The Effect of Transformational Leadership Style on Emotional Engagement of Salespersons and its Downstream Effect on Creative Performance: Role of Meaningfulness in Work

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Abstract

Even though there is an immense level of research related to the effects of the transformational leadership style of managers, the role of meaningfulness in work as a mediator between this specific style and the emotional engagement of salespersons has yet to be cross-examined in previous literature. To understand how this mediating mechanism leads to emotional engagement, which ultimately leads to the creative performance of salespersons, we advanced a conceptual model using Social Exchange Theory (SET) and examined the data from a sample of 315 salespersons; results from the multivariate analysis show that the relationship between transformational leadership style and emotional engagement is partially mediated by salespersons' perceptions of meaningfulness in work. The study also offers insights into one of the essential consequences, i.e., creative performance. The results also provide broad implications for managers and researchers in boosting emotional engagement and improving creative salespersons' performances. The study is one of the exceptional efforts to provide evidence regarding the role of meaning in work in the context of a relationship between transformational leadership style and the emotional engagement of salespersons.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Meaningfulness in Work, Emotional Engagement, and Creative Performance

1. Introduction

The effect of Transformational Leadership (TL) on individual-level variables has been one of the most broadly investigated areas in the last few years (Saeed & Jun 2021). TL drew much interest from researchers because of its substance and significance to overall followers' productivity. As far as the individual-level effect of TL is concerned, empirical evidence has revealed that followers of transformational leaders are more prolific (Kim et al., 2022) because it inspires motivation among followers (Katou et al., 2022), results in higher performance (Ye et al., 2022), show greater creativity and well-being (Shamshad & Naqi Khan, 2022). In general, TL is related to positive outcomes for followers (Kuo et al., 2022,) making this leadership style more effective than any other leadership style in management (Febrianti & Jufri, 2022)

Although TL affects subordinates' behaviors and attitudes, it is not as simple as it seems. There is evidence that transformational leaders influence followers indirectly (Duan et al., 2022). This study is a response to the call from Liu et al. (2021), who stresses integrating new cognitive variables to examine the effect of TL on followers' responses and clarify empirical ambiguities. This study has contributed to enhancing the understanding by studying a distinctive mediating process and its outcome as identified by the different researchers. This study has also considered the direction Høstrup and Andersen (2022) set to investigate the TL effects on field salespersons further. Most of the previous studies have been conducted from the perspective of leaders, but the followers' perspective has rarely been studied, as pointed out by Lim and Moon (2022) in their study.

Recently, TL and engagement relationship at work has attracted much scholarly attention (Delima & Sellar, 2022). Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) defined the concept of engagement as a 'fulfilling and positive work-related mindset characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption.' This is important to note that Bakker, Albrecht, and Leiter (2011) and Edmondson and Matthews (2022) claimed that the direct relationship between TL and engagement under varied conditions has different intensities. Authors asserted that direct influence of such kind is not simple and can be the outcome of helping employees to inculcate Meaningfulness in Work (MIW). MIW, according to Rosso, Dekas, and Wrzesniewski (2010), has been conceptualized in significantly broader terms as authors defined MIW as 'looking for a resolve in work that has more value than just the explicit outcome of the work'. Moreover, it is explicitly mentioned in previous research work that the prime goal of individuals is to be motivated to do more fulfilling and meaningful work. Experiencing MIW has been depicted as moving higher-order needs. Chalofsky (2003) added to this phenomenon by suggesting that once the basic needs are fulfilled, one will aspire for a job that fulfills the purpose of involving in more MIW. Furthermore, literature seconds the predictive value of engagement for different dimensions of performance (Bouckenooghe et al., 2022; Panda et al., 2022). Engaged employees perform better as most of the positive emotions like enthusiasm, joy, happiness, and better health Nandini et al. (2022). Consequently, more empirical evidence is desirable to attain an enhanced understanding of

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the link between TL and creative performance to assist managers and more effectively obtain the prospective benefits of this leadership style.

This study proposes a conceptual model to test the mediating role of MIW between TL and EE, which eventually leads to the creative performance of salespersons. By examining this mechanism, we hope to contribute to the literature in terms of theory and practice. This study claims that this relationship is mediated by MIW, which is conceptually the value an individual gives to a work goal. Similarly, while concentrating on the services sector, the extent of creativity required for jobs differs in larger organizations. Some jobs require more creativity and less in other cases. Creative Performance (CP) has been studied previously, keeping in mind the engineers, scientists, architects, and artists but researchers have now agreed that creativity is one of the most desirable traits in all job roles, especially in selling (Akhtar et al., 2019; Bolander et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2020). Based on the gaps mentioned earlier, this study has advanced the mediating role of MIW between TL and EE. Furthermore, the theoretical model has also integrated CP as an essential outcome of this mediating mechanism.

2. Literature Review
2.1. Transformational Leadership Style

TL style is commonly associated with articulating an appealing vision, indulging in an enthralling role model, encouraging the acceptance of common goals, setting high levels of performance expectations, and providing support and intellectual encouragement to followers, TL style has also been endorsed as an enviable set of leaders' behaviors bringing about challenges for their followers (Nielsen & Cleal, 2011). In sum, transformational leaders are those individuals who widen and lift the interest of their followers and create commitment and awareness in individuals. Moreover, Bass (1985) argued that TL has an additional effect on subordinates to do more than intended originally by tempting them to go beyond their self-interest for the sake of the team or organization, enlightening them more about the task outcome importance, and initiating their needs in the higher order.

Despite the solid link between TL behaviors and desired outcomes, more research needs to be done conceptually and empirically to assess the role of TL on the affective states of followers. TL has been the focus of scholarly research since Burns (1978) presented his seminal work, which proposed that leadership styles can be further divided into two classes. transformational and transactional leadership. TL motivates and elevates the followers' self-esteem, whereas transactional leaders take care of the immediate self-interest of the followers. TL definition presented by Burns (1978) stated that TL is 'the process through which leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of morality and motivation'. Bass (1985) presented his work which was through dedication to the seminal work of Burns (1978), however, Bass's (1985) work varies in three ways. Firstly, he denied the notion that TL and transactional leadership are only extremes of the leadership phenomenon rather, an effective leader should have qualities of both TL and transactional leadership. Secondly, the author also argued that the outcomes of both leadership styles could be positive or negative, and he finally added that transformational leaders should also have to take care of the needs and wants of the subordinates or followers to enhance their professional capabilities. The remarkable work of both the authors on TL was further explored, and the behaviors that comprehend the conception of TL were re-conceptualized as communication of the vision, development of subordinate skills, support to subordinates in challenging work-related matters, subordinate empowerment, innovation in subordinate working abilities, leading by setting examples and leaders' charisma.

Caza, Zhang, Wang, and Bai (2015) further added that emotional sincerity is another expected behavior that an organization expects from its managers and as well as employees. It is also concluded by Caza et al. (2015) that for followers to become emotionally sincere, similar emotional sincerity is needed in the leaders to achieve CP. To innovate or become creative, TL objectively engages and motivates followers by articulating them to perform better than expected by themselves. Leaders display TL to embed a shared vision of the forthcoming, collective performance, setting high-performance standards, setting examples by self-performance, supporting each individual for development, and providing intellectual stimulation. Henceforth, this study has explained how sales managers with such a style attend to particular desires and offer returns dependent upon whether their salespersons achieved the set goals. One side of the dyadic exchange is alluded to as a component of SET (giving/fulfilling). Sales managers that follow the TL style intend to let their salespersons be involved in receiving the inner qualities and measures and, in this way, modifying their convictions about and responsibilities regarding authoritative targets, which alludes to the second part (returning) of the dyadic exchange examined in SET. There are very few of the research that proposes TL is emphatically identified with the reasonable clarification of SET.

2.2. Meaningfulness in Work

Organizational and personal consequences are linked with MIW perception (Rosso et al., 2010), such as well-being, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and lower absenteeism. MIW as a construct has been studied in the job characteristic model (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) and the empowerment model (Spreitzer, Kizilos, & Nason, 1997). Globalization, demographic changes, and technological development have changed employees' perceptions regarding work and their behaviors. Consequently, Rosso et al. (2010) pointed out that scholars must be more specific when they define MIW because, with recent changes, the older definition of MIW is no longer appropriate.

The conceptual understanding of MIW directs towards associating or connecting the self with the work. However, as far as responsibility, reliability, and devotion are concerned, coupled with a view of social and internal obligation toward the part of work. Additionally, standards, qualities, and conventions of work in the everyday existence of individuals are also some themes that explain the existence of MIW possibilities. Spreitzer et al. (1997) identified that individuals' esteem, satisfaction, and work fulfillment are the possibilities that let the employee feel satisfied with work. This permits the individual to satisfy the expected/coveted work values and heeds up with a noteworthy part of MIW. Wrzesniewski (2003) added that organizational commitment to workers' families and the positive effect of the job part on the corporate objectives and desire for creativity are essential job qualities that bring about the state of MIW. However, a holistic definition of the construct was as yet anticipated to be grounded. For that reason, analysts have made many advances to enumerate the MIW (e.g., work commitment, job involvement, intrinsic/extrinsic motivation, work values, and so on).

May, Gilson, and Harter (2004) asserted that individuals have an essential thought process for looking for MIW. They described MIW as the assessment of work-related outcomes that individuals perceive as per their level of understanding, belief, and measurement. The authors also added to the possibilities of disengagement due to the absence of MIW in employees' daily working routines. The arrangement of work experienced as meaningful by employees should encourage their self-awareness and work inspiration. They integrated job enrichment, work role fit, and co-worker relations as antecedents to investigate MIW to contribute to the hypotheses with a more detailed look into MIW conception. In an attempt to explain the relationship between TL and MIW, Nielsen et al. (2008) found that TL differentiates various bits of work conduct that might be linked with devotees' view of the MIW. TL is depicted as giving personal meaning, which is a meaningful interrelationship between the vision and their work. Rosso, Dekas, and Wrzesniewski (2010) pointed out that a majority of studies have centered on how an individual's self (values, motivations, and beliefs), which is the totality of a human's thoughts and feelings, influences their impression of MIW. Therefore, our integration of MIW in the model has clarified the conceptualization of the construct under the shadow of SET between TL and followers' responses. It has also been confirmed that the outcome of the motivational mechanism studied to help the sales force of the service sector is innovative/creative. This study argues that MIW perceptions are primarily based on subjective interpretations and interactions with the work that employees experience. Furthermore, we undertake that when the work has a purpose, goal, and value, employees perceive MIW more.

2.3. Emotional Engagement

It is noteworthy that engagement is sovereign of identical concepts and has measures and characteristics of its own (Tursi et al., 2022). Though several researchers have reasoned that engagement is a specific motivational construct that has unique characteristics as compared to other concepts such as organizational commitment, job satisfaction, or job involvement (Brown et al., 2022; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), contrary study findings from the majority of researchers do not compel that engagement is different and is merely a repackaging of other constructs Albrecht (2010) and Schöbel et al. (2022). Debatably, studies have contended the concept of engagement recently through sufficient and explicit theories like the self-determination theory (Meyer & Gagne, 2008), job-demand resource model (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), and conservation of resources theory (Halbesleben, 2011). A comprehensive analysis of the contrast between engagement and organizational commitment, job satisfaction, job involvement, and the notion of flow can be observed in studies by Albrecht (2010) and Bakker, Albrecht, and Leiter (2011).

Engagement is a contemporary construct (Kundi et al., 2022), and several researchers have conceptualized it in different ways. Previously, Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, and Bakker (2002) defined work engagement as a pervasive and persistent affective cognitive condition of being characterized by dedication, vigor, and absorption. Dedication is to involve and experience a sense of challenge and pride. Vigor stands for mental resilience states and high levels of energy while working. Absorption is being highly focused and happily absorbed in work. It has a close relationship with the notion of flow, due to which researchers consider that attention is needed to observe whether absorption is the primary dimension of work engagement's outcome (Bakker et al., 2011). Engagement's definition proposed by Schaufeli has strong validity and seems to encompass the missing components of other definitions.

Most of the researchers generally refer to Schaufeli's perspective of work engagement as heart to further research as it has the affective-cognitive nature of employees' work perception. This perspective aligns with the idea that engagement has energy and involvement as two core dimensions. Previous research has connected engagement with positive business and individual outcomes, including enhanced personal productivity, decreased turnover, increased managerial effectiveness, increased employee creativity, and customer satisfaction (Vaitkevičius & Vidrevičienė, 2022). Followers and leaders both feel and experience emotions in the workplace. Emotions are both positive, such as joy and hope, to negative, such as obstruction and annoyance. During their numerous exchanges with leaders, workers are exposed to different situations that generate emotions that influence their attitudes, feelings, and behaviors. Generally, emotions are vital during the job to remain enthusiastic.

Kahn (1992) reported three further dimensions of engagement: physical, cognitive, and emotional. The author noted that engagement could be seen through the behavioral speculation of an individual's physical, intellectual, and emotional vitality in work parts. It is also reported that the workers who put their whole hearts into the

occupation-related undertaking will probably be emotionally engaged. This study has focused on the EE, which is the cognitive aspect or part of the overall employee's engagement. EE has been discussed in the literature primarily along with other physical and mental dimensions. Babcock-Roberson and Strickland (2010) reported that the emotional component is about cosseting the whole heart into job-related tasks. Workers who put emotional vitality into their job improve performance (Oliveira et al., 2023) by expanding association among colleagues and keeping the goal to accomplish.

2.4. Creative Performance

Creativity is comprehended as the generation of valuable and novel ideas (Amabile, 1997; Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, & Herron, 1996; Hon, Bloom, & Crant, 2014) and regarded as how imaginatively and flexibly one considers the problem. Employee creativity increases organizational survival chances and effectiveness and is vital in acquiring a competitive advantage. Salespersons must have creative skills to handle and develop effective plans and strategies. Thus, in today's highly competitive and rapidly changing environment, knowing what causes creativity in their work is desirable. From the organizational point of view, leadership, creativity studies, and behaviors of leaders are required to show their effect on subordinates' creativity. For instance, some researchers have stressed that leadership affects the organization's environment and influences employee creativity. The role of leaders in nurturing creativity is essential (Mainemelis et al., 2015; Shalley & Gilson, 2004; Tierney, 2008; Siddiqi, 2008).

Creativity is known as a multifaceted and complicated construct. Researchers and specialists have struggled to unravel its nature by utilizing a wide range of approaches (Liu et al., 2022). The vast majority of these investigations have been established in more extensive written works, for example, sociology and psychology (Wong et al., 2021). Anyhow, creativity's contemporary meaning fundamentally incorporates uniqueness and effectiveness. According to the organizational creativity literature, individual creativity can be stated as people's creation of novel and valuable thoughts regarding the product, services, techniques, and processes by people (Wang & Lau, 2022). Extensive confirmations recommend that the CP of employees significantly impacts organizational advancement and competence (Stollberger & Debus, 2020). The term creativity differentiates in concept from innovation as creativity includes the creation of unique and worthy ideas; however, innovation involves idea generation and its execution throughout the organization as well (Damadzic et al., 2022; Khan & Minbashian, 2021). For creativity occurrence, individuals need to have a divergent approach, observe and perceive things in distinct ways, come up with new solutions for old problems & pool the earlier unrelated procedures.

Leaders must boost individuals to be creative and ensure them with a supportive social setting that fosters creative performance (Anderson, Potočnik, & Zhou, 2014; Liu et al., 2022; Mainemelis et al., 2015). We defined creative performance as a consequence of the work of the employee, which is considered both valid and novel by their manager, as operationalized in the literature previously by researchers like (Amabile et al., 1996; Lin, Kark, & Mainemelis, 2013; Liu, Liao, & Loi, 2012). The creation of novel and creative ideas is considered the resourcefulness of an individual. These ideas must be in line with the organizational benefits. Although the reaction must be new, it can't be simply extraordinary. The picture can be an intuition that is not as per the organizational demand or may vary for a specific situation. Wong et al. (2021) divided the idea of creativity into two primary classes. The first class includes cognitive and thinking parts, which incorporate having dense information and abilities of a particular working area, having the capability to consider the subject, and having a well-established general ideation and intuition base. Secondly, personality or motivational segments induce a highly esteemed mental state, task commitment, and high intrinsic motivation and thought processes. Further, it was also asserted that the individual should have knowledge of the point and be set to remove the ambiguities in the task anticipated to be resolved.

Further to the previous conception of CP, Amabile (2012) included three within-individual components. These components include expertise which is required for a specific area/s of work, referred to as 'domain-relevant skills', psychological and self-related steps to produce innovative ideas, referred to as 'creativity-relevant processes', and more importantly, motivation which helps the individual to engage in the creative course of action referred to as, 'task motivation. However, the outer component of the individual that can be positive or negative in supporting the idea of creativity is the environment of the individual, specifically close surroundings, particularly the social environment.

Agnihotri et al. (2014) studied creativity as the key and most anticipated ability of a salesperson and also revealed a positive impact of CP on the overall performance of the individual (salesperson). As selling jobs are characterized as one of the most competitive job roles, it is up to the sales managers to provide an environment that not only fuels the CP as well as enables the salesperson to manage their other job-related obligations. Considering the scope of our study, CP is the extent of the motivational model studied for sales teams in the services sector. With regards to SET, CP is the return of a salesperson after receiving positive cognitive feeding from their sales managers.

2.5. Integration of Study Variables and Hypotheses Development

This research attempts to further understand SET in leadership by focusing on the motivational mechanism. Homans (1958) gave the concept of SET from the old conception of social behavior. Homans (1958) defined SET as the 'exchange of goods, material goods but also non-material ones, such as the symbols of approval or prestige'.

This explains that the theoretical model developed in this study follows the theoretical underpinning of SET by considering TL as an influencer to salespersons' related outcomes like EE and CP. This exchange process works when the exchange is done in equilibrium. The individuals participating in this exchange give an equal expected return. The term 'give' refers to all kinds of social exchanges. However, giving and recovery can be both social and monetary. The individual that offers has to bear a cost, and the individual who returns also has to bear some cost against this exchange. Though it is found that this exchange can be out of equilibrium condition, the ideal condition is when both possibilities of exchange are balanced.

As detailed earlier, the main focus of this research is on the SET in combination with TL and followers' perceptions to determine how and to what extent the SET impacts the dyadic relationship between TL and followers' perceptions. Thus it is pertinent to mention that the individualized consideration of TL ultimately engages employees to perform well CP. The primary behavior in the TL style includes behaving as a role model supervisor exhibiting idealized influence behavior. Leaders who are role models build devotion and loyalty while paying little attention to their own self-interest. Followers endeavor to match their transformational managers because they behave in a manner that lets them serve as their subordinate's role models.

Individualized consideration is another TL behavior that could be related to employee engagement. This behavior illustrates individualized attention towards their subordinates by detecting and responding to the demands of followers, exhibiting care for specific differences, and paying individualized attention to the needs of the followers for growth and achievement. SET is one of the most influential theories in organizational behavior, which could imply this relationship. This theory is built based on subjective cost-benefit analyses and the evaluation of substitutes. It refers that the interactional series that can take place between two parties, like the manager and followers, which will generally set obligations from one party to another. Thus a party is probably reciprocated under SET.

A study by Deichmann and Stam (2015) on TL style revealed that it increases organizational commitment among employees and bears a similar positive relationship with engagement and intrinsic motivation, i.e., intrinsic. It is also evident that TL enhances people's responsibility to change for the well-being of an organization. It is also expected that TL is a style that engages (e.g., EE) the followers in the creative idea generation, i.e., CP. Dynamic TL distinguishes the job-related needs and puts endeavors one on one to energize and rouse the employees to create aptitudes to satisfy their needs and skills. Increasing the authority of subordinates TL set up the devotee to perform adequately in testing and troublesome circumstances, enabling the subordinates to execute arrangements and make choices for which they have been presently transformed.

The capacity for creative ideation needs higher motivation to engage the employees and hence generate novel ideas (CP). Therefore Qu et al. (2015) argued that although few pieces of research have shown a negative relationship between TL and CP, it is also evident that TL helps the followers by motivating them to become engaged in CP. It has also been found that employee feelings of EE influence performance (e.g., creativity), enhanced by the TL style. A subordinate who gets support, motivation, and quality guidance from the supervisor may experience filling in as additionally challenging and fulfilling and end up exceedingly engaged with the occupational responsibilities.

The theoretical model studied in this research shows a downstream effect on the CP of employees. TL has been highlighted as a critical factor in the work context that can facilitate and motivate followers to engage in creative courses of action. Research has, in particular, been focused on connecting TL with the emergence of follower CP. Therefore our model integrates that the nature of the relationship between leader and followers has a compatibility with the CP. Hence the evidence of the relationship between TL and CP enabled us to integrate this relationship into the theoretical model. Employees with higher leader-follower relationships are more likely to be engaged in job-related tasks that involve risk-taking and induction of personal efforts, provided with higher resources, and receive recognition from their supervisors. A conglomerate of these influencing factors sets the stage for the subordinates' innovative outcomes (CP).

Former researchers indicated that there is an ample requirement for intrinsic drivers for the output of CP. EE is one of the inherent drivers that impact the CP of the followers. Therefore our model integrates the mediating role of EE between the TL and CP of the followers. On the other hand, TL also provides feedback (positive) on the outcomes of the work and acknowledges the achievements of the subordinates. This practice increases the confidence in the leaders and hence creates an instinct to achieve the vision that the TL has injected. Besides, it is also argued that employees who perceive their work as meaningful consider the reward or benefit of the job and connect the job functions and their values. Managers who create particular missions, objectives, and traits for associations can impact subordinates' judgments of MIW. With the help of inspirational motivation, TL convinces the followers of a specific vision and gives them a clear direction for the future. This gesture helps the followers to create self-beliefs regarding the work. The followers bearing MIW coincides with the perception of organizational objectives and values in the presence of TL. Along these lines, subordinates will likely see the work as motivational, bearing purpose, and very important. These perceptions of the work environment are essential for followers to perceive MIW. In this manner, with more significant superiors show of transformational leadership practices, believers' impression of meaning in work is likely to increase.

The researcher who studied MIW and works engagement directs a positive relationship between both variables. Be that as it may, philosophers have examined work engagement in both dimensions as a predictor of MIW and antecedent as well. It has also been argued that the perception of MIW is related to intrinsic motivation, which has a definite relationship with engagement at work. However, our study has examined MIW as a predictor of EE. MIW can act as a conceivable mediator within the TL-EE relationship. Therefore based on the above discussions, we have developed hypotheses for the possible deduction of SET. The model consists of the TL and cognitive outcomes integrated with a complex model, which will add knowledge to the literature on SET by empirically testing the hypothesized relationships. The following are hypotheses developed based on the above:

H_1 The transformational leadership style of managers positively impacts the emotional engagement of salespersons.

H_{2a} The transformational leadership style of managers positively impacts meaningfulness in the work of salespersons.

H_{2b} Meaningfulness in work has a positive impact on emotional engagement.

H_3 Meaningfulness in work mediates the relationship between the transformational leadership style of managers and the emotional engagement of salespersons.

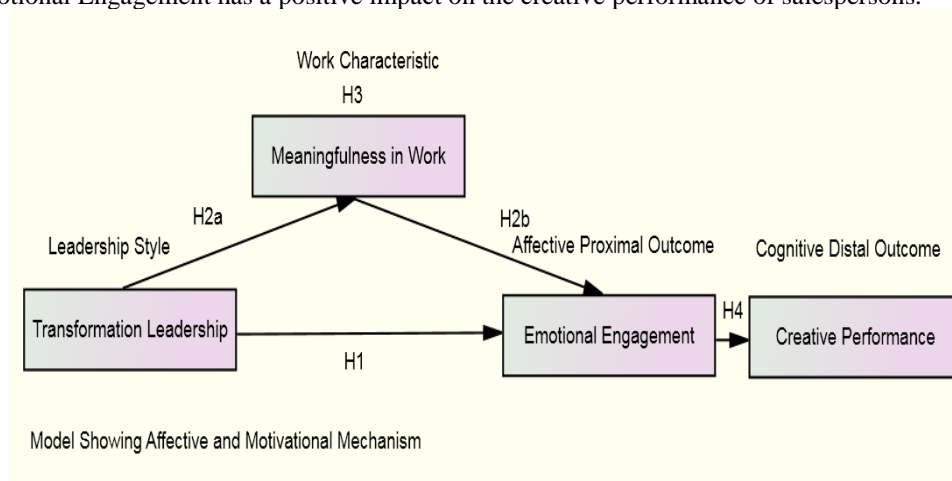H_4 Emotional Engagement has a positive impact on the creative performance of salespersons.

Figure 1 Conceptual Model

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Sample and Data Collection

The unit of analysis in this study is salespersons of the telecom sector working in different areas. The salespersons' perceptions have helped to conclude the leadership style of sales managers in the telecom sector and perceptions of salespersons regarding MIW, EE, and CP. The sample size of three hundred and fifty was considered appropriate in this research. The exact population of salespersons within the region was unknown; therefore, the most suitable form of sampling was convenience sampling, as suggested by Sekaran (2003). Telecom operators' salespersons were approached by their line supervisors for survey distribution. Respondents were asked to record their responses on a 5-point Likert scale. The salespersons were also requested to respond after carefully reading each item's statement.

3.2. Operationalization of Study Variables

Well-established and already-tested measures were used in this study to measure the model. A five-point Likert scale with polar ends of 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree was used for all measures. To measure TL, we used a scale developed by Carless, Wearing, and Mann (2000). Respondents were requested to rate their field supervisors by mentioning the degree to which their supervisors are engaged in TL behaviors. To measure EE, we have adopted the scale developed by Russell and Barrett (1999). The items were used keeping in line with the explanation of EE given by Kahn (1990). The scales include questions related to interest, excitement, enthusiasm, and energy display. We employed May, Gilson, and Harter's (2004) scale to measure MIW. We observed MIW participants' perception by requesting salespersons to mark six items on a Likert scale of five points from 1, i.e., strongly disagree, to 5, i.e., strongly agree. Creative performance was assessed using seven things developed by Carmeli and Schaubroeck (2007). Items were rated on a five-point scale.

4. Data Analysis Techniques

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to analyze the relationships in the proposed model. SEM is a multivariate data analysis technique that is more effective for analyzing directly and indirectly. Data diagnostics like descriptive statistics and correlation were found with SPSS-22.0. Whereas Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) of individual latent variables and nested model, direct effects model, and indirect effects models were calculated using AMOS-22.

4.1 Assumptions of Multivariate Analysis

Before performing SEM, the assumptions of multivariate analysis were checked. The normality of data is the first assumption which was reviewed by analyzing QQ plots. The appearance of data based on visual inspection shows that the information is distributed within the normal range. The Skewness and Kurtosis were also lying within the range of -1 to +1 for Skewness and -3 to +3 for Kurtosis. To find out the possibility of outliers in the data, frequencies, and box plots were cautiously checked, and cases that were found far away from the box were deleted. The cases after deletion of all possible outliers remained with 315 valid cases. Correlation was used to check the multicollinearity among the constructs. The values of correlation determine the level of relationship among constructs.

Table 1: Descriptive of Study Variables (N=315)

Constructs	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
TL	7.00	35.00	19.10	4.68	0.07	0.14
MIW	7.00	30.00	23.20	3.57	-0.66	1.38
EE	6.00	30.00	21.25	4.6	-0.38	0.28
CP	11.00	35.00	28.30	4.25	-0.57	0.97

Notes: TL= Transformational Leadership; MIW= Meaningfulness in Work; EE= Emotional Engagement; CP= Creative Performance

4.2. Measurement Model (Measure Validation)
4.2.1 Reliability and Uni-dimensionality

The validation of the items of each latent variable is a mandatory step before analyzing the path model of the study. In 2004, Ping stated that the items should always be unidimensional. They should have only one principal construct. After confirming the uni-dimensionality, the CFA of the items was tested using AMOS 22.0. The sample covariance matrix was used to employ CFA. CFA confirmed significant loading of items into their latent variable. Cronbach's Alfa and Composite Reliability (CR) scores in Table 2 show that values of Cronbach's Alfa and CR are $\geq$ 0.7, which confirms that the items are error-free (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The Normal Fit Index (NFI) also showed an acceptable value of $\geq$ 0.90. The results of this process indicated that the data is an overall fit to move further for a CFA, which led additionally towards the possibility of overall model fit.

Table 2: First Run Results of Individual CFA's (N=315)

Constructs	Items	Uni-dimensionality				Convergent Validity			Reliability
		χ^2/df	GFI	CFI	RMSEA	NFI	FL [min-max]	CR	α
TL	7	15.64	0.86	0.81	0.21	0.80	[0.72-0.88]	0.82	0.89
EE	6	4.26	0.96	0.97	0.10	0.97	[0.75-0.88]	0.70	0.89
MIW	6	19.66	0.85	0.84	0.24	0.83	[0.50-0.88]	0.71	0.86
CP	7	10.74	0.87	0.93	0.17	0.92	[0.74-0.90]	0.72	0.80

Notes: χ^2= Chi Square; Df= Degree of freedom; NFI= Normal Fit Index; CFI= Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA= Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; FL = Factor Loadings; CR= Composite Reliability

We deleted a few items and correlated error terms for achieving a perfect fit of indices as TL6 and TL7 were deleted and $e_3 \leftrightarrow e_7$ correlated were correlated; in the case of EE, $e_3 \leftrightarrow e_8$ Correlated were connected, and MIW6 was deleted, and $e_4 \leftrightarrow e_5$ correlated were correlated, and in CP case $e_4 \leftrightarrow e_5$ $e_6 \leftrightarrow e_7$ $e_4 \leftrightarrow e_7$ were correlated.

Table 3: Second Run Results of Individual CFA's (N=315)

Constructs	Items	Uni-dimensionality				Convergent Validity			Reliability
		χ^2/df	GFI	CFI	RMSEA	NFI	FL [min-max]	CR	α
TL	5	1.79	0.99	0.99	0.05	0.99	[0.72-0.88]	0.88	0.84
EE	6	1.07	0.99	1.00	0.01	0.99	[0.75-0.88]	0.70	0.86
MIW	5	1.77	0.99	0.99	0.05	0.99	[0.50-0.88]	0.71	0.92
CP	7	2.50	0.94	0.97	0.05	0.97	[0.74-0.90]	0.73	0.94

Notes: χ^2= Chi Square; Df= Degree of freedom; NFI= Normal Fit Index; CFI= Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA= Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; FL = Factor Loadings; CR= Composite Reliability

The second run of CFA showed a perfect fit, as shown in Table 3. We also ran a nested four-factor model, and the results can be seen in following Table 4:

Table 4: Four Factors Nested CFA

	Uni-dimensionality						Convergent Validity	Reliability
Indicators	χ^2/df	GFI	CFI	RMR	RMSEA	NFI	FL [min-max]	α
23	1.85	0.90	096		0.05	0.92	[0.50-0.92]	0.83

Notes: χ^2/df = Chi Square ratio; NFI= Normal Fit Index; CFI= Comparative Fit Index; RMR= Root mean square residual; RMSEA= Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; FL= Factor Loadings; α = Cronbach's alpha.

The significant estimates of factor loadings of each construct justified the convergent reliability. CR values in Table 3 are the values required to analyze the third and last method, which requires checking the value of Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The values of > 0.5 proved acceptable. The values extracted in Table 3 are > 0.70, meaning the results are highly reliable and error-free. All the latent variables have passed the possible reliability and validity tests. Fornell and Larker (1981) recommended analyzing the discriminant validity, which is the square root of AVE. Table 5 shows the reliability of the results as the correlation values are lesser than the square roots of AVEs in the diagonal of Table 5.

Table 5: Discriminant Validity (Covariance among Latent Variables) (N=315)

Constructs	TL	MIW	EE	CP
TL	0.74†	0.20**	0.47**	0.34**
MIW		0.77†	0.09	0.16**
EE			0.81†	0.50**
CP				0.83†

Notes: TL= Transformational Leadership; MIW= Meaningfulness In Work; EE= Emotional Engagement; CP= Creative Performance; ** Correlation significant at 0.01 levels (2-tailed); †√ (AVE) Values in the Diagonal

5. Descriptive Demographics

Table 6: Age Statistics

	Gender				
		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	Male	301	95.6	95.6	95.6
	Female	14	4.4	4.4	100.0
	Total	315	100.0	100.0	

Table 7: Education Frequencies

	Gender				
		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	Intermediate	63	20.0	20.0	20.0
	Bachelors	226	71.7	71.7	91.7
	Masters	26	8.3	8.3	100.0
	Total	315	100.0	100.0	

6. Hypotheses Testing
6.1 Direct Effects
The direct impact model estimated TL to EE, MIW to EE, and EE to CP path, whose values calculated by AMOS 22.0 are appended in Table 6. The path from TL to MIW was left to be tested in the indirect impact model. The β value of TL to EE and EE to CP showed significant values of > 0.53. However, the path estimates of MIW to EE showed insignificant results, i.e., χ^2= 428.49, df= 224, and χ^2/ df= 1.91 ratios is within the acceptable limit. GFI= 0.89, NFI= 0.92, and CFI= 0.96 values were also satisfactory. Therefore the overall results are reliable. The RMSEA value of 0.05 is also reliable. However, the results also direct towards improvement in the indirect effect model.

6.2 Indirect Effect
In the direct effect model, we tested the path of TL to MIW, MIW to EE, TL to EE, and EE to CP. The β value of TL to MIW, TL to EE, and EE to CP were found to be significant. The value of path analysis of MIW to CP was found to be negative, similar to the direct effect model results, which confirmed the rejection of hypotheses; H_{2b} and H_3, χ^2= 421.43, df= 223, and χ^2/ df= 1.89 ratios are acceptable and better than the direct effect results. The values, i.e., GFI= 0.90, NFI= 0.93, and CFI= 0.97, also show values better than those of the immediate effect.

RMSEA value of 0.05 is also reliable in that the presence of a mediator in the model enhanced the results of the indirect effect model. Although the mediation results rejected the hypothesis formulated, it is also evident that the indirect model was mediated partially.

Table 6: Results of Structural Equation Analysis for Two Competing Models

The relationships between variables	Direct effect model			Indirect effect model		
	β	S.E		β	S.E	
TL→ MIW	Not applicable			0.16*	0.04	Significant
TL→ EE	0.53***	0.06	Significant	0.53***	0.06	Significant
MIW→EE	-.002	0.09	Insignificant	-.01	0.09	Insignificant
EE→ CP	0.54***	0.04	Significant	0.54***	0.04	Significant
χ^2	428.49			421.43		
Df	224			223		
χ^2 / df ratio	1.91			1.89		
GFI	0.89			0.90		
NFI	0.92			0.93		
CFI	0.96			0.97		
RSMEA	0.05			0.05		
R^2 MIW	Not applicable			0.02		
R^2 EE	0.28			0.28		
R^2 CP	0.29			0.30		

Notes: TL= Transformational Leadership; MIW= Meaningfulness in Work; EE= Emotional Engagement; CP= Creative Performance; SE= Standard Error; χ^2 / pdf = Chi-square ratio; NFI= Normal Fit Index; CFI= Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA= Root Mean Square Error of Approximation ***$p < 0.001$; * *$p < 0.05$
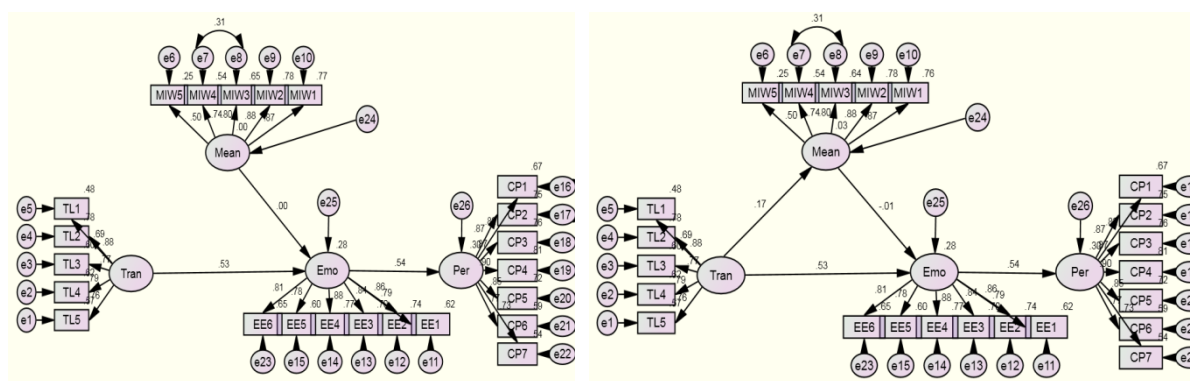

Figure 2: Direct and Indirect Effect Model

7. Discussion and Conclusion

This study explores the impact of TL style on CP along with the mediating role of MIW in the presence of EE. The hypotheses were developed based on SET. The path model was run in two ways to test the hypothesis-acceptance or rejection. Firstly, the direct effect model was run in which the mediation path was not included. Table 6 shows that in the immediate effect model, the value of β= -.002 indicates the insignificant relationship between MIW and EE. However, β values of all other latent constructs show significant results. The mediating effect of MIW was tested in the indirect effect model. The value of β is -0.01 between MIW and EE. Therefore the direct and indirect effects are considered as not significant. Hypotheses H_{2b} and H_3 are rejected based on the calculated nominal values of β. However, the results also show that the model estimates show better results after taking into effect the role of mediator.

7.1. Managerial Implications

As we know, the TL style is eminent in developing the subordinates' skills. This research has found essential implications for sales managers in the telecom sector in Pakistan. The salespersons of the telecom sector should be emotionally engaged if their managers induce the importance of their work role. The sales managers first needed to adopt the TL style to generate the vision and objective of the organization by setting an example and by giving importance to each individual's work to let them emotionally engage. The implementation of such social exchange in the salespersons will increase the possibilities for salespersons to perform creatively with their entire internal self -involved. This study offers findings that make some significant contributions towards the growing body of literature on TL and its consequences. Firstly, this research delivers empirical evidence for the positive

relationship between TL and EE. Secondly, the mediation mechanism between TL and EE is identified. Through its mediating mechanism, this research helps bridge the literature gap for the relationship between TL and EE. It was stated by Delima and Sellar (2022) that employees are influenced and affected by actions performed by their organizational leader. That's why we recommend that TL will enhance employee's ENG level in followers. Hence, we need to flourish the EL at the organizational level to improve employee ENG and ultimately progress in CP. In today's dynamic working environment, creativity is known as the only way to survive. Leadership style helps enhance EE and, ultimately, CP among employees by giving the right context, encouragement, and support. Our research, as well as previously held analyses, suggest that TL is considered valuable to foster EE and CP among employees with various leadership styles. Organizations should introduce different development programs and plans for leadership and make them understand their significance. That's how leadership can build high-quality relationships with employees and help in developing CP among them. A manager needs to maintain TL style by guarding the rights of employees, respecting them, and creating an environment and practices that would inspire employees to come up with creative output to be put to work.

7.2. Conclusion

The present study suggests that the TL style plays an efficient, practical, and crucial role in establishing CP in the salespersons in the telecom sector of Pakistan. TL, which is IV, affects the CP (DV) in the desired direction with their significant role. In addition, the mediating mechanism studied in this research, where MIW was mediating between TL and EE, confirmed that the telecom sector's salespersons still need MIW. It can be posited that in the absence of MIW, the sales managers have to work hard on the motivation of the salespersons. TL is found to have a direct and positive relationship with EE. Therefore, this situation is confirmed from the literature that TL motivates the telecom sector's salespersons to experience EE in work for and ultimate CP.

The study's results partially explain the mediation effect of MIW between TL and EE, i.e., few of the salespersons were experiencing MIW. This number can increase, but the organization should focus on the commitment to salespersons' families and the positive effect of the job part on the organizational objectives and desire for creativity. Thus it can be concluded that telecom operators' top hierarchy and sales managers should seek a solution to bring meaning to the salespersons' jobs. The study has also added value to the TL style. The sales managers endure the qualities of the TL style. The whole motivational mechanism studied in this research was only responding due to the TL style of sales managers. The context of Pakistan has provided ample explanation of the TL style. This can help resolve the search for a more generalizable definition of TL style.

7.3. Future Recommendations

This study attempts to explain the context of Pakistani salespersons and sales managers' leadership styles. It is further suggested that future research can explore other cognitive variables for a better explanation of the relationship between TL and CP. In addition, MIW can be studied to examine different Pakistan workforces' perspectives regarding MIW. The antecedents of MIW can also explain how employees in the Pakistani context can experience the phenomenon of MIW. Finally, the literature on sales in Pakistan is not found enough in any mainstream research. Therefore, it is also suggested that studies on leadership styles should better incorporate the important side of the sales volume in the context of the Pak economy.

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