

HIGH-PERFORMANCE WORK SYSTEM: AN IMPORTANT LINK BETWEEN TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND JOB PERFORMANCE

Imran R., Shabbir M.S., Mahmood A. *

Abstract: The research aims at examining the impact of transformational leadership on job performance. Moreover, the research explores the mediating effect of High-Performance Work System (HPWS) in the relationship between transformational leadership and job performance. A purposive sample of 400 respondents from Omani service organizations was selected for the study. The results show that transformational leadership has a positive and significant impact on HPWS and job performance. Moreover, HPWS also has a positive impact on job performance. Partial support has been found for the hypothesized mediator role of HPWS in transformational leadership and job performance relationship.

Key words: Transformational Leadership, High Performance Work System (HPWS), Job Performance, Strategic Management, Oman.

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Introduction

Over decades, the researchers in the field of strategic management have focused on identifying appropriate human resource (HR) practices that may help to form a customized system to have positive contribution in the performance of organization (Messersmith and Guthrie, 2010). Therefore, these systems are termed as High-performance Work Systems (HPWS), which are originally separate but interconnected HR practices specific to the organization that enhance outcomes at individual and organizational levels (Gkorezis et al., 2018; Zatzick and Iverson, 2011).

Past literature demonstrates that HPWS positively contributes to job performance (Combs et al., 2006; Jiang et al., 2012). Though any system, no matter how well formulated, is unable to perform effectively without proper direction. Similarly, HPWS effects are not created by magic. Instead, leaders design it, and executives convince employees who understand and act in response (Nishii et al., 2008). The HR experts and practitioners who deal with HPWS generally undermine the role of

* **Rabia Imran** Dr., Dhofar University, Salalah, Oman. **Muhammad Salman Shabbir** Dr. Dhofar University, Salalah, Oman. **Arshad Mahmood** Dr., Universiti Sains Malaysia Penang, Malaysia.

✉ corresponding author: mshabbir@du.edu.om

✉rabiaimran@yahoo.com; arshad@usm.my

managers and leaders (Chadwick et al., 2015). Nevertheless, leadership surprisingly remains somewhat neglected (Ateş et al., 2020).

The resource-based perspective assumes that HR system depends on contextual factors (Bowen and Ostroff, 2016) can be applied as a comprehensive framework for explaining how the HR and strategy process is made easier by leadership. Moreover, managers and executives play a key role in strategy implementation and act as key agents of employee engagement across the company to implement a coordinated HPWS (Chadwick et al., 2015). Alternatively, it is also important that managers encourage employees to implement HPWS. Through a quality exchange with employees, transformation managers create an awareness of corporate strategy and HPWS, which ultimately enables them to get a clear scenario of organization.

The recent literature in both HRM and leadership extends their focus on effective management of people in the organization to maximize performance (Ateş et al., 2020; Leroy et al., 2018). However, this is still an under-researched phenomenon, which demands further exploration of basic questions about transformational leadership affects performance, and whether this effect is directly or indirectly with and through HPWS etc. (Ehnröoth et al., 2020).

In this sense, the researchers adopted ability, motivation, and opportunity (AMO) model as a framework for selecting appropriate HR practices that will make HPWS. AMO model reveals the practices related to and improve employees' abilities, motivation, and opportunities that ultimately boost performance outcomes (Jiang et al., 2012; Subramony, 2009). According to AMO model, the human resource practices that make up the HPWS in the current research comprise the following:

- a. HRM practices focusing on employee knowledge skills and abilities (KSAs) that enhance ability such as recruitment, selection systems, and formal training systems.
- b. Motivational practices aimed at increasing motivation of employees, such as incentives and rewards.
- c. Opportunities building practices focusing on the participation of employees such as empowerment.

Oman labour market consists of approximately 2.3 million as of 2016 with male population dominating 85% of the total labour market compared to 15% females (Fadhil, 2019). Furthermore, the majority of workforce in private sector is comprised of expatriates. In 2016, the expatriate employees who worked in the private sector were 89.6% whereas; expatriates working in the government sector were 10.4% (National Centre for Statistics and Information, 2017).

Among the crucial goals in line with the vision 2040, the government of Oman has been taking serious steps to generate adequate employment opportunities for the Omani workforce (Central Bank of Oman, 2017). Additionally, there is an ongoing effort to replace expatriates with Omanis. However, it will remain ineffective until the environment for private sector is improved and made attractive for the local workforce (World Bank, 2017). Moreover, keeping the theoretical and practical issues relevant to performance in view, this research is vital, especially in the

context of Middle Eastern region. To overcome the aforementioned problems, a careful investigation is required to intensify research on human resource management practices and its possible linkage with leadership which had remained neglected (Al-Jahwari and Budhwar, 2016; Budhwar et al., 2019; Fadhil, 2019).

In this study, the theoretical framework is drawn upon the resource-based theory (RBV) that believes that performance and competitive advantage is achieved based on the optimal utilization of scarce and inimitable organizational resources (Barney, 1991). The resources can be categorized into assets, capabilities, organizational processes, organization attributes, information and knowledge. The theory suggests leadership as an important resource contributing to performance. The theory further provides a base for the argument that HR policies and procedures create unique employee based recourses that leads towards specific behavior. The choice of a correct set of HR policies can lead to higher performance (Jackson et al., 2014; Jiang et al., 2012).

The current study develops a theoretical model drawing on resource-based view by exploring the effect of transformational leadership on HPWS and its effect on job performance. Available research reveals the effect of transformational leadership on job performance (Cavazotte et al., 2013; Imran et al., 2012) and HPWS on performance (Imran and Atiya, 2020; Imran and Shahab, 2018). This research has a novel contribution, as based on classifications of resource-based view it explores the impact of individual capabilities such as leadership style on intangible assets like HPWS and examines their effect on performance.

Hypotheses development

Leadership style has been associated with performance outcomes for decades. Researchers, using resource-based view, have been focusing on identifying the most suitable style for boosting performance (Grabara et al., 2020). Transformational leadership style has been identified as one of the most suitable styles for enhanced performance in most situations. It is a behaviour-based approach to achieve excellence and performance beyond expectations (Bass and Avolio, 1995). The transformational leader is conceptualized as a person who acts as a role model and promotes employees to achieve excellence to pursue organizational vision. Past literature is evident of the fact that transformational leaders become the role models and have a positive impact on job performance (Anwar and Ahmad, 2012; Cavazotte et al., 2013). Therefore, the following proposition is made:

H₁: Transformational leadership has a positive impact on Job Performance

Transformational leaders inspire their followers, develop trust and enhance the process of knowledge sharing. This makes transformational leadership as the most favorable style adopted by the organizations striving for higher performance mechanisms (Ehrnrooth et al., 2020; Para-González, et al., 2018). HRM practices are identified as an important factor that promotes performance. However, leaders

are the one who creates synergy among HR practices. Researches in the area of HRM and leadership were separate for a long time. However, there is a need to find common ground between both. Both leadership style and HR practices influence performance. The leaders need HR practices to support their leadership style. The inspiring leader positively influences the adoption of appropriate practices as well as their implementation (Vermeeren et al., 2014). The system of aligning the practices in an appropriate bundle to make a HPWS has an impact on the overall performance (Ehrnrooth et al., 2020; Para-González, et al., 2018). On the basis of the argument following proposition is made;

H₂: Transformational leadership positively affects High-Performance Work System HPWS has gained attention due to its positive effect on performance. The main reason behind this is not the individual practices but the creation of an effective system by integrating different practices (Abbasi et al., 2020; Messersmith and Guthrie, 2010; Muposhi, 2019; Mokoena, 2019; Athiyaman and Magapa, 2019; Moolman and Jacobs, 2019). Past literature on the assumptions of resource-based theory claims that performance increases due to the implementation of HPWS (Abbasi et al., 2020; Imran and Fatima, 2015; Imran et al., 2015). Initially, the research focused only on organizational performance (Karatepe, 2013; Zhang and Morris, 2014). However, HPWS also positively affects employee-related outcomes, especially job performance (Imran and Atiya, 2020; Imran and Shahab, 2018).

H₃: High-Performance Work System has a positive impact on job performance Last decade is evident of the efforts made by researchers and practitioners to understand and identify the processes that play their positive role in linking transformational leadership to performance. Past literature has identified numerous factors that mediate in transformational leadership and performance outcomes association. These factors include work environment (Imran et al., 2012); team potency (Schaubroeck et al., 2007); organizational climate (Yasir et al., 2013); Culture (Imran, Zahoor and Zaheer, 2012); and Work engagement (Lai et al., 2020). However, the role played by HPWS is highly ignored (Liao and Lin, 2011). On the other hand, the link of the effect of leadership on HPWS is found in the literature (Ehrnrooth et al., 2020; Para-González et al., 2018; Vermeeren et al., 2014) and further the researches are found to link HPWS with performance (Imran and Atiya, 2020; Imran and Shahab, 2018; Bricchieri-Colombi, 2019; Fradley and Hardouin, 2019; Sarkin and Gulleroglu, 2019; Tekir and Akar, 2019; Auriacombe and Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2019). One recent this made the base for the following hypothesis:

H₄: High-Performance Work System mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and job performance

Methodology

The current research was conducted on service sector organizations operating in Oman. For the current study, the service sector was divided into five sub-sectors,

banking, telecommunication, education, health and tourism. The organizations listed in Muscat securities market were randomly selected, and then a purposive sample of 400 respondents from the selected organizations was drawn. The data was collected from different departments and different job levels from each organization. The data was collected from the period of February to April 2019. The sample consisted of 69% male and 31% females. Majority of them were from 31-40 age groups, in a middle managerial level and having an experience around 10 years.

The data was collected by designing a questionnaire by adapting existing scale items. The items adapted were in English; however, they were translated into the local language Arabic for better understanding. The researchers consulted with five academic experts and four practitioners in order to meet content and face validity conditions. The data collection process was started by approaching the respondents at their workplaces. The participation was on a voluntary basis. They were given an introduction to the basic idea of the study and were ensured information confidentiality. A total of 700 questionnaires were distributed among the respondents. However, 498 out of 700 distributed questionnaires were received, and only 400 were found usable for analysis.

Transformational leadership scale was measured by a 20-item scale developed by MLQ established by Bass and Avolio (1995). The construct of HPWS was measured by adopting a 25-item scale by Hsu, Lin, Lawler and Wu, (2007). HPWS consisted of factors including recruitment, job rotation, performance-based pay, empowerment, Training and development and, competency based pay. Furthermore, the search conceptualized the concept of job performance with 10 items, which were further divided into task performance and in-role behavior. Task performance was measured by an instrument developed by Bott et al. (2003) of 5 items scale. The concept of in-role behavior was measured by a 5 items scale developed by Williams and Anderson (1991). All the measures were anchored at five-point Likert-type with 1(strongly disagree) and 5(strongly agree).

Results of the study

This section consists of information related to preliminary analysis and main model testing. Table 1 reveals the results of descriptive statistics, correlation matrix and reliability analysis of the study variables. The results show that the values of mean range from 4.30 to 3.57 for HPW and Transformational leadership, respectively. The standard deviations range from .862 to .633 for HPWS and job performance, respectively. The Cronbach's alpha values were for 0.927 for job performance, 0.971 for Transformational leadership and 0.963 for HPWS. All of the values were above the acceptable range and confirmed the construct reliability.

Furthermore, all the variables had a positive and significant correlation with each other. Job performance had a positive and significant correlation with transformational leadership ($r=.412$, $p<.05$) and HPWS ($r=.324$, $p<.324$).

Moreover, transformational leadership and HPWS were also positively and significantly correlated ($r=.697$, $p<.05$). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to identify the fitness of adapted scales, and it was found that all the fit indices of the model were within the range deemed acceptable. Moreover, the results of CFA also showed that one dimension of HPWS, i.e. job rotation was not found to be significant in Omani context. Therefore, HPWS and the scale of job performance were also left with 9 items.

Table 1. Descriptive, Reliability and Correlation (N=400)

	Scales	Mean	SD	I	II	III
I	Job Performance	3.86	.633	(.927)		
II	Transformational leadership	3.57	.742	.412*	(.971)	
III	High-Performance Work System	4.30	.862	.324*	.697*	(.963)

It is typically found in the self-reported data. Harman's one-factor test is one of the most common methods, and it is taken as a remedy in this regard (Bish et al., 2015). The present study was administered on 55 items, and those were restricted to a single factor. The variance was 43.573%, which is less than the threshold point (< 50%). Therefore, the bias was not found.

Table 2. One factor Model (CMV)

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	24.401	43.573	43.573	24.401	43.573	43.573
2	5.203	9.291	52.865			
3	4.081	7.287	60.151			
4	1.818	3.247	63.399			
.	.	.	.			
.	.	.	.			
.	.	.	.			
54	.056	.100	99.824			
55	.054	.096	99.920			
56	.045	.080	100.000			

Note: Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

For testing structural equation modeling (SEM), Preacher and Hayes (2008) recommended the path exploration. In this study, two different models were tested for investigating mediation. Model 1 examines the direct effect between transformational leadership and job performance, whereas, Model 2 shows the indirect effect of transformational leadership on job performance through HPWS.

Table 3 reveals the fit indices of both the models, and all the indices are more significant than the acceptable level (Hair et al., 2006).

Table 3. Fit Indices of the Model

Model	CMIN/DF	GFI	AGFI	NFI	CFI	RMR	RMSEA
Model 1	4.556	.890	.847	.931	.932	.026	.026
Model 2	4.479	.870	.822	.900	.920	.036	.093

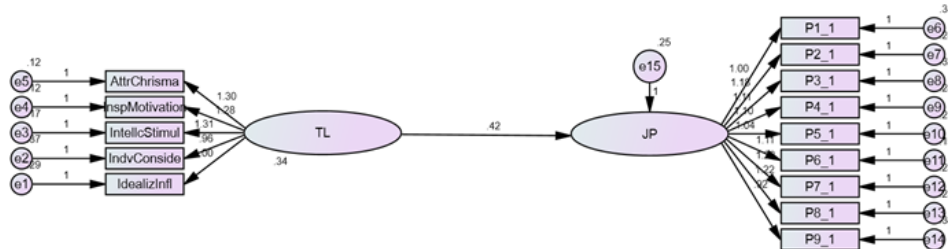


Figure 1: Model 1: Direct Relationship

***p < .001

Note. TL= Transformational leadership, HPWS= High Performance Work System, JP= Job Performance

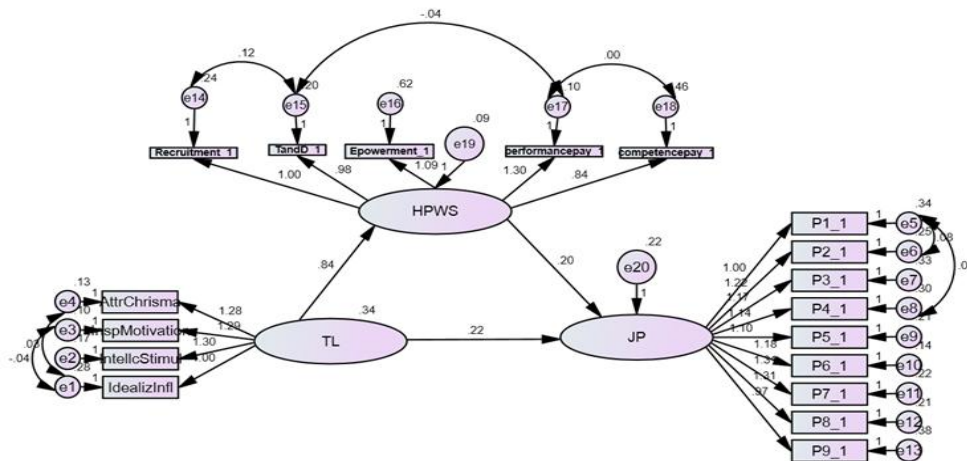


Figure 2. Model 2: The Mediation Model

***p < .001, **p < .05

Note. TL= Transformational leadership, HPWS= High Performance Work System, JP= Job Performance

Table 3. Direct and Indirect effects

Hypothesis	Direct Effects	Indirect Effect	Total Effect	Ratio of Indirect effect to total effect (%)	Results
TLJP→	.42***				Supported
TL→ HPWS	.86***				Supported
HPWS → JP	.20**				Supported
TL→ HPWS→ JP	.22***	.20**	.42**	47.61%	Partially Supported

*Note: TL= Transformational leadership, JP= Job Performance, HPWS= High Performance Work System, ***p < .001, **p<.05*

The results support the first hypothesis as the positive and significant effect of transformational leadership on job performance (path coefficient=.42, $p < .001$). The mediating effect of HPWS was examined through the second model. The results of the second model revealed that transformational leadership positively affects HPWS (path coefficient=.86, $p < .001$), and HPWS has a significant influence on job performance (path coefficient=.20, $p < .05$), which is supporting H2 and H3 respectively. HPWS, as a mediator, was also examined through the consequence of transformational leadership on job performance. Path coefficient was 0.22 for it and $p < 0.05$ with a proportion of indirect effect to total effect as 47.61% partially supporting the fourth hypothesis.

Results Discussion

The present study aims to examine the impact of transformational leadership on job performance and explore the possible linkage with HPWS as a mediator. The results are based on responses of 400 employees from the service sector organizations in Oman. The results of this study reveal a positive and significant effect of transformational leadership on HPWS and job performance and HPWS. Moreover, the effect of HPWS has also been found to be on job performance. Additionally, the hypothesized role of HPWS in the relationship between transformational leadership and job performance is partially supported.

Transformational leadership is found to have a positive and significant impact on job performance. Past literature is an evidence of the fact that transformational leaders become the role models and have a positive impact of job performance (Anwar and Ahmad, 2012; Cavazotte et al., 2013; Isabirye and Moloi, 2019; Mokoena and Dhurup, 2019; Bonal et al., 2019; Galatti et al., 2019; Polat et al., 2019).

This research also found a positive impact of transformational leadership on HPWS, which is unique as this area did not get much attention in the past. The

empirical evidence of this study advocates that transformational leadership can be a source of creating synergy among HR practices. In order to gain and sustain competitive advantage, HR practices need to support leadership style (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007; Ozgen, 2019; Casas-Rosal et al., 2019; Afonso and Silva, 2019). The inspiring leader positively influences the adoption of appropriate practices as well as their implementation (Vermeeren et al., 2014).

The results have also found a positive and significant relationship between HPWS and job performance. The findings of this study are in line with the preceding research and support with significant empirical evidence as it was proposed that performance increases due to the implementation of HPWS (Imran and Fatima, 2015; Imran et al., 2015; Karatepe and Vatankhah, 2014).

The current research hypothesized HPWS as a mediator in the relationship between transformational leadership and job performance considering as a contribution in theoretical aspects. The current research is among pioneer researches hypothesizing and empirically exploring this relationship. Consequently, keeping the theoretical and practical flaws in view, the current research has tried to fill the gaps and explores partial support for this hypothesized relationship. It means that there is a direct and indirect relationship between transformational leadership and job performance.

The results of this study provide useful suggestions for the practitioners in designing and adopting policies and practices for employees to boost performance. The results suggest that transformational leaders can influence job performance by adopting and implementing the right bundle of HR practices in HPWS. These leaders are in a better position to understand what will work as a motivator in their organization. Thus, the organizations should involve direct leadership in developing required HR policies and procedures. Usually, these are separate domains, and leadership is usually missing from the equation. However, this research proposes a practical model for organizations to integrate both.

Conclusion

Job performance is a variable of immense interest for the researchers as it is an important tool to indicate long-run sustainability. Since long, the research of HRM and leadership focuses on people management for maximizing performance. Researchers have repeatedly stated that more theoretical and empirical research should consider the impact of transformational leadership on HPWS, which can, in turn, affect job performance. The current research has moved in this direction and tried to bridge these gaps by proposing and examining an integrated model whereby the impact of transformational leadership directly and indirectly through HPWS is assessed on job performance.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite many contributions, no study comes without limitations, and these must be considered while interpreting the results. The current research also has a few limitations. First, the research is based on the uni-dimensional construct of HPWS. As HPWS is a bundle of HR practices, it is important to see the role of these all practice in the said relationship. Firstly, future research may use a multi-dimensional construct of HPWS. Secondly, the research is based on cross-sectional data; however, these kinds of relationships usually take a longer period of time to be assessed. Therefore, future researches should use a longitudinal design for examining these kinds of relationships. Thirdly, the data is collected from the service sector collectively. As HPWS is a bundle of HR practices and it might vary sector to sector. Future research is suggested to compare different sectors in order to get more elaborated findings.

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WYSOKOWYDAJNY SYSTEM PRACY: WAŻNY ZWIĄZEK MIĘDZY TRANSFORMACYJNYM PRZYWÓDZTWEM A WYDAJNOŚCIĄ W MIEJSCU PRACY

Streszczenie: Celem badania jest zbadanie wpływu przywództwa transformacyjnego na wyniki w pracy. Ponadto badanie analizuje pośredniczący wpływ systemu pracy o wysokiej wydajności (HPWS) w związku między przywództwem transformacyjnym a wydajnością pracy. Do badania wybrano celowo 400 respondentów z omańskich organizacji usługowych. Wyniki pokazują, że przywództwo transformacyjne ma pozytywny i znaczący wpływ na HPWS i wydajność pracy. Ponadto HPWS miał również pozytywny wpływ na wydajność pracy. Stwierdzono częściowe poparcie dla hipotetycznej roli HPWS jako mediatora w transformacyjnym przywództwie i relacji z wynikami pracy.

Słowa kluczowe: przywództwo transformacyjne, system pracy o wysokiej wydajności (HPWS), wydajność pracy, zarządzanie strategiczne, Oman.

高性能工作系统:变革型领导与工作绩效之间的重要联系

摘要: 该研究旨在检验变革型领导对工作绩效的影响。

此外, 该研究探索了高性能工作系统 (HPWS) 在变革型领导与工作绩效之间的中介作用。选择来自阿曼服务组织的400名受访者作为调查对象。结果表明, 变革型领导对HPWS和工作绩效具有积极而重大的影响。此外, HPWS还对工作绩效产生了积极影响。对于HPWS在变革型领导和工作绩效关系中的假定调解人角色, 我们获得了部分支持。

关键字: 变革型领导, 高性能工作系统 (HPWS), 工作绩效, 战略管理, 阿曼。