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The moderating effect of transformational leadership on employees' job stress and job satisfaction: Perceptions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

By

Mariam Homayed

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Adnan Kassar School of Business

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THESIS APPROVAL FORM

Student Name: Mariam Homayed I.D. #: 201906240

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School: Business

The undersigned certify that they have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis and approved it in Partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of:

Masters of science in the major of Human Resource Management

Thesis Advisor's Name: Dr. Silva Karkoulia

Signature:  Date: 31 / 5 / 2021
Day Month Year

Committee Member's Name: • Dr. Manal Younis

Signature:  Date: 31 / 5 / 2021
Day Month Year

Committee Member's Name: Dr. Hussein Ismail


Signature:  Date: 31 / 5 / 2021 31 1

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis project to the two people closest to my heart, my mother and sister.

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The moderating effect of transformational leadership on employees' job stress and job satisfaction: Perceptions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mariam Homayed

ABSTRACT

Purpose: The main purpose of this study was to investigate the moderating effect of transformational leadership on job stress and job satisfaction during the COVID-19 pandemic, on employees working in the middle east region since very few research has been developed under these circumstances. The study included findings on the relationship between job stress and job satisfaction as well before transformational leadership was introduced as a mediator. Employees working in different sectors around the middle east were chosen as a sample of the study.

Design/methodology/approach: Quantitative analysis was developed in this study where surveys were distributed and collected. The sample of this study included employees from managerial and non-managerial positions working in different sectors in the middle east. The data obtained from 336 participants were analyzed using SPSS program and the hypothetical model was tested using structural equation modeling through Onyx.

Findings: The findings of the study developed by the researcher supported the hypotheses where there was a negative relationship between job stress and job satisfaction (**H1**). The researcher found a positive relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction. In addition, there was a negative correlation between transformational leadership and job stress. The results show that **H2** was also supported where transformational leadership partially moderates the relationship between job stress and job satisfaction.

Originality/value: This research highlights the significant role that transformational leadership has on the occupational stress and the level of job satisfaction among employees. It provides the readers with insight on the relationships between the three variables as well as the impact that transformational leadership has on job stress and job satisfaction. This paper was developed during the COVID-19 crisis and the data was collected during the outbreak, which provides the study with new and valuable perception on the conditions of employees. Limited research has been conducted covering employees working in the middle east region and using those three variables during the pandemic, which also gives this paper an added value to literature.

Key words: Transformational leadership, job stress, job satisfaction, COVID-19, pandemic.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1- JS	Job Satisfaction
2- SS	Subjective stress
3- TL	Transformational leadership
4- TLA	Transformational leadership attributes
5- TLB	Transformational leadership behaviors
6- TLM	Transformational leadership motivation
7- TLS	Transformational leadership stimulation
8- TLC	Transformational leadership consideration

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Background

Job satisfaction and the level of occupational stress are two significant factors that affect the performance of employees, their intention to stay and the overall productivity of the organization. Over the years, there have been many definitions for both terms. However, it is commonly accepted in literature that employees who are trying to fulfill requirements over their capacities are usually under stress. The concept of employee satisfaction among researchers is generally mainstream and it mainly includes the feelings that employees develop towards their jobs.

Employees' job stress and job satisfaction could be guided by proper leadership. In fact, there has been an expansion in literature on the determinants of employee job satisfaction and various academicians suggested that leadership is considered as one of the determinants. Several research works also support the positive relationship between job satisfaction and leadership (Seo et al., 2004; Stordeur et al., 2000; Berson & Linton, 2005).

There is a common saying that implies employees tend to leave their jobs due to bad leadership and this in itself imposes significance on leadership in organizations. Now more than ever, leadership is considered to be extremely important for organizations to

cope during the COVID-19 pandemic. The drastic change in the daily operations of businesses calls for an urgent need of leadership in order to guide the employees and reduce the level of stress they are most likely enduring.

Human resource management practices play a very important role in enhancing the level of employee job satisfaction, reducing the level of employee stress and providing the employees with the proper leader. This paper discusses the moderating effect that leadership has on employee job satisfaction and job stress during the covid-19 pandemic.

1.2 Need for the study

The need for this study is based on the freshness of the topic. All businesses are currently adjusting into very different conditions and circumstances due to the pandemic and employees are living under ambiguous situations. Thus, this study is essential to have a better insight on transformational leadership and the moderating effect it has on employees' job stress and job satisfaction during this pandemic.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to provide awareness and guidance to employees in the Middle East on the significance of transformational leadership, occupational stress and job satisfaction, especially during these days where most businesses have shifted their processes and employees are adjusting on new terms. Furthermore, the study explores the moderating effect of leadership on employee's stress and satisfaction with their jobs.

1.4 Statement of the research problem

This research aims to study the moderating effect of transformational leadership on employee's job stress and job satisfaction during the covid-19 pandemic. It attempts to answer this question: Does transformational leadership moderate the relationship between employee's job stress and job satisfaction during the covid-19 pandemic?

1.5 Operational definition of terms.

Transformational Leadership: can be defined as “an ongoing process where leaders and followers increase each other's level of motivation and morality.” (Burns, 1978).

Job stress: can be referred to as “the individuals who are trying to fulfill the requirements over their capacities.” (Carver, 1995; Vermunt & Steensma, 2003: 137).

Job satisfaction: Job satisfaction is defined as “the feelings a person has about her or his job”. (Spector, 1997).

Followed by the introduction is the second chapter of this thesis that includes thorough definitions, explanations and relationships of the three main variables: job satisfaction, job stress, and transformational leadership along with the hypotheses that were developed by the researcher. The third chapter involves the procedures and methods that were used to collect the required data. The results of the data analysis are demonstrated and explained in the fourth chapter. The chapter that follows includes the hypotheses testing results and the final chapter discusses the managerial implications, limitations of the study, the outcomes, future research and is summed up with a conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Job Satisfaction

2.1.1 Definition of Job Satisfaction

Human resources are the most important asset of any organization. Job satisfaction is a factor of employee's outcome that many researchers found interest in studying. In fact, a report by Spector (1997) states that there are literally thousands of studies on job satisfaction.

As stated by Spector (1997), job satisfaction refers to the feelings that people hold towards their jobs (like or dislike). Liking the job reveals satisfaction and disliking the job reveals the dissatisfaction of employees. Spector (1997) developed a "job satisfaction measuring scale" that evaluates the level of employee satisfaction towards their jobs using factors like promotion, benefits, pay, supervision, and coworkers. If the employees get the factors that they want, they are more likely to be satisfied and would like to stay in the organization.

Locke (1976) defines job satisfaction as an emotional state that is typically positive or pleasurable and is resulted from the person's job experiences or the job itself.

According to Robbins (2005), job satisfaction is a collection of feelings that employees hold towards their jobs. In addition, job satisfaction plays a role in the levels of high turnover, job dissatisfaction, low morale, absenteeism and so on. Wicker (2011) describes job satisfaction as a feeling of pride and inner fulfillment developed while doing a particular job.

Poon J. M (2003) explains that job satisfaction is a positive psychological state that an individual develops while evaluating his/her job and job experience. From an executive's perspective, job satisfaction is most likely to be achieved when the working conditions are good and favorable (Montgomery, 2012).

2.1.2 Factors of Job Satisfaction

An in-depth review in literature shows that many studies pay attention primarily on a single construct of job satisfaction. Very few have taken into consideration the different facets to job satisfaction (Boles et al., 2003).

According to Ahmad et al. (2012) and Valaei and Rezaei (2016), most researchers generally focus on the two most used indicators of job satisfaction that are the demographic variables and work environment variables. However, job satisfaction can be accurately measured by evaluating different characteristics of the job that develop the employees' beliefs and attitudes towards their jobs (Churchill et al., 1974).

A survey conducted by Spector (1994) covers nine dimensions of job satisfaction including the nature of work, pay, contingent rewards, supervision, promotion, operating conditions, fringe benefits and communication.

These nine factors are important in order to determine job satisfaction (Greer & Singh, 2002; Hansen and Gwozdz, 2013). Other organizational research suggests that employees develop attitudes towards several factors of the job including pay, company policies, promotion, customers and supervisors (Johnson & Johnson, 2000; Taber & Alliger, 1995).

These characteristics or dimensions of job satisfaction may not be of equal importance to every individual. Hence, the facets of job satisfaction are not equally related to other constructs.

A theory on the facets of job satisfaction developed by Herzberg suggests that there are two factors that influence employee's satisfaction (Alam & Shahi, 2015) which are known as motivation factors and hygiene factors (Herzberg et al., 1959).

The motivation factors which are intrinsic in nature include prospects of career growth, interest in the vocation and acknowledgement of individual achievement while on the other hand, hygiene factors that are extrinsic in nature include job security, salaries and the quality of supervision.

Moreover, Weiss et al. (1967), classified job satisfaction into three components: intrinsic, extrinsic and general satisfaction. According to Rose (2001), intrinsic satisfaction is the reward derived from the job itself while extrinsic satisfaction is defined as the reward that is demonstrated in the form of monetary compensation. A general job satisfaction is formed by both intrinsic satisfaction and extrinsic satisfaction (Weiss et al., 1967).

2.1.3 Consequences of Job Satisfaction

Two major consequences of job satisfaction were proposed by Baker (2004), namely turnover and absenteeism. Many other studies have also put focus on the effects that job satisfaction has on turnover intention and organizational commitment (Aydogdu & Asikgil, 2011; Igbaria & Guimaraes, 1993).

Furthermore, managers, experts and researchers believe that increasing job satisfaction leads to an improvement in productivity and performance (Eslami & Gharakhani, 2012). According to Yang (2010), job satisfaction greatly contributed to psychological outcomes in relation to organizational effectiveness.

2.1.4 Benefits of Job Satisfaction

Research indicates that employees who are satisfied with their jobs tend to perform better than employees who are dissatisfied with their jobs. (Chambers, 1999; Babin & Boles, 1996; Meyer et al., 1989; Birnbaum & Somers, 1993; Igbaria, 1991).

In addition, a study conducted by Lincoln and Kalleberg (1990) showed that satisfied employees tend to be loyal to the organization and benefits the organization by giving it a higher identification rate.

Acknowledging and increasing the level of satisfaction of employees has a positive influence on their level of productivity, organizational commitment (Syptak et al., 1999; Bhuian & Abdul-Muhmin, 1997; Russ & McNeilly, 1995; Yavas & Bodur, 1999; Fletcher & Williams, 1996; Clugston, 2000), creativity and job involvement (Syptak et al., 1999; Agho et al., 1992; Spector, 1997) and life satisfaction (Judge et al., 1994; Iris & Barrett, 1977).

2.1.5 Job Satisfaction during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced two main changes in the daily working life of employees yet did not affect each individual equally. First, many companies around the world shifted to remote work and urged their employees to work from home (Möhring et al., 2020).

Second, due to the lockdown caused by the pandemic, there were economic consequences that resulted in a loss of revenue to many companies (Anger et al., 2020). Accordingly, these companies that are highly affected by the pandemic tend to reduce the working hours and wages of the employees (Katja Möhring et al., 2020).

Job insecurity plays a vital role in the reduction of working hours and short time work during the COVID-19 pandemic since employees develop great fears of becoming unemployed, unlike other employees who continue to work their regular, normal hours (Möhring et al., 2020).

Furthermore, short-time work is associated with lower income (Konle-Seidl 2020; Osiander et al., 2020). Both factors of high job insecurity and lower earnings should have a negative consequence on the employees' satisfaction with their jobs (Katja Möhring et al., 2020).

2.2 Job Stress

2.2.1 Definitions of Job Stress

In the framework of job environments, there are various definitions of work-related stress. Halkos & Bousinakis (2010) define stress as an emotional change in response to an uncomfortable situation, as proven by physiological and psychological symptoms.

Beehr and Newman (1978) explain that since many adults spend considerable time of their lives in work-related activities, the demands on the physical and mental health of employees can be significant. For instance, obliging employees to maintain high performance with introductions of organizational changes and new technologies can result in job related stress (Magni & Pennarola, 2008).

According to McGrath (1970), work stress is potentially developed when the environmental demands threaten to exceed the individual's ability to meet those demands. Furthermore, it is acknowledged that individuals who regularly try to fulfill their requirements above their capacities are under stress (Carver, 1995; Vermunt & Steensma, 2003: 137).

Herzberg's (1966) hygiene factors explain that job-related stress can be demonstrated by the working conditions of the company as well as its administration and policy.

Moreover, Topper (2007) noted that work related stress exists when there is a perceived gap between the expectations of the workplace and the employees' ability to meet those expectations. More precisely, stress arises from interactions between the employee and the organization where the employee deduces that he/she cannot meet the requirements of the job (Dewe et al., 1993).

As stated by Rollinson (2005), workplace stress emerges from the conditions that arise with the interaction of employees and their jobs or changes within individuals that force them to divert from their regular functioning.

2.2.2 Sources of Job Stress

Among different life the workplace stands out as a vital source of stress due to the long amount of time spent in this specific setting. Many researchers identified several factors

that contribute to stress in the workplace. Manshor et al., (2003) explained that the main concerns that lead to job stress include the working conditions, workload, and relationships at work. Nelson and Burke (2000) also clarified that the quality of the organization's social environment such as relationships with others is an important aspect that provokes job stress.

Quick and Quick (1984) classified occupational stress into four categories including (1) role demands; (2) interpersonal demands; (3) physical demands; and (4) task demands. Similarly, the six conditions that could prompt stress in the workplace according to The National Institute on Occupational Safety and Health include (1) work roles; (2) career concerns; (3) design of tasks; (4) environmental conditions; (5) interpersonal relationships; and (6) management style (NIOSH, 1999).

Belkić (2003) developed an Occupational Stressor Index by expanding the work of the National Institute on Occupational Safety and Health and identified the sources job stress into seven aspects including (1) uncertainty/conflict; (2) underload; (3) avoidance; (4) high demand; (5) averseness; (6) extrinsic time pressure; and (7) strictness.

According to McGrath (1976), a most common source of work-related stress is role ambiguity. McGrath (1976) explained that role ambiguity occurs when the scope of responsibilities is unclear to the employees and they are uncertain about the expectations

of the job. Nelson and Burke (2000) also identified role-based facets of job stress such as role conflict and role ambiguity.

Antoniou and associates (2006) suggested in their research that specific conditions that bring about stress in the workplace can be grouped into either endogenous pressure, which include individual personality characteristics, or exogenous pressures, which include excessive workload, unpleasant occupational conditions or lack of collaboration.

Rollinson (2006) states that each individual experience different levels of stress and that the degree of stress experienced by each person is influenced by several factors such as social support, personal characteristics, life events and socio-demographic variables.

2.2.3 Consequences of occupational stress

Stress is considered as a major contributor to the performance of employees as well as the overall productivity and expenses of organizations. Ross (2005) states that stress produces a variety of unwanted and costly consequences that affect both the organization and the individual.

The consequences of occupational stress can be categorized into two groups which include individual level of stress and organizational level. There are three main subgroups under the individual level of stress. (assembled using: Chusmir & Franks (1988), Comish & Swindle (1994), Dua (1994), Lind & Otte (1994), Ben-Bakr et al.,

(1995), Johnson & Indvik (1996), Earnshaw & Morrison (2001), and Antoniou et al., (2006)):

- 1- Undesirable behaviors and feelings including absenteeism, lower productivity, lower motivation, job dissatisfaction, sabotage, lower quality and quantity of work, job burnout, inability to make rational decisions and less commitment to the organization.
- 2- Physiological diseases such as high blood sugar, skin issues, injuries, increased blood pressure and pulse rate. Quick et al. (1997) cite that the increased level of stress leads to diseases such as migraines, cancer, back pain and gastrointestinal conditions. Furthermore, Kasperczyk (2010) explains that stress has been proven to increase occurrences of cardiovascular diseases such as coronary artery disease, hypertension and atherosclerosis. In addition to those extremely threatening physiological diseases, Beheshtifar and Nazarian (2013) state that stress has also been proven to derange the immunosuppressant systems of the body that makes people more prone to sickness such as common cold.
- 3- Psychological diseases such as depression, distress, boredom, passiveness/aggressiveness, lower self-confidence, lower self-esteem, loss of concentration, loss of contact with reality and anxiousness. Quick et al. (1997) report that stress can produce violent behaviors such as child abuse, sexual assault and even murder. Similarly, Hargrove et al. (2011) found that stress can lead to an increase of

bullying and violence in the workplace. Moreover, Lingard et al. (2007) found job stress to be a major contributor to burnout and explain that employees experience increased cynicism and emotional exhaustion frequently due to stress and burnout.

On the organizational level, stress can have numerous impacts that affect the overall productivity and working environment of the organization. Quick et al. (1997) explain that poorer performances and lower quality decisions are made by individuals that experiences stress on the job.

Beheshtifar and Nazarian (2013) found that increased stress influences the relationships that the organization maintains with the partners, suppliers, and regulatory agencies. Quick et al. (1997) similarly add that stress can decrease the levels of customer service which in return can cause loss of customers in present and in future. Furthermore, Quick et al. (1997) also deduce absenteeism and loss of productivity as major consequences of increased work-related stress.

2.2.4 Job stress during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As mentioned previously, work-related stress can be developed through various sources such as the organization's working conditions (Manshor et al., 2003), the social environment at work (Nelson & Burke, 2000) and role ambiguity or role conflict (McGrath, 1976).

During the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, almost all the factors that produce stress in the workplace were triggered which led to negative consequences for both the employees and the organization. For instance, the working conditions of most companies experienced a drastic transformation and shifted to remote work. Such an alteration had negative effects on the employees' well-being, put them at a great risk of loneliness and had them experience a lack of purpose (Achor, Kellerman, Reece, & Robichaux, 2018).

A great amount of evidence cited a significant link between the COVID-19 outbreak and adverse mental health issues such as depression, anxiety and stress or burnout (Mo et al., 2020; Nemati et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2020).

Huremovi'c D (2019) states that there is a vast number of studies in literature explaining the effects of public health crisis such as SARS or other naturally inflicted disasters on mental illness such as loneliness, depression, anxiety and stress.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also imposed social distancing among people which further increases the chances of developing mental health symptoms since isolation is known to have harmful effects on the mental health of people (Leigh-Hunt N, et al., 2017).

Findings from China show the serious impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of employees. In a study conducted in January and February 2020 with 52730 participants, almost 35% of the respondents in the sample reported that they experienced psychological distress (Qiu et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the effects of the pandemic may last even after it has ended but the current situation with the virus still existing prevents researchers from having reliable data on post-traumatic stress effects of the pandemic. However, previous studies from other pandemics (Rajkumar, 2020) show that such outbreaks lead to the idea that it indeed affects the psychological vulnerability (Conversano et al., 2020).

2.3 Transformational leadership

2.3.1 Definitions of Transformational Leadership

Burns (1978) was the first researcher to conceptualize Transformational Leadership which was then further developed by Bass (1985).

Rather than describing it as a set of particular behaviors, Burns (1978) defined transformational as an ongoing process where leaders and followers increase each other's level of motivation and morality. In other words, Burns (1978) explains that leaders should be able to get the desired outcomes of the organization by encouraging employees through healthy perceptions, moral and beliefs as well as motivating them.

According to Bass (1985), transformational leadership means having the ability to influence employees or followers deeply so as to release their complete potential of performance in order to achieve the organization's goals.

Furthermore, Bass (1999) conducted a research that shows that followers who work in a setting influenced by transformational leadership are more likely to express a greater sense of self-confidence and their work is likely to be of greater significance than subordinates influenced by transactional leadership style.

Various other researchers (Ibraheem et al., 2011; Imran et al., 2011; Mirkamali et al., 2011) demonstrated the value of transformational leadership and examined that this style specifically influences followers, provides them special attention and motivation.

Several leadership scholars acknowledge the significant role of transformational leadership in enhancing employee performance, commitment and trust in organizations that have a hierarchical authority structure (Podsakoff et al., 1990). One of the reasons for its significance is that this style of leadership is practiced as a process of creating a vision and promoting a sense of belongingness among employees (Tse, 2008).

Transformational leadership creates a culture that is mission-oriented through a process of social influence among the members of the organization. (Hofstede, 1993).

Furthermore, transformational leadership causes employees to perceive the organization

as supportive and promotes attachments among the members of the organization (Hofstede, 2001).

2.3.2 Behaviors of transformational leaders

Through a study conducted by Podsakoff, McKenzie, Moorman, and Fetter (1990), the concept of transformational leadership can be categorized into six fundamental behaviors that are as follows:

Identifying a vision as well as articulating it; Conducting an appropriate model; Praising the acceptance of mutual goals; Developing high expectations for performance; Providing individual support and practicing intellectual stimulation.

Encouraged by this model, Carless, Wearing, and Mann (2000), developed the seven following behaviors that are practiced by transformational leaders:

Communicate or develop an image of the organization's future; Express an individual interest of the staff and diagnose the capacities of each subordinate; Assist them in working towards their objective through organized team work; Empower employees by giving them the authority to implement policies as well as being supportive of their decisions; Be innovative in achieving their goals by using non-conventional strategies; Lead by example by adopting the values and beliefs that they support; Are charismatic and inspire employees to excel in their personal interests as well as their limitations.

Howell and Higgins (1990) form a link between transformational leaders and “champions” where they behave in a way where they know exactly what to do and are typically risk takers. Furthermore, they are said to have extraordinary personalities and are able to motivate others.

Over the years, researchers summarized the behaviors of transformational leaders into four general components including idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass and Avolio, 1995).

2.3.3 Components of Transformational Leadership.

Avolio and Bass (1999) identified four major components of transformational leadership when they developed the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), that were later considered as the four I’s, including (1) idealized influence, (2) inspirational motivation, (3) intellectual stimulation and (4) individualized consideration.

Idealized influence

Transformational leadership is partly attained through charisma, which over the years was renamed as idealized influence. It refers to the charismatic efforts of a leader that revolve around beliefs, values, and a deep sense of mission in order to motivate their followers to do more than they think they are able to do (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003).

An important characteristic of idealized influence includes identifying with the leader. Idealized influence indicates whether or not a leader sustains the followers' trust, respect and faith (Avolio & Bass, 1999).

Inspirational motivation

The leader's ability to communicate the goals and values to the followers in order to enable them to transcend their own self-interest is referred to as inspirational motivation. (Bass, 1985). Furthermore, followers identify with leaders that are inspirational and are ready to meet the leader's expectations as well as put effort to achieve the mutual goals that are promoted by the leader (Bass, 1985).

According to Bass and Steidlmeier (1999), transformational leaders provoke inspirational motivation by presenting their followers with meaning and challenges for engaging in mutual goals and undertakings. Such leaders display high levels of confidence, hope and optimism, to lead their followers to be confident, hopeful and optimistic (Keung, 2011).

Inspirational motivation addresses how well a leader provides vision, uses appropriate images, symbols or artifacts to help followers focus on their work and make them feel like their work is significant (Avolio & Bass, 1999).

Intellectual stimulation

Intellectual stimulation is considered as the most underdeveloped aspect of transformational leadership (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004). This component includes behaviors that increase the followers' awareness and interest in problems and further develops their ability to think about such problems in new, creative ways (Bass, 1985).

Moreover, intellectual stimulation encourages an environment that is tolerant with diverse positions and pushes individuals to question their own beliefs and values as well as the beliefs and values of the organization (Avolio & Bass, 1999).

In simpler words, intellectual stimulation occurs when transformational leaders stimulate their subordinates to think about old problems in new ways (Hater & Bass, 1988). Followers that are intellectually stimulated are most likely to focus on long term development as well as achieve long term goals.

Individualized consideration

Individual consideration suggests that leaders acknowledge, understand and satisfy the needs of each individual on one-to-one basis. (Bass & Avolio, 1990).

It identifies and supports the desires and differences of every individual. Furthermore, with individualized consideration, transformational leaders are said to be mentors that have special regard for each individual's achievement (Bass, 1994).

According to Bass (1990), individualized consideration entails that transformational leaders are supportive of the development of the skills of subordinates and would assist them in achieving their desired outcomes.

2.3.4 Transformational leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic

Very limited research has been conducted to address the role of transformational leadership during the covid-19 outbreak. However, the impact of leadership during any sorts of crisis has been acknowledged and analyzed.

According to Howitt and Leonard (2007), a crisis is an unexpected occurrence that comes in a huge scale and overwhelming speed that results in high degree of uncertainty which gives rise to a strong emotional disturbance, disorientation and a feeling of lost control.

On that note, research indicates that leadership can be a positive balance to such situations. Wooten and James (2008) state that different leadership competencies are required to manage a certain crisis at different stages.

As mentioned earlier in this study, transformational leaders practice behaviors that encourage employees to adapt to uncertain situations, or would most likely reduce the level of uncertainty and emotional disturbance. Leaders during the COVID-19 pandemic played an important role to have everyone in the organization adjusted to the new regulations.

2.4 Relationship between variables

2.4.1 Job satisfaction and Job stress

Job satisfaction and job stress have been two points of discussion in literature for a very long time, even to this very day. Many studies have tried to identify the relation between the two variables.

Stamps & Piedmonte (1986) found a significant relationship between job satisfaction and job stress. A study conducted in England by general practitioners determined four job stressors that lead to job dissatisfaction (Cooper et al., 1989). Furthermore, Cummins (1990) highlighted that job stressors are predictive of job dissatisfaction and likeliness to leave the organization.

Another study by Vinokur-Kaplan (1991) states that factors in the organization such as working conditions and workload were negatively linked with job satisfaction. Fltecher and Payne (1980) contributed to that statement by identifying that dissatisfaction can be a source of stress, while being satisfied can alleviate the level of stress. This study shows that both job satisfaction and job stress are interrelated to each other.

Other studies by Terry et al. (1993) and Landsbergis (1988) demonstrate that high levels of work stress are linked with low levels of job satisfaction.

A study created by Selye (1976) and Cavanaugh et al. (2000) identifies job stress into two kinds which are challenge-related stress and hindrance-related stress. Those two stressors showed different associations with employees' emotions. For instance, appraisals of challenge-related stress result in positive feelings and emotions (Rodell & Judge, 2009), while hindrance-related stress is negatively linked with outcome variables such as job satisfaction (Podsakoff et al., 2007; Lin et al., 2014).

Hence, as supported by several studies mentioned above, we can hypothesize the following:

***H1:** There is a negative correlation between employees' job stress and job satisfaction.*

2.4.2 Transformational leadership and job satisfaction

As stated earlier in this research paper, transformational leadership is best described by Bass (1995) as leaders who transform the aspirations, values and priorities of their followers as well as motivate them to perform better.

According to Walumbwa FO et al. (2004), the relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction is very well established nowadays in literature. As conceptualized by Bass (1995), the characteristics of transformational leadership provide theoretical foundation that explains the job satisfaction of employees.

Bogler (2001) illustrated that job satisfaction can be affected by transformational behaviors through the employees' general perceptions of transformational leaders. Such leaders who practice transformational behaviors like intellectual stimulation and individual attention are able to increase the expectations of employees as well as enhance their level of satisfaction. Furthermore, transformational leaders promote participation in decision making which gives employees a good sense of involvement. Thus, employees feel more committed to their jobs and are typically satisfied with their jobs.

Similarly, a study conducted by Nemanich and Keller (2007) explains that job satisfaction takes place when employees feel valued through transformational behaviors such as inspiration and individual consideration. According to them, this relationship can be recognized as a reciprocal exchange since employees' experience job satisfaction and are more likely committed to produce better job outcomes when they feel valued by the organization.

Moreover, previous studies found that transformational behaviors usually enhance or boost the level of job satisfaction in several organizational settings such as in military, educational setting, industrial and volunteering settings (Braun S et al., 2013).

Additionally, Yang et al. (2011) explain that a positive perception by followers on transformational behaviors generally leads to a stronger identification with the organization as well as higher levels of job satisfaction and internalization.

2.4.3 Transformational leadership and Job Stress

According to Karina et al. (2008), there exists limited information on the impact of transformational leadership on job stress and the well-being of employees.

Bono and Ilies (2006) found that charismatic leaders have a significant influence on the feelings and emotions of employees whereas Sosik and Godshalk (2000) suggest that transformational leadership has a significant impact on job related stress.

Researchers Sosik and Godshalk (2000) explain that there is a relationship between the style of leadership in a mentoring role and the work-related stress of the people they counsel. Their study showed that those who have been counseled by mentors who displayed transformational leadership behaviors reported less stress.

In accordance with that finding, researchers suggested that organizations should offer mentoring initiatives linked with transformational leadership workshops or courses in order to diminish the workplace stress of employees.

Furthermore, as stated by Savery and Luks (2001), there are harmful and costly consequences from job stress that emphasize the need for certain strategies to minimize stressors within the organization. Tracy and Hinkin (1994) found that transformational leadership is one strategy that encourages open communication with employees, which in return reduces employee job stress.

According to a study conducted by Yao, Fan, Guo and Li (2014), leaders with transformational characteristics are able to lower the level of job stress of employees as well as reduce their negative actions.

Moreover, another study shows that transformational leadership has significant negative correlation with work stress. In other words, the higher the efficacy of transformational leadership, the lower the employees feel job-related stress (Gill, Flaschner, & Bhutani, 2010 ; Sosik & Godshalk, 2000; Yao, Fan, Guo, & Li, 2014 ; Chen & Lian, 2016).

Hence, we can come up with a third hypothesis as supported by the findings mentioned above:

2.4.4 The moderating effect of Transformational leadership on employee's Job stress and Job satisfaction.

Very few research studies exist that examine the moderating effect of transformational leadership on job stress and job satisfaction. This research will investigate the relationship between the variables, if any, and examine the correlations between them. The results of this study aim at adding value to the gaps in literature.

The researcher hypothesizes the following:

H1: There is a negative relationship between job stress and job satisfaction.

H2: Transformational leadership moderates the relationship between job stress and job satisfaction.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The empirical techniques and the methods used for this research are introduced and thoroughly explained in this chapter. The instrumentations used, population of the study, data collection method as well as the conceptual framework are also covered in this section of the research paper.

3.1 Construct Operationalization

This research is quantitative in nature. A self-administered questionnaire was implemented to measure the relationship between the three variables used in this research. The questionnaire includes five structured scales with demonstrated validity and reliability in previous studies; and seven questions to collect demographic data.

The study based its methods on the construction and distribution of surveys in order to facilitate the process of collecting data in the quickest and less costly way. The surveys were only developed as softcopy formats and were constructed using Google forms for data collection and testing. Hardcopy formats were not included due to the restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study was conducted on the employees working across different sectors in the middle east. The intention of targeting these employees is simply since very limited research exists on studying the impact of transformational leadership on job satisfaction and job stress on employees working in the middle east.

The survey was completely voluntary. Participants had the choice to proceed or to quit. The questions were all answered by choice as well. The survey consisted of 35 close-ended questions for employees; the questions were divided into five sections: consent form, demographics, job stress, job satisfaction and transformational leadership.

The first section provided participants the consent to take part in the survey where they were able to either proceed with it or quit. The second section included the demographics where participants were required to fill the questions that involved their age, gender, educational level, years of working experience, organizational level and company size. The third section investigated the role of stress in employees' jobs. The fourth section was based on measuring the level of employees' satisfaction with their jobs. The fifth section explored the role of transformational leadership practiced by employees in their jobs. This section included five segments of leadership: idealized attributes, idealized behavior, idealized motivation, individual consideration and intellectual stimulation.

The final page/screen displayed a thank you note to the participants who took part in the study.

Prior to the distribution of the surveys, a pilot study was applied to six employees within the middle east and five other random respondents in order to ensure the clarity of the contend as well as make sure it is understood and well-constructed. The results showed that the survey was simple, clear and easily read by the participants.

Section one: Consent

The nature of this research demanded ethical considerations such as ensuring informed consent, optional participation and respecting the privacy of the participants by making sure they were completely anonymous while answering the questions. Hence, this section included an introduction that explains the purpose of the research as well as statements to inform the participants that their input was entirely voluntary and confidential. Lastly, the participants were given the choice to participate in the survey or quit.

Section two: Demographics

This section required participants to complete seven questions in order to collect data regarding their gender, age, educational level, industry, organizational level, company size and years of work experience.

Section three: Job stress.

The third section included four questions that measure the level of subjective stress employees feel within their jobs. It was introduced with “The questions in this section aim to measure the level of subjective stress in your job position. Please remember that your responses are completely confidential.”

The questionnaire is measured at a 5-point scale where participants would respond to situational questions that come in a form of a scale from 1 to 5 where “1” represented total agreement and “5” represented total disagreement.

Section four: Job satisfaction.

This portion of the survey included only three questions that aimed to measure the level of employees' job satisfaction. Similarly, the previous section, it was introduced with "The questions in this section aim to measure your level of job satisfaction. Please remember that your responses are completely confidential."

Section five: Transformational leadership.

This section of the survey demonstrated five segments with twenty questions in total regarding transformational leadership. The first part contained four questions that aimed to measure the idealized attributes aspect of transformational leadership. The second part included four questions as well that aimed to measure the idealized behavior aspect. Followed by that were four other questions that focused on measuring the idealized motivation factor. The fourth section aimed at measuring the intellectual stimulation aspect of transformational leadership with four questions. The final portion involved four questions regarding the individual consideration aspect of transformational leadership.

This part of the survey was also introduced with "The questions in this section aim to measure four aspects of transformational leadership. Please remember that your responses are completely confidential."

Section six: Thank you note.

The final section of the survey included a thank you note to the participants that read "Thank you for participating in this survey!"

3.2 Scale Development

Job satisfaction scale development

The shortlisted version of Spector (1985)'s job satisfaction scale was used in this study. The scale was shortened by (Domino, Wingreen & Blanton, 2015). Spector (1985) developed the original scale which included 36 items on a six-point scale that measures all the facets of job satisfaction such as rewards, pay and job satisfaction itself. However, this study contained only 3 items that measure job satisfaction on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (totally agree) to 5 (totally disagree). The job satisfaction survey is very well known for its validity and reliability. Researchers like Sukriket (2014), Anari (2011), and Azeez et al. (2016) demonstrated the validity of this scale.

Job stress scale development

This study incorporated the shortlisted version of Motowidlo, Packard, & Manning, (1986)'s occupational stress scale where only four items were used to measure employees' job stress. The four items included a 5-point scale that ranged from 1 (totally agree) to 5 (totally disagree). The occupational stress survey is also very known for its reliability and validity. Researchers like Scotter and James (1996), and Kumar et al. (2012) demonstrated the validity of this scale.

Transformational leadership scale development

A 20-item scale was used to measure four aspects of transformational leadership in this study, using the shortlisted version of the original scale developed by researchers Avolio

and Bass (1996). 20 items in total were used in this study and were divided into five sections including idealized attributes, idealized behaviors, idealized motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. Each section included four items. The transformational leadership survey developed by Avolio and Bass (1996) is known for its reliability as well as its validity and has been widely used by researchers in literature.

3.3 Objectives and Hypotheses

The objectives of this study were to:

- 1- Examine the impact of transformational leadership on employees' job satisfaction and job stress during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2- Test the hypotheses extracted from the theoretical framework of this paper.

Hypotheses:

H1: *There is a negative correlation between employees' job stress and job satisfaction.*

H2: *Transformational leadership moderates the relationship between job stress and job satisfaction.*

3.4 Data collection

The data for this thesis was collected by inviting employees working in different sectors in the Middle East to participate in the study by filling the survey. The intention of this

study is to develop a structural equation causal model to better reflect the mediating effect of transformational leadership on employees' job satisfaction and job stress working across different sectors in the Middle East during the Covid-19 pandemic. Data was collected during the month of March 2021, where softcopies were distributed to employees. A total of 336 people participated in the survey, where 2 respondents did not agree to participate in the consent form and therefore did not proceed to answer the following questions.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Survey Administration

The sample of this study includes employees working in different sectors in the middle east region. The questionnaire administration took place during the entire month of March 2021. Surveys were circulated and distributed online as softcopies since the pandemic enforced certain restrictions on the distribution of hardcopies. 336 responses were collected and used in this study in total. However, two participants chose not to proceed beyond the demographics section. Hence, 334 responses were used for analysis.

IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows (Version 27.0) package was used to analyze the collected data. The results are shown in the section below.

4.2 Demographic variables

Table 1: Demographics

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
AGE		
1946-1964	1	.3
1965-1976	23	6.8
1977-1995	159	47.4
1996- Present	153	45.5
GENDER		
Female	197	58.5

Male	139	41.5
	EDUCATION	
BS/BA	190	56.7
Diploma	8	2.4
High school	5	1.5
Masters	121	35.9
PhD	12	3.6
	INDUSTRY	
Agriculture	3	.9
Auditing/Consulting	24	7.1
Banking	11	3.3
Construction	15	4.5
Education	49	14.5
Engineering	12	3.6
Finance & Insurance	17	5.0
Hospital	22	6.5
Hospitality and tourism	13	3.9
Information & Technology	31	9.2
Manufacturing	10	3.0
Oil & Gas	5	1.5
Other	13	3.9
Prefer not to mention	20	5.9
Sales/Marketing	91	27.3
	ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL	
Middle Management	69	20.8
Non-Management	140	41.5
Operational Management	72	21.4
Senior Management	55	16.3

	YEARS OF WORK EXPERIENCE	
1--5	205	60.8
6--10	61	18.4
Over 10	70	20.8
	COMPANY SIZE	
100-249	56	16.9
250-500	43	12.8
50-99	148	43.9
Over 500	87	25.8

Table 1 demonstrates the summary of the employees' demographics where the age group ranged between four different generations. Most respondents portrayed millennials, born in the years 1977-1995, totaling 47.4% of the responses. A very close number of responses to the millennials belonged to Generation Z, born in the years 1996- present, with 45.5% of the total responses. 6.8% of the responses belonged to Generation X, who were born in the years 1965- 1976. One respondent (0.3%) represented the Baby Boomer Generation and was born during the years 1946-1964.

The gender section reveals that 197 of the respondents were female 58.5%, and 139 of the respondents were male 41.5%. As shown, the number of female responses and exceed the number of male responses by 17%, although interestingly, the survey was distributed to both genders equally.

The educational level shows that the majority of the respondents completed their bachelor's degree, representing 56.7% of the total responses, followed by 35.9% respondents who completed their master's degree, 3.6% with a PhD, 2.4% respondents that acquired a diploma and 1.5% of the respondents completed high school level of education.

As for the industry, the majority of respondents belonged to the sales/marketing field, representing 27.3% of the total responses. Followed by the field of education, covering 14.5% of the total responses. The least number of responses belonged to the oil and gas sector, demonstrating 1.5% of the entire responses. The primary target of this study was the field of sales and marketing which explains the gap among other sectors.

The organizational level shows that most of the respondents worked in non-management positions, illustrating 41.5% of the total responses, while 21.4% and 20.8% of the respondents worked in operational management and middle management positions, respectively. 16.3% of the respondents belonged to senior management positions.

The years of working experience ranged from 1-5 years, with 60.8% of the entire responses, 6-10 years with 20.8% of the total responses and over 10 years with 18.4% of the responses.

The company size shows that most respondents worked in companies that ranged between 50-99 employees, demonstrating 43.9% of the total responses, while the least number of responses belonged to companies with 250-500 employees (12.8%).

4.3 Reliability analysis

The first step taken during the analysis was checking the reliability of the construct's measurement. SPSS program was used to measure the Cronbach's alpha value for the three variables used in this study including job satisfaction, job stress and transformational leadership. Table 2 demonstrates the results with an indication of high reliability for all the constructs measured. The results below display a summary of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient and scale number items of each variable.

Table 2: Cronbach Alpha

Construct	Dimension	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient	Scale Items
Job satisfaction		.992	3
Job stress		.999	4
Transformational leadership	TLA	.877	4
	TLB	.876	4
	TLM	.877	4
	TLS	.878	4
	TLC	.875	4

The results shown in the table above display high scale reliability since all Cronbach's alpha values are above the required threshold of 0.7.

4.4 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Table 3: Confirmatory Factor Analysis.

Variable	Dimension	KMO	Bartlett's Test Chi Square.
Job satisfaction		.791	4222.314
Job stress		.883	5382.385
Transformational leadership	TLA	.891	5946.745
	TLB	.879	6273.082
	TLM	.890	6460.434
	TLS	.889	6317.257
	TLC	.892	5853.799

The suitability and adequacy of the factor analysis in this sample data is proven by the results of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measures test of the adequacy of sample data and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity as shown in Table 3 above. The factor analysis results display good factor loadings since all values were above 0.7 as demonstrated in the tables below regarding the Component Matrix of each construct.

Table 4: JS Component Matrix

	Component Matrix
JS1	1.000
JS2	1.000
JS3	1.000

Table 5: SS Component Matrix

	Component Matrix
SS1	.999
SS2	.999
SS3	.999
SS4	.997

Table 6: TL Component Matrix

	Component Matrix		Component Matrix		Component Matrix		Component Matrix		Component Matrix
TLA 1	.999	TLB 1	.999	TLM 1	1.000	TLS 1	1.000	TLC1	.999
TLA 2	.999	TLB 2	1.000	TLM 2	1.000	TLS 2	1.000	TLC2	.999
TLA 3	.999	TLB 3	1.000	TLM 3	1.000	TLS 3	1.000	TLC3	.999
TLA 4	.999	TLB 4	1.000	TLM 4	1.000	TLS 4	1.000	TLC4	.999

Factor analysis was used in order to construct a score for job satisfaction, subjective job stress and each component of transformational leadership, demonstrating 6 scores in

total, JS, SJS, TLA, TLB, TLM, TLS and TLC. These scores are used to assess the effect of transformational leadership on job satisfaction and job stress.

CHAPTER FIVE

HYPOTHESES TESTING AND RESULTS

1- Testing H1

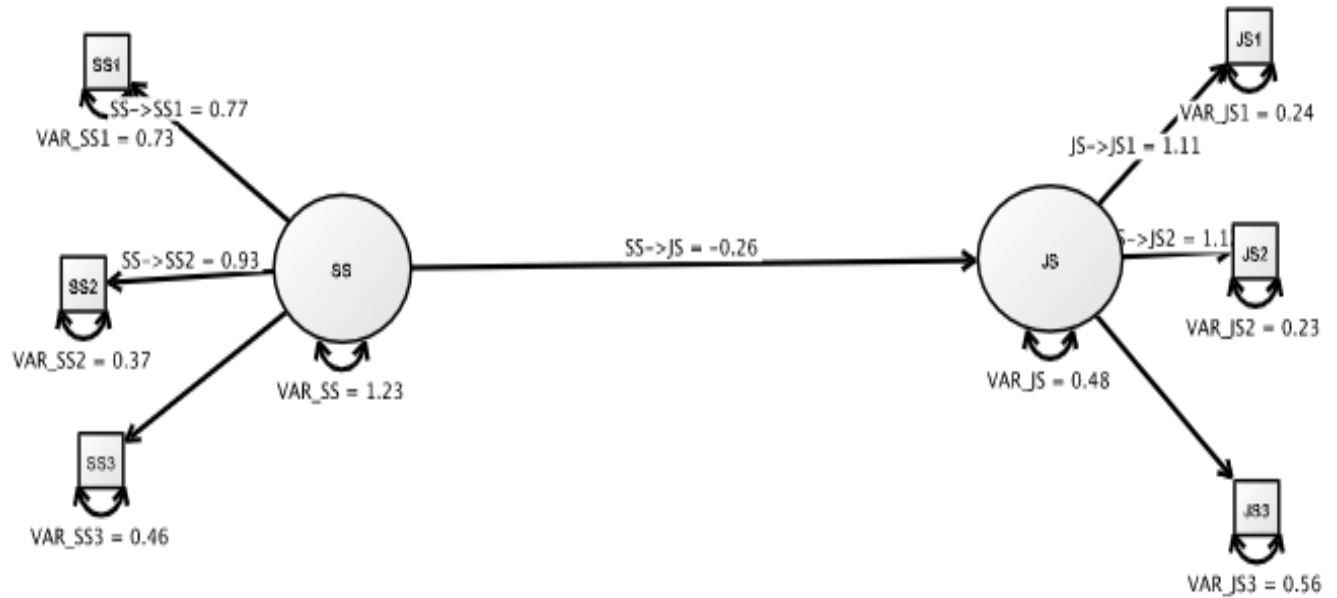


Figure 1: Displays the model of the indirect relationship between Job Stress and Job Satisfaction using ONYX.

Table 7: Path and Z-value for figure 1.

Hypothesis	Path Value	Z- Value
SS → JS	-0.26	-5.833

Table 7: Displays the construct correlation and Z values of the variables when there is a negative relationship between subjective job stress and job satisfaction. The result shows significance when Z Value is at 1.645 level and above with a path value of <0.05. In this case, H1 is supported with a Z value of -5.833 and a path value of -0.26, showing a strong negative correlation between the variables. Therefore, there is an indirect, negative relationship between job stress and job satisfaction.

The researcher tested the model by analyzing the RMSEA, TLI and CFI scores, where it resulted in a good fit model since the TLI score was above 0.8 (0.985), CFI = 0.992, and a RMSEA score of 0.054.

Testing H2:

The moderating effect of transformational leadership on the relationship between job stress and job satisfaction.

Using Hays Process Model in SPSS, the moderation test of transformational leadership in the relationship between job stress and job satisfaction was performed. Interestingly, the test showed that transformational leadership significantly moderates the SS – JS relationship. The results were as follows:

Model: 1

Y: JSA

X: SSA

W: TLA

Sample

Size: 335

**

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

JSA

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
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	.9991	.9981	.6100	59494.3872	3.0000	331.0000	.0000
Model							
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
constant	2.1978	.3503	6.2745	.0000	1.5088	2.8869	
SSA	-.3207	.0613	-5.2333	.0000	-.4412	-.2001	
TLA	.5893	.0761	7.7482	.0000	.4397	.7389	
Int_1	.0022	.0003	7.5032	.0000	.0016	.0027	
Product terms key:							
Int_1:	SSA	x	TLA				
Test(s) of highest order unconditional interaction(s):							
	R2-chng	F	df1	df2	p		
X*W	.0003	56.2981	1.0000	331.0000	.0000		

To start with, the model has a high coefficient of determination reaching 99.81%. This indicates that 99.81% of the variation in job satisfaction could be determined by job stress and transformational leadership. As expected, the path coefficient of JS is negative, indicating a negative relationship with JS. As stress on the job increases, the level of satisfaction would decrease. The coefficient is significant (P-value <0.05). In addition, as shown in table 7, the Z score of the relationship between SS and JS is highly significant, proving the strong indirect relationship between the variables. When transformational

leadership was introduced as a moderator, the indirect relationship between SS and JS was strengthened. Transformational leadership has a positive coefficient, implying that higher levels of job satisfaction are associated with higher levels of transformational leadership. The coefficient is also significant ($P\text{-value} = 0.0000$). In other words, the relationship between TL and JS is positive. As the level of TL increases, the level of JS would increase as well.

The moderation test is performed through testing the interaction effect of the two independent variables. Shown as $X*W$, the test is significant, with an $F\text{-value}$ of 56.298 and a $P\text{-value}$ far less than 0.05 ($P\text{-value} = 0.0000$). This means that Transformational leadership moderates the relationship between stress and satisfaction, and that different levels of transformational leadership will result in weaker (if TLA is high) or stronger (if TLA is low). The high level of TLA was extracted from the scale of the survey that ranged from 3.51 (neutral) to 5 (Strongly agree). Whereas the low level of TLA was extracted from the scale of the survey that ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 3.5 (neutral). Both levels were tested against the means and standard deviations of SS and JS to compare the level of moderation that TL imposes on them.

To illustrate, descriptive statistics were computed for job stress and job satisfaction at two TLA levels (low and high). Results indicate that TLA at different levels results in different levels of stress as well as satisfaction. The results are shown below:

Table 8: Descriptive statistics.

TLA	SS (Mean)	JS (Mean)
Low (1-3.5)	2.8770	3.320
High (3.51-5)	2.9791	3.800

It is clear that the impact of TLA on job satisfaction is higher than its impact on job stress. This may imply that while transformational leadership may not change the stress level in the job, it can alleviate the impact of stress on the overall job satisfaction.

As a result, H2 is supported since TL moderates the relationship between job stress and job satisfaction.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION.

6.1 Discussion

The primary purpose of this research was to examine the impact of transformational leadership on employees' subjective job stress and job satisfaction during the COVID-19 pandemic. The aim of this thesis was to find how transformational leadership influenced employees working in the middle east region on their level of job satisfaction as well as their level of job stress.

6.1.1 Negative correlation between Job Stress and Job Satisfaction.

Testing H1: *There is a negative correlation between Job Stress and Job Satisfaction.*

The results of this study supported H1, displaying an indirect relationship between Job stress and Job satisfaction. This finding supports many other findings from existing studies including a study conducted by Igharia and Greenhaus (1992), that showed a negative relation between Job stress and Job satisfaction.

Generally speaking, feeling stressed is mostly based on negative emotions, while feeling satisfied is mostly formed by positive emotions. Therefore, it is unlikely to find opposite terms positively related to each other.

6.1.2 Direct relationship between Transformational leadership and Job satisfaction.

The results of this study supported H2, demonstrating a direct correlation between the two variables, transformational leadership, and job satisfaction. Previous and recent studies show that transformational leadership has a positive impact on job satisfaction. Researchers Choi et al. (2016), hypothesize a direct relationship between the two variables.

Such findings are logical and acceptable since employees are more likely to feel satisfied when they are being valued and appreciated, which can be higher when a leader practices transformational behavior.

6.1.3 Indirect relationship between Transformational leadership and Job stress.

Similar to the previous hypotheses, H3 was supported by the results of this study, representing an indirect, negative relation between transformational leadership and job stress. Findings from previous studies developed by researchers such as Shu-Chuan Huang et al. (2018) and Manoppo (2020), hypothesize an indirect relation between the two variables, transformational leadership, and job stress.

Transformational behaviors such as considering each individual's needs and appreciating each individual's achievements puts the employees in a better working environment and encourages them to feel more confident about their work and less stressed.

6.1.4 The moderating effect of Transformational leadership on Job stress and Job satisfaction.

Testing H2: *Transformational leadership moderates the relationship between job stress and job satisfaction.*

H2 was also supported in this study since the results show an impact of transformational leadership that moderates the relationship between job stress and job satisfaction.

Transformational leadership moderated the relationship since there was a high coefficient of determination among the variables, reaching 99.81% when it was introduced as a moderator as shown in the tables listed above. As mentioned previously, many studies support the negative relationship that exists between job stress and job satisfaction. In a similar vein, transformational leadership has a strong indirect and direct relationship between the two variables, job stress and job satisfaction.

The results are rational and justified since transformational behaviors usually tend to make employees feel positively, which increases their level of satisfaction, and would decrease negative feelings, stress included.

6.2 Managerial Implications

The researcher recommends the adaptation of transformational leadership in organizations of any or all sectors. The concept of transformational leadership in literature is considered greatly significant since it could directly impact the achievement of organizational goals. More so, transformational leadership is highly important in adjusting to uncertain situations such as the covid-19 pandemic as well as the new regulations and policies that come with it.

Managers should be provided with training that would guide them in practicing transformational behaviors. Such behaviors enable employees in having a strong identification with the organization. By strongly identifying with the organization's mission, vision, and culture, employees would feel more confident and content with their jobs. Moreover, they would feel encouraged to remain involved in organizational decisions, which in return would boost their level of motivation and improve their performance. Training could be given virtually to avoid violating covid-19 restrictions.

Furthermore, managers should constantly improve the work settings and general environment in the organization so as to keep the employees motivated, satisfied, and less prone to stress in the workplace. This is especially significant during the pandemic with many employees feeling demotivated and very stressed. The quality of social environment such as relationships between co-workers should be high for the purpose of

increasing the employees' level of satisfaction while simultaneously reducing their level of stress.

The researcher also recommends managers to consider the treatment of employees as individuals rather than just a member of some group, as well as consider each individual's needs, abilities aspirations distinctively. Accordingly, employees would feel more valued and appreciated, which in return would increase their level of productivity and performance.

6.3 Limitations of the study

This study includes several limitations, just like other studies. First, the study was conducted during a worldwide pandemic and new circumstances, which still has limited research and findings in literature. The COVID-19 pandemic also had an impact on the number of participants since the researcher was unable to reach the target audience due to the restrictions caused by the crisis. Second, since the purpose of this study is meant for a thesis project, it had to be done during a specific period of time with a deadline, which led to a limitation in the scope of findings. Third, the facets of job satisfaction were not specifically included in the study. Lastly, this research focused primarily on just one concept of leadership.

6.4 Future Research

For future studies, the researcher recommends the following: first, researchers could take into consideration the gender analysis or the influence of generational gap on the variables that are job satisfaction, job stress and transformational leadership. Second, the facets of job satisfaction can be included and analyzed individually rather than studying job satisfaction as a whole. The facets could also be studied in relation with other variables such as motivation, organizational citizenship behavior and commitment. Third, the research could include incorporate different styles of leadership such as transactional leadership, democratic leadership and autocratic leadership, instead of settling on just one concept. Finally, for future studies, the researcher recommends to broaden the target audience by including countries outside the Middle East in order to improve the generalizability of the findings.

6.5 Conclusion

The primary aim of this research was to investigate the moderating effect of transformational leadership on employees' job stress and job satisfaction during the COVID-19 pandemic. It focused on employees working in different fields in the middle east region. The paper firstly displayed a negative relationship between the two variables, job stress and job satisfaction, which was later on supported by the findings and showed great significance. Second, a positive relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction was demonstrated with results that support the hypothesis. However, the facets of job satisfaction were not included in the study and it was analyzed by itself instead. Third, the study found a negative relationship between transformational

leadership and job stress and was supported further in the analysis section. The moderating effect of transformational leadership on the variables job stress and job satisfaction was also proven to exist and was analyzed as well as discussed in the study. The researcher recommends studying the variables on a broader area, beyond the middle east, as well as investigating the generational gap so as to broaden the scope of the study.

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Appendix: IRB approval and Survey.



Institutional Review Board (IRB)

لجنة الأخلاقيات

NOTICE OF IRB EXEMPTION DETERMINATION

To: Ms. Mariam Homayed
Dr. Silva Karkoulia
Assistant Professor
School of Business

APPROVAL ISSUED: 3 March 2021
EXPIRATION DATE: 3 March 2023
REVIEW TYPE: EXEMPT CATEGORY B

Date: March 3, 2021

RE: *IRB #: LAU.SOB.SK2.3/Mar/2021*

Protocol Title: The Impact of Transformational Leadership on Job Stress and Job Satisfaction during Covid-19 Pandemic

Your application for the above referenced research project has been reviewed by the Lebanese American University, Institutional Review Board (LAU IRB). This research project qualifies as exempt under the category noted in the Review Type

This notice is limited to the activities described in the Protocol Exempt Application and all submitted documents listed on page 2 of this letter. **Final reviewed consent documents or recruitment materials and data collection tools released with this notice are part of this determination and must be used in this research project.**

CONDITIONS FOR ALL LAU NOTICE OF IRB EXEMPTION DETERMINATION

LAU RESEARCH POLICIES: All individuals engaged in the research project must adhere to the approved protocol and all applicable LAU IRB Research Policies. **PARTICIPANTS must NOT be involved in any research related activity prior to IRB notice date or after the expiration date.**

EXEMPT CATEGORIES: Activities that are exempt from IRB review are not exempt from IRB ethical review and the necessity for ethical conduct.



PROTOCOL EXPIRATION: *The LAU IRB notice expiry date for studies that fall under Exemption is 2 years after this notice, as noted above. If the study will continue beyond this date, a request for an extension must be submitted at least 2 weeks prior to the Expiry date.*

MODIFICATIONS AND AMENDMENTS: *Certain changes may change the review criteria and disqualify the research from exemption status; therefore, any proposed changes to the previously IRB reviewed exempt study must be reviewed and cleared by the IRB before implementation.*

RETENTION: *Study files must be retained for a period of 3 years from the date of project completion.*

IN THE EVENT OF NON-COMPLIANCE WITH ABOVE CONDITIONS, THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR SHOULD MEET WITH THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE IRB OFFICE IN ORDER TO RESOLVE SUCH CONDITIONS. IRB CLEARANCE CANNOT BE GRANTED UNTIL NON-COMPLIANT ISSUES HAVE BEEN RESOLVED.

If you have any questions concerning this information, please contact the IRB office by email at irb@lau.edu.lb

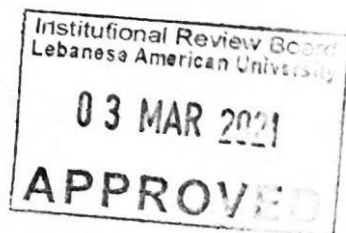
The IRB operates in compliance with the national regulations pertaining to research under the Lebanese Minister of Public Health's Decision No.141 dated 27/1/2016 under LAU IRB Authorization reference 2016/3708, the international guidelines for Good Clinical Practice, the US Office of Human Research Protection (45CFR46) and the Food and Drug Administration (21CFR56). LAU IRB U.S. Identifier as an international institution: FWA00014723 and IRB Registration # IRB00006954 LAUIRB#1

Dr. Joseph Stephan
Chair, Institutional Review Board

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED:

LAU IRB Exempt Protocol Application	Received 17 January 2021, amended 24 February 2021
Research Proposal	Received 17 January 2021

Informed Consent Form	Received 17 January 2021, amended 24 February 2021
Questionnaire	Received 17 January 2021, amended 24 February 2021
Link to Online Survey	Received 17 January 2021, amended 24 February 2021
IRB Comments sent: 17 January 2021 26 January & 4 February 2021 4 February 2021 1 March 2021	PI response dated: 22 January 2021 4 February 2021 24 February 2021 1 March 2021
NIH Training – Silva Karkoulia	Cert. # 2059914 (Dated 20 April 2016)
CITI Training – Mariam Homayed	Cert.# 384567237Dated (15 September 2020)



The moderating effect of transformational leadership on employees' job satisfaction and job stress: Perceptions during the Covid-19 pandemic.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A SURVEY

I am a student in Masters of Science in Human Resources at the Lebanese American University, and I would like to invite you to participate in my thesis research. The purpose of this study is to measure the impact of transformational leadership on employees' job satisfaction and job stress during the Covid-19 pandemic. I would highly appreciate your input to my thesis by completing this survey. Kindly note that it will take approximately 20 minutes to complete the survey.

By continuing with the questionnaire, you agree with the following statements:

1. I have been given sufficient information about this research project.
2. I understand that my answers will not be released to anyone and my identity will remain anonymous.
3. I understand that all responses I provide for this study will remain confidential. When the results of the study are reported, I will not be identified by name or any other information that could be used to infer my identity. Only researchers will have access to view any data collected during this research however, data cannot be linked to me.
4. I understand that I may withdraw from this research any time I wish and that I have the right to skip any question I don't want to answer
5. I understand that my refusal to participate will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which I otherwise am entitled to.
6. I have been informed that the research abides by all commonly acknowledged ethical codes and that the research project has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at the Lebanese American University
7. I understand that if I have any additional questions, I can ask the research team listed below.
8. I have read and understood all statements on this form.
9. I voluntarily agree to take part in this research project by completing the following questionnaire.

If you have any questions, you may contact:

Name (PI) Phone number Email address

Mariam Homayed +961 70 747 935 mariam.homayed@lau.edu

This study has been reviewed and approved by the LAU IRB:

LAU.SOB.SK2.3/Mar/2021

If you have any further questions about your rights as a participant in this study, or you want to talk to someone outside the research, please contact the:

IRB Office

Lebanese American University

3rd floor, Dorm A, Byblos Campus

Tel: 00 961 1 786456 ext. 2546

DEMOGRAPHIC AND PERSONAL DATA					
<i>This portion of the survey is concerned with your background and work experience. This information will help identify trends in the data for different group of managers and employees. Please remember that your responses are completely confidential.</i>					
Please answer the following questions:					
Age:	<input type="text"/>	20-29	Gender:	<input type="text"/>	Male
	<input type="text"/>	30-39		<input type="text"/>	Female
	<input type="text"/>	40-49			
	<input type="text"/>	50-59	Type of industry:	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	
	<input type="text"/>	60+			
Your educational level:	<input type="text"/>	BS/B A	Organization al level:	<input type="text"/>	Senior management
	<input type="text"/>	Masters		<input type="text"/>	Middle management
	<input type="text"/>	Doctorate		<input type="text"/>	Operational management
	<input type="text"/>	other		<input type="text"/>	Non-management
	<input type="text"/>	r			
Years of work experience:	<input type="text"/>	1--5	Company size:	<input type="text"/>	50-99
	<input type="text"/>	6--10		<input type="text"/>	100-249
	<input type="text"/>	Over 10		<input type="text"/>	250-500
	<input type="text"/>			<input type="text"/>	Over 500

SUBJECTIVE STRESS					
Please answer the following questions:	Total ly disag ree				Tot ally agr ee
	1	2	3	4	5
I feel a great deal of stress because of my job					

Very stressful things happen to me at work					
My job is extremely stressful					
I almost never feel stressed at work					

JOB SATISFACTION					
Please answer the following questions:	Total ly disag ree				Tot ally agr ee
	1	2	3	4	5
All in all, the job I have is great					
In general, I am satisfied with my job					
My job is very enjoyable					

Transformational leadership					
Please answer the following questions:	Total ly disag ree				Tot ally agr ee
	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Idealized Attributes</i>					
I instill pride in others for being associated with me					
I go beyond self-interest for the good of the group					
I act in ways that build others' respect for me					
I display a sense of power and confidence					
<i>Idealized Behaviors</i>					
I talk about my important values and beliefs					
I specify the importance of having a strong sense of purpose					
I consider the moral and ethical consequences of decisions					

I emphasize the importance of having a collective sense of mission					
<i>Idealized Motivation</i>					
I talk optimistically about the future					
I talk enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished					
I articulate a compelling vision of the future					
I express confidence that goals will be achieved					
<i>Intellectual Stimulation</i>					
I re-examine critical assumptions to question whether they are appropriate					
I seek differing perspectives when solving problems					
I get others to look at problems from many different angles					
I suggest new ways of looking at how to complete assignments					
<i>Individual Consideration</i>					
I spend time teaching and coaching					
I treat others as individuals rather than just a member of a group					
I consider an individual as having different needs, abilities, and aspirations from others.					
I help others to develop their strengths					