised the vital role of JS in organisational management. In addition to this, this study found a different finding from most previous studies that EC does not directly affect job performance (Andrew, 2017; Almeida and Coelho, 2019; Qureshi et al., 2019), and this finding can enrich the understanding of existing studies on the relationship between these two constructs.

5.3 Practical implications

The results of this study emphasise the importance of TL in organisational management, and since TL does not exist only at the top leadership level, it can exist at all levels of the organisation (Braun et al., 2013). Therefore, companies should pay attention to the selection, development and management of managers with TL style, which can be installed at all levels of the company. In addition, this study found that JS plays an important mediating role in the impact of TL on job performance, which can remind business managers that in the management of employees, it is necessary to pay attention to and improve employee satisfaction with work in order better to improve the work efficiency and enthusiasm of employees.

5.4 Limitation and future research

This study focuses only on the effect of TL on job performance. At the same time, in actual organisations, there are a variety of leadership styles so that future research can explore the role of different leadership styles on organisational performance and their differences. In addition, the sample of this study was selected only from Telenor Pakistan, and the generalisability of the study may have some limitations. Future studies can test the generalisability of this study by selecting a more diverse sample in different research contexts.

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