Original Paper

Transformational Leadership and Life Satisfaction: The Mediating Role of Self-esteem and Subjective Experience of Work Success

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Abstract

Transformational leadership theory seems ideal for the South African context that is experiencing significant changes since the first democratic elections in 1994. Very little evidence is available regarding the role of self-esteem and success at work in the relationship between transformational leadership and life satisfaction, especially in South Africa. Data was collected in different organizations using cross-sectional design and a convenience sample (N = 616). The results suggest that all transformational leadership characteristics were significantly related to one another on the one hand and to self-esteem, subjective experiences of work success and life satisfaction on the other hand. A good fit of the data to the hypothesized model and closer inspection of the total, direct and indirect effects confirmed the partial mediation effect of self-esteem and subjective experiences of success at work in the relationship between transformational leadership and life satisfaction. Managerial implications and suggestions for future studies are provided.

1. Introduction

South African have noticed drastic changes during the past twenty-five years in their social and work life. With the many changes in the business environment, we have also noticed that organizational leadership has also gone through several changes such as the emergence of transformational leadership (Jauhar, Ting, Rahim, & Fareen, 2017). Transformational leaders can encourage and inspire followers to achieve results that are beyond expectations. This ability is generally based on three personality characteristics, which include charisma; individual attention; and intellectual stimulation (Bertocci, 2009).

Work occupies a central role in most people's lives. The experiences people encounter at work have the potential to improve or thwart their well-being significantly. Many people expect their work to provide not only financial rewards but feelings of happiness and satisfaction with life. Indeed, many people hope that work will provide life with a sense of purpose or meaning. One of the most influential individuals for employees in an organisation is the leader (Arakawa & Greenberg, 2007). Yet, whereas transformational leadership and job satisfaction have been investigated extensively (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Boehnke, Bontis, DiStefano, & DiStefano, 2003; Chang & Lee, 2007; Fernandez, 2008; Griffith, 2004; Hanaysha, Khalid, Mat, Sarassina, Rahman, & Zakaria, 2012; Mohammad Mosadegh Rad & Hossein Yarmohammadian, 2006; Puni, Mohammed & Asamoah, 2018; Shaw & Newton, 2014; Siddique, Aslam, Khan, & Fatima, 2011; Wan Omar & Hussin, 2013; Yang & Islam, 2012; Yang, 2014) very little is known about the link between work-related factors, primarily the link between transformational leadership and life satisfaction. We do know that transformational leadership is associated with enhanced psychological well-being (Arnold, Turner, Barling, Kelloway, & McKee, 2007). Also, we know that research (Arnold et al., 2007; van Dierendonck, Haynes, Borrill, & Stride, 2004) have demonstrated that high-quality leadership has the potential to influence others subjective well-being positively. More specifically, we also know that transformational leadership positively contributes to life satisfaction (Amin, Yusnita, Ibrahim, & Muda, 2013). Recent studies (Jackson & Lushozi, 2014a, 2014b; Jackson, 2017) have also confirmed the positive link between transformational leadership and subjective experiences of work success as well as the mediating role of self-esteem in the relationship between transformational leadership and employee outcome.

The recent movement towards positive psychology has generated a significant amount of interest in the concept of life satisfaction (Pavot & Diener, 2008). Life satisfaction is defined as a cognitive assessment of satisfaction with one's life circumstances (Erdogan, Bauer, Truxillo, & Mansfield, 2012). The top-down approach depicts life satisfaction as a function of stable personality traits (Heller, Watson, & Ilies, 2004). The bottom-up approach to life satisfaction suggests that satisfaction with different life domains such as family, friends, health, financial and jobs (Schimmack & Oishi, 2005) including the gratification of basic human needs can result in higher levels of life satisfaction (Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2002). Leaders, who provide support for autonomy, offer developmental feedback and form high-quality relationships with their followers are likely to satisfy followers' need for autonomy, competence and belongingness respectively. The satisfaction of these needs, in turn, can enhance followers' intrinsic motivation and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Research (Tuckey, Bakker, & Dollard, 2012) suggest that leaders can have a significant impact on their followers' health and well-being, not only in terms of creating psychological distress and other adverse outcomes but also by enhancing general psychological well-being. However, there is a scarcity of research on how different leadership styles influence life satisfaction (Erdogan et al., 2012).

Life satisfaction research has been criticized on the grounds that it has largely ignored the work domain and has mainly examined non-work populations such as, children, adolescents, students and people

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with health problems (Erdogan, Bauer, Truxillo, & Mansfield, 2012; Hakanen & Schaufeli, 2012; Loewe, Bagherzadeh, Castillo, Thieme, & Batista-Foguet, 2014). The criticism is levelled at the possibility that results from non-work samples may not be generalizable to the work context (Chughtai, 2018) or employees for that matter. Very little evidence is available regarding the role of self-esteem and success at work in the relationship between transformational leadership and life satisfaction, world-wide and more especially in South Africa. Hence the need for this effort to fill this void. Besides, this contribution seeks to extend our understanding of life satisfaction by incorporating both the bottom-up (work-related predictors such as transformational leadership and subjective experiences of success at work) and top-down approach (using self-esteem as a personal feature) to the study of life satisfaction. The context (South African private and public organisations) of the study is also a novel feature of life satisfaction empirical research, where very little is known about the proposed relationships in the workplace. The approach taken in this effort to study life satisfaction is therefore unique.

Building on previous empirical work (Amin et al., 2013; Jackson & Lushozi, 2014a; 2014b; Jackson, 2017), this submission proposes and test a mediating conceptual model (Figure 1, below). In this model, the dimensions of transformational leadership serve as predictors of self-esteem, subjective experiences of work success and life satisfaction. More specifically, the conceptual model portrays self-esteem and subjective experiences of work success as mediators in the relationship between the dimensions of transformational leadership and life satisfaction.
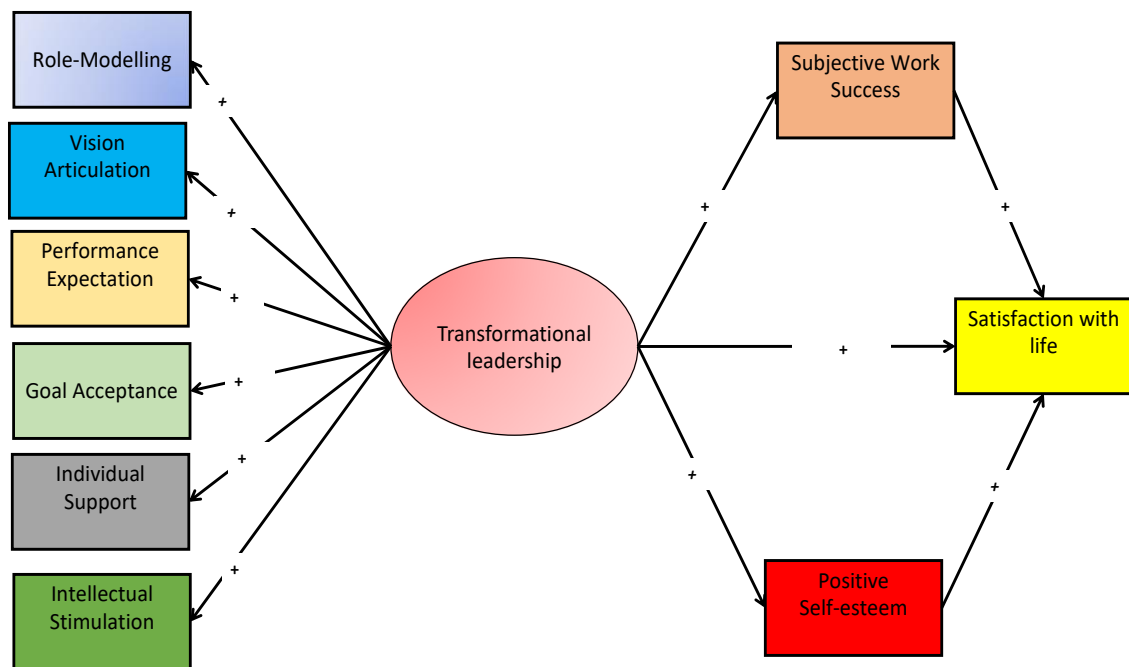

Figure 1. The Hypothetical Model

Source: Author

2. Theory and Research Objectives

This study focusses on the mediating effects of self-esteem and subjective experiences of work success in the relationship between transformational leadership and satisfaction with life. These constructs will be focused on next.

2.1 Model Antecedent: Transformational Leadership

Originally this leadership style was introduced by Burns (1978), extended by Bass (1985) and further expanded by Bass and Avolio (1995, 1997). This leadership theory that is also known as the full-range leadership theory (FRLT) has been widely used in leadership studies and have achieved unparalleled utility in the management and leadership literature (Antonakis & House, 2013). Transformational leaders have been described as representatives of change that can incite employees towards a new set of (corporate) values and behaviors (McShane & Von Glinow, 2015). This leadership theory, therefore, seems ideal for the South African work context that has experienced substantial changes since the first democratic elections in 1994. This submission operationalizes transformational leadership in line with the conceptualization of leadership of Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Moorman and Fetter (1990) who described this style as multidimensional that consist of six critical features including identifying and articulating a vision, providing an appropriate model or role modelling, facilitating the acceptance of group goals, setting high performance expectations, providing individualized support and intellectual stimulating team members.

Empirical findings suggest that transformational leadership affects individuals, groups and organizations (Barrick, Thurgood, Smith, & Courtright, 2015; Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson, 2003). Transformational leadership has been linked to job satisfaction (Atmojo, 2015; Choi, Goh, Adam & Tan, 2016; Puni et al., 2018), employee empowerment (Choi, Goh, Adam & Tan, 2016; Han, Seo, Yoon & Yoon, 2016), work motivation (Bronkhorst, Steijn, & Vermeeren, 2015; Deschamps, Rinfret, Lagacé & Privé, 2016), employee performance (Atmojo, 2015; Buil, Martínez & Matute, 2019), work engagement (Breevaart & Bakker, 2018; Buil, Martínez, & Matute, 2019; Mohammed, Fernando, & Caputi, 2013; Yasin Ghadi, Fernando, & Caputi, 2013), job crafting (Wang, Demerouti, & Le Blanc, 2017), organisational citizenship behaviour (Buil, Martínez, & Matute, 2019; Han, Seo, Yoon, & Yoon, 2016; Lofquist & Matthiesen, 2018; Shapira-Lishchinsky & Raftar-Ozery, 2018), job involvement (Sheikh, Newman, & Al Azzeh's, 2013), subjective experiences of work success (Jackson & Lushozi, 2014a, 2014b; Jackson, 2017), and organisational commitment (Atmojo, 2015; Han, Seo, Yoon, & Yoon, 2016; Jackson & Lushozi, 2014a, 2014b; Jackson, 2017). This study, however, aims at exploring the predictive role of transformational leadership in employee orientations, attitudes and outcomes such as self-esteem, subjective experiences of work success and life satisfaction.

2.2 Model Outcome: Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction measures an individual's overall assessment of their life circumstances (Erdogan et al., 2012). It provides a subjective assessment of an individual's happiness and is considered to be one of the leading indicators of wellbeing (Newman, Nielsen, Smyth, & Hooke, 2014). Life satisfaction, a

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global measure of well-being, represents the comparison between self-imposed standards and real conditions in one's overall life. The smaller the discrepancy, the more a person is satisfied with their life in general (Chen, Wu, Lin, & Ye, 2018). Some researchers distinguish between the terms of 'happiness', 'well-being' and 'life satisfaction', but others use these terms interchangeably (Veenhoven, 1996; Schyns, 1998; Posel & Casale, 2011). For example, Schyns (1998) found a high correlation between mean happiness and mean life satisfaction, and suggests that happiness and life satisfaction are very similar concepts.

Different personal and demographic factors influence life satisfaction (Schyns, 1998). Life satisfaction, for instance, has been linked to unemployment (Møller & Radloff, 2010), age (Powdthavee, 2003; 2005), education (Mahadea & Rawad, 2008; Powdthavee, 2003), marital status (Powdthavee, 2003), gender (Hinks & Gruen, 2007; Mahadea & Rawad, 2008), health (Veenhoven, 1996), importance of religion (Rule, 2007), geographic location (Graham & Felton, 2006), and absolute income (Powdthavee, 2003). Life satisfaction is also related to several work-related outcomes, such as burnout and job performance (Haar and Roche, 2010; Jones, 2006). Many studies (Abolghasemi & Varaniyab, 2010; Civitci, 2015; Fredrickson, 2001, 2004; Hamarat, Thompson, Zabrucky, Steele, Matheny & Aysan, 2001; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984;) have also shown that work-related stress impact on life satisfaction. Hours worked, and types of work are also related to life satisfaction (Appleton & Song 2008). Multiple reviews show that work-family conflict is associated with a wide variety of adverse outcomes (Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux & Brinley, 2005; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998), including life satisfaction. There is in this regard, some evidence demonstrating the benefits of perceived organisational support, the informal organisational and supervisor support at work (Kossek, Pichler, Bodner & Hammer, 2011; Newman, Nielsen, Smyth & Hooke, 2014). Servant leadership, work engagement and organizational-based self-esteem are also linked to increased life satisfaction (Chughtai, 2017). In this study, the focus is on the mediating effects of self-esteem and subjective experiences of work success in the relationship between transformational leadership and satisfaction with life.

2.3 Mediators in the Model: Self-esteem and Subjective Experiences of Work Success

Mediators are variables that provide additional information about how or why two variables (dependent and independent) are strongly associated (Jackson & Lushozi, 2014a; 2014b) According to Wu and Zumbo (2007), for a mediation model, the independent variable (transformational leadership) is presumed to cause the mediator (self-esteem and subjective experiences of work success), and in turn, the mediator causes the additional influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable (life satisfaction). Empirical evidence suggest that leaders are more likely to influence their subordinate's health and well-being indirectly by influential their work environment (Ilies, Morgeson & Nahrgang, 2005; Nielsen, Randall, Yarker & Brenner, 2008) and by strengthening their personal resources (Jackson & Lushozi, 2014a; 2014b; Jackson, 2017; Nielsen & Munir 2009; Nielsen, Randall, Yarker & Brenner, 2008; Tims, Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2011). Early studies have suggested that self-efficacy and self-esteem are two significant mediators between transformational leadership and followers'

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outcomes (e.g., Jackson & Lushozi, 2014a; 2014b; Lui, Siu, & Shi, 2010; Pillai & Williams, 2004). *Self-esteem* has been linked to the handling of conflict situations, task interdependence, and relationships with others (Brockner, 1988; Duffy, Shaw, & Stark, 2000; Leary & Baumeister, 2000). People's evaluation of the self is primarily grounded in their relationship with others (McAllister & Bigley, 2002) consequently one may expect that interactions with leaders or supervisors are likely to affect one's self-esteem (Van Knippenberg, Van Knippenberg, De Cremer & Hogg, 2004). In line with this reasoning, Shamir, House and Arthur (1993) propose that charismatic leadership, in part, derives its effectiveness from its effects on follower self-esteem. *Perceived subjective experiences of work success* in this study, refers to the extent employees perceive that they are meeting and exceeding standards and that they are performing well at work. The concept also refers to the respect that employees earn from co-workers as consequences of being so successful at work. Ng, Eby, Sorenson and Feldman (2005:367) argued that work success is the "accumulative positive work and psychological outcomes resulting from one's work experience". Work success represents a feeling of pride and personal accomplishment that comes from knowing that one has done one's personal best (Eby, Butts, & Lockwood, 2003).

Self-esteem is a positive predictor of satisfaction with life (e.g., Zawadzka, Kosakowska-Berezecka, & Niesiobędzka, 2016; Diener & Diener, 1995, 2009), and this relationship has been confirmed in many studies in many cultures (Campbell, 1981; Diener & Diener, 1995). Self-esteem is also positively associated with subjective experiences of work success (Jackson & Lushozi, 2014). Research (Arnold et al., 2007; Chughtai, 2017; Van Dierendonck, Haynes, Borrill, & Stride, 2004) have demonstrated that high-quality leadership has the potential to influence others subjective well-being positively. We also know that transformational leadership positively contributes to life satisfaction (Amin, Yusnita, Ibrahim, & Muda, 2013). Recent studies (Jackson & Lushozi, 2014a; 2014b; Jackson, 2017) have also confirmed the positive link between transformational leadership and subjective experiences of work success as well as the mediating role of self-esteem in the relationship between transformational leadership and employee outcome. It is therefore argued in this study, and in line with the above empirical evidence that transformational leadership is presumed to cause the mediators namely, self-esteem and subjective experiences of work success, and in turn, the mediators would trigger supplementary influence form transformational leadership on life satisfaction, the dependent variable.

2.4 Research Objectives

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the link between transformational leadership, self-esteem, subjective experiences of work success and satisfaction with life. *The secondary objectives of this study* were to determine

- The relationship between transformational leadership, self-esteem, subjective experiences of work success and satisfaction with life;

- The role of transformational leadership in self-esteem, subjective experiences of work success and satisfaction with life;

- The role of transformational leadership and self-esteem in subjective experiences of work success and satisfaction with life;
- The role of transformational leadership, self-esteem and subjective experiences of work success in satisfaction with life; and

3. Method

3.1 Research Design and Methods

The quantitative approach was selected based on the nature of the data. A cross-sectional design using questionnaires was selected as the most applicable method in obtaining data for this study. Permission was sought from management to do the study in the various South African companies, and it was granted. The confidential and anonymous nature of the study was explained to respondents before distributing the questionnaire. In addition, the questionnaire did not require any identification, such as name or personnel numbers, from the respondents. An informed consent letter was given to respondents with the questionnaire to explain the purpose of the study to emphasize the confidential and anonymous nature of the study. Two weeks were provided for completion, and reminder emails were sent prior to the collection of the fully completed questionnaire.

3.2 Sample Characteristics

This data collection part of this project formed part of a practical empirical assignment by MBA second-year students. Students were expected to obtain permission from management and participants (via consent forms) to collect data in their organizations, to analyze the data and to write a report on the impact of transformational leadership on employee beliefs and attitudes. Students received course credits for submission of the assignment. The target population was those employees in South African organizations that could read and write, to whom MBA second-year students could have excess to and are willing to participate in the study. Six hundred and sixteen employees fully completed questionnaires could be used in the final analysis. Additional characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Sample Characteristics (N=616)

Demographics	Sub-groups	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	**Male**	**329**	**53.4**
	Female	285	46.3
	Missing	2	0.3
Age	18 – 25	67	10.8
	26 – 35	**258**	**41.9**
	36 – 45	154	25.0
	46 – 55	63	10.2

	56 – 65+	26	4.2
	Missing	49	8.0
Race	White	256	41.2
	Black	**296**	**48.1**
	Coloured	21	3.4
	Indian	32	5.2
	Other	5	0.8
	Missing	6	1.0
Qualifications	**Grade 12**	**219**	**76**
	Certificate	28	9.7
	Diploma	7	2.4
	Degree	17	5.9
	Post-Graduation	1	0.3
	Missing	16	5.7
Sector	Government / Public	85	13.8
	Manufacturing	133	21.6
	Mining	69	11.2
	Engineering	81	13.1
	Agriculture	18	2.9
	Retail	21	3.4
	Service	142	23.1
	Missing	67	10.9

The majority of the participant were male (53.4%), between the age of 26 and 35 (41.9%), Black (48.1%), with a grade 12 certificate (76%), and employed in the service sector.

3.3 Measuring Instruments

- *The Transformational Leadership Scale* (Podsakoff et al., 1990). This is a 28-item scale that measures seven transformational and charismatic leadership traits, uses a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = very little to 7 = very much. The scale consists of seven subscales to assess different leadership characteristics namely *Articulate a vision* (5 items), *Role-Modelling* (3 items), *Fostering acceptance of goals* (4 items), *High performance expectations* (3 items), *Individual support* (4 items), *Intellectual stimulation* (4 items) and *Transactional leader behavior* – not used in this study (5 items). Jackson and Lushozi (2014a) obtained Cronbach Alphas between .96 to .71 for the Transformational leadership sub-scales.

- The *Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale* (RSE; Rosenberg, 1965). The RSE is a 10-item measure and adjusted the 4-point scale by using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The measure contains five positively and five negatively phrased items. Sample items include "I

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feel that I have a number of good qualities" and "All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure. Scores on all negatively phrased items were reversed before the analyses. Jackson and Lushozi (2014b) obtained a Cronbach Alphas of .71 for the RSE (Rosenberg, 1965).

- *Subjective Experiences of Work Success Scale* (SEWSS) (Jackson, Van de Vijver & Ali, 2011). This instrument measures the participant's perception of his or her work success and reputation at work. This 14-item measure uses a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. An example of one of the items on this scale included "I do my work well enough to be complimented for it by my superiors". Jackson, Van de Vijver and Ali (2011) obtained a Cronbach Alphas of .85 with the (SEWSS)

- *The Satisfaction with Life Scale* (an adaptation of Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). This five-item scale (sample item: "I am satisfied with my life") was complemented with two additional items ("Life is worth living" and "All in all, I am satisfied with my life these days"). The scale primarily addresses the cognitive components of satisfaction with life. Literature reviews confirm that this scale is one of the most widely-used measures of general well-being (Goetz, Ehret, Jullien, & Hall, 2006).

- Finally, a *biographical questionnaire* was included gender, age, race, and educational attainment and sector.

3.4 Statistical Analysis

The statistical analysis was carried out with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 25, 2019). Exploratory factor analyses were carried out to investigate the construct validity of the measuring instruments. Firstly, a simple principal component analysis was conducted on the constructs that form part of the measurement model, namely job demands and resources and the eigenvalues and scree plot were studied to determine the number of factors to extract. Kaiser (1960) recommends extracting factors with eigenvalues larger than 1.00. Additionally, the scree plot can also be used to determine the number of factors. Cattell (1966) advises that the point of inflection of the scree plot be considered (Field, 2009; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Descriptive statistics (e.g. means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis) were used to determine the distribution pattern of the data. To ensure that the data were normally distributed, a cut-off point of 2.00 was set for skewness (Finch & West, 1997) and 4.00 for kurtosis (Field, 2009). Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) recommend a guideline of 0.70 as an acceptable cut-off point. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used to specify the relationship between the variables. In terms of statistical significance, it was decided to set the value at a 95% confidence interval level ($p < 0,05$). Effect sizes (Steyn, 1999) were used to decide on the practical significance of the findings. The parameters 0.10 (small effect), 0.30 (medium effect) and 0.50 (large effect) were set for practical significance of the correlations (Steyn, 1999). A cut-off point of 0.30 (medium effect) was set for the practical significance of correlation coefficients (Cohen, 1988). A step-wise multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the proportion of variance in the dependent variables of self-esteem, subjective experience of work success and satisfaction with

life that is predicted by the independent variables (characteristics of transformational leadership). The effect size in the case of multiple regressions is given by the formula (Steyn, 1999): $f^2 = R^2/(1-R^2)$. The following parameters 0.01 (small effect), 0.10 (medium effect) and 0.35 (large effect) were set for practical significance of f^2 (Steyn, 1999). Structural Equation Modelling (using multigroup analysis) was performed using the AMOS 20 programme to test for mediating effects of positive self-esteem, and subjective experiences of work success mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and satisfaction with life.

4. Results

Results of the study are presented in four sections, namely exploratory factor analyses, descriptive statistics, including the correlational analyses of all the measures used in the study. *Secondly*, regression analysis we conducted to determine (1) the role of the dimensions of transformational leadership in self-esteem, (2) the role of the dimensions of transformational leadership (in the first step) and self-esteem in subjective experiences of work success, and (3) the role of the dimensions of transformational leadership (in the first step), self-esteem (in the second step), and in subjective experiences of work success (in the third step) in satisfaction with life. *Thirdly*, testing for the mediating effect of self-esteem and subjective experiences of work success in the relationship between transformation leadership characteristics and satisfaction with life, using SEM (multigroup analysis).

4.1 Exploratory Factor Analyses

The results obtained from separate exploratory factor analyses (EFA) and inspections of the scree plots and eigenvalues of the factors indicated that all scales used to assess critical situational work-related variables and employee attitudes were one-dimensional. The choice for one factor was based on problems in interpreting multi-factorial solutions and on the sharp decrease of the eigenvalue after the first factor. The uni-factorial solutions extracted explained 81.82% of the variance in *vision articulation*, 90.94% of the variance in *role modelling*, 87.04% of the variance in *goal acceptance*, 81.94% of the variance in *high performance expectation* and 60.66% of the variance in *individual support*, 85.85% of the variance in *intellectual stimulation*, 51.78 of the variance in *generalized self-efficacy*, 51.38% of the variance in positive *self-esteem,* 51.98% of the variance in negative *self-esteem,* 46.02% of the variance in *subjective experience of work success,* 66.02% of the variance in *organizational commitment* and 52.26% of the variance in satisfaction with life.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics and Correlational Analysis

This section focuses on descriptive statistics of the variables covered in the study. The descriptive statistics of the variables in the study are presented in Table 2 below. Internal consistency calculated for the research data using Cronbach's alpha, skewness and kurtosis are presented in Table 2. Table 3 also summarizes the correlation coefficients between the constructs.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlational Analysis

	α	Eigen values	Variance explained	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
1. Vison articulation	.94	4.09	81.82	4.74	1.57	-0.67	-0.35
2. Role modelling	.95	2.73	90.94	4.72	1.76	-0.58	-0.66
3. Goal acceptance	.95	3.48	87.04	4.89	1.60	-0.71	-0.32
4.Perform expectations	.89	2.46	81.94	5.20	1.39	-0.93	0.56
5. Individual support	.58	1.82	60.66	4.50	1.27	0.00	-1.15
6. Intellectual stimulation	.95	3.43	85.85	4.69	1.54	-0.65	-0.20
7. Work success	.87	4.60	46.02	4.18	0.50	-0.91	2.90
8. Positive Self-esteem	.76	2.57	51.38	4.21	0.55	-0.73	1.06
9. Life satisfaction	.84	3.66	52.26	3.71	0.67	-0.44	0.54

Inspection of Table 2 indicates that the Cronbach alpha of all scales falls within the acceptable range of 0.70 and above (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994) required for data to be useable in research of a similar nature. Table 2 also indicates that the data for all scales used were normally distributed given the guidelines of 2.00 for skewness (Finch & West, 1997) and 4.00 for kurtosis (Field, 2009).

Table 3. The Correlation Coefficients between the Constructs

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Vison articulation	-							
2. Role modelling	.86**	-						
3. Goal acceptance	.86**	.83**	-					
4. Perform expectations	.70**	.65**	.74**	-				
5. Individual support	.64**	.65**	.68**	.54**	-			
6. Intellectual stimulation	.80**	.77**	.81**	.70**	.63**	-		
7. Work success	.15**	.17**	.15**	.17**	.16**	.14**	-	
8. Positive Self-esteem	.11**	.10*	.16**	.21**	.14**	.14**	.53**	-
9. Life satisfaction	.23**	.23**	.22**	.20**	.18**	.23**	.32**	.40**

Note. $^{**}p < .00 / p < .05$

Table 3 suggests that all transformational leadership characteristics were statistically significantly related to one another (large effects) on the one hand and with self-esteem (small effects) subjective experiences of work success (small effects) and satisfaction with life on the other hand.

4.3 Regression Analysis to Determine the Role of Transformational Leadership Characteristics in Self-efficacy, Self-esteem, Subjective Experiences of Work Success and Satisfaction with Life

The interested was also on the role of transformational leadership characteristics in self-esteem, subjective experiences of work success and satisfaction with life. Regression analysis with transformational leadership characteristics as predictors of positive self-esteem, subjective experiences of work success and satisfaction with life are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Regression Analysis with Transformational Leadership Characteristics as Predictors of Self-efficacy, Self-esteem, Subjective Experiences of Work Success and Satisfaction with Life

Predictors	Self-esteem	Work Success.		Satisfaction with life		
	Step 1	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
	Standardized β	Standardized β	Standardized β	Standardized β	Standardized β	Standardized β
Vision Articulation	-.13	.04	.04	.06	.11	.10
Role-modelling	-.11	.13**	.13**	.07	.11	.11
Goal acceptance	.13	.18**	.18**	.00	-.05	-.05
Performance expectations	.21**	.08	.08	.05	-.03	-.03
Individual support	.08	.15**	.15**	.02	-.01	-.01
Intellectual stimulation	.03	.35**	.35**	.08	.07	.06
Self-esteem			.04		.39**	.39**
Subjective Work success						.03
F	5.85	221.60	189.63	6.58	21.89	19.16
p	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
R	.23	.83	.83	.25	.45	.45
R^2	.06	.68	.68	.06	.20	.20
F^2	.06	2.13	2.13	.06	.25	.25
Effect size	Medium	Large	Large	Medium	Medium	Medium

Note. ** $p < .00$ / $p < .05$

Table 4 revealed that 6% of the variance in self-esteem were explained by transformational leadership feature, with performance expectations (β=.21 / t=3.42) proving to be the only statistically significant predictor of positive self-esteem. 68% of the variance in subjective experiences of work success were explained by transformational leadership characteristics, with role modelling (β=.13 / t=2.76), goal acceptance (β=.18 / t=3.30), individual support (β=.15 / t=4.77) and intellectual stimulation (β=.35 / t=8.12) proving to be only statistically significant predictor of subjective experiences of work success.

However, with the inclusion of positive self-esteem the variance explained remained the same (68%) with still role modelling (β=.13 / t=2.76), goal acceptance (β=.18 / t=3.30), individual support (β=.15 / t=4.77) and intellectual stimulation (β=.35 / t=8.12) proving to be only statistically significant predictor of subjective experiences of work success. In addition, 6% of the variance of satisfaction with life was explained by the features of transformational leadership, with none of the predictors proving to be statistically significant predictors. A 14% increase were realized with the inclusion of positive self-esteem in the second model with 20% of the variance of satisfaction with life explained by the features of transformational leadership and positive self-esteem, with only positive self-esteem (β=.39 / t=10.38) proving to be statistically significant predictors. However, no additional variance was explained the inclusion of subjective experiences of work success in the third model with still only positive self-esteem (β=.39 / t=10.38) proving to be the only significant predictor of satisfaction with life.

4.4 The Mediating Effects of Self-esteem in the Relation between Transformational Leadership and Employee Attitudes

Structural Equation Modelling (multigroup analysis) was performed using AMOS 25 (IBM, 2019) for testing for mediating effects of positive self-esteem and subjective experiences of work success in the relationship between characteristics of transformational leadership and satisfaction with life. The hypothesized model is a mediation model in which characteristics of transformational leadership influence positive self-esteem and subjective experiences of work success, which in turn impact on life satisfaction. Closer examination was made of the direct and indirect effects to evaluate their relative sizes. There is quite some literature on the testing of mediation effects (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Holmbeck, 1997; Hoyle & Kenny, 1999; Judd & Kenny, 1981; Kline, 1998; Preacher & Hayes, 2004). It has been found that the method proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986) can have low statistical power and that joint significance tests involving the product of coefficients showed higher statistical power than other procedures, including the Baron and Kenny approach (MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West & Sheets, 2002).

The results of the analysis revealed that a good fit was obtained when matching the hypothetical model to the data (see Figure 2): χ^2(24, N=616) = 89.54, p < .001; χ^2/df = 3.73 (recommended ≤ 3.00), adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) = .94 (recommended ≥ .90), the Tucker Lewis index (TLI) = .97 (recommended ≥ .90), the comparative fit index (CFI) = .98 (recommended ≥ .90), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was 0.07 (recommended ≤ .06. The acceptable fit of the empirical data to the conceptual model indicates that the *relationship between* antecedent transformational leadership dimensions and satisfaction with life is mediated through positive self-esteem and subjective experiences of work success in this sample.
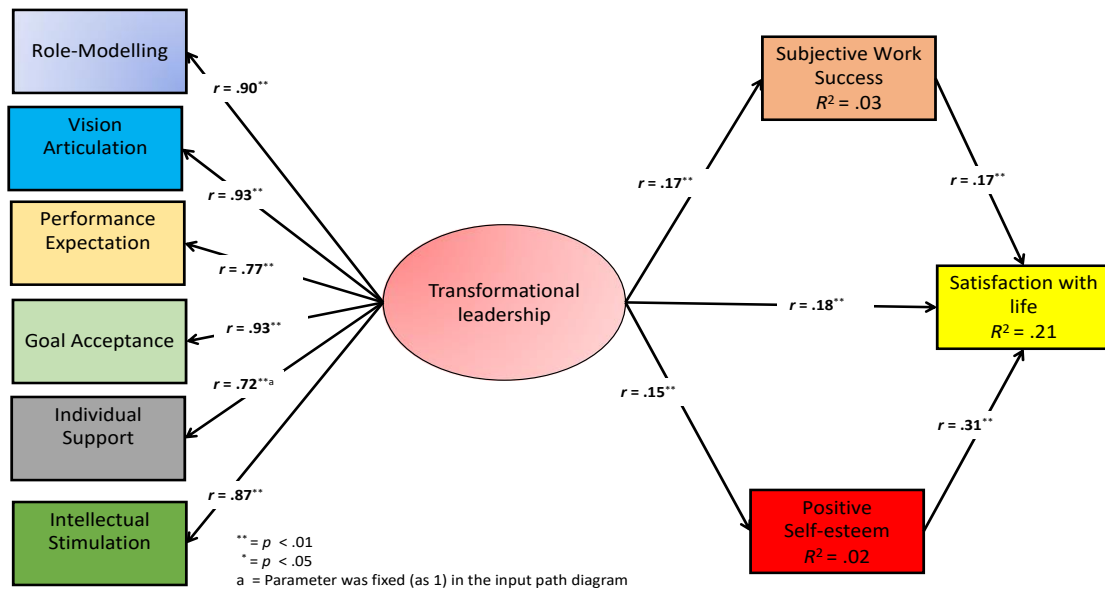
Figure 2. The Result of the SEM Analysis

Table 5. Direct, Indirect and Total Standardized Effects of Transformational Leadership Characteristics, Positive Self-Esteem and Subjective Experiences of Work Success

	Satisfaction with life		
Predictor	Direct	Indirect	Total
Transformational leadership	.19[*]	.06[*]	.25[*]
Positive self-esteem	.31[*]	.00	.31[*]
Subjective experiences of work success	.13[*]	.00	.13[*]

[*]$p < .05$.

An inspection of Table 5 indicated that in line with observations from Figure 2, transformational leadership characteristics had total, indirect and indirect effects on satisfaction with life. In addition, the significance of the total, direct and indirect effect suggests that the link with satisfaction with life is *partially mediated* by positive self-esteem and subjective experiences of work success in this sample. Transformational leadership characteristics have, therefore, a salient influence on positive self-esteem and subjective experiences of work success in this sample. Direct and indirect effects were all positive and reinforced each other to increase satisfaction with life. It can be concluded that the path from transformational leadership characteristics to satisfaction with life *is partially mediated* by positive self-esteem and subjective experiences of work success. This means that transformational leadership characteristics, positive self-esteem and subjective experiences of work success are essential for the enhancement of satisfaction with life in this sample.

5. Discussion

The first objective of this project was to determine the relationship between transformational leadership, self-esteem, subjective experiences of work success and satisfaction with life. The results seem to suggest that all transformational leadership characteristics were statistically significantly related to one another on the one hand and with self-esteem, subjective experiences of work success and satisfaction with life on the other hand. These findings are in line with results of previous empirical studies. Recent studies have also confirmed the positive relations between transformational leadership dimensions on the one hand (Amin et al., 2013; Jackson & Lushozi, 2014a; 2014b; Jackson, 2017) and self-esteem and subjective experiences of work success on the other hand (Jackson & Lushozi, 2014a; 2014b; Jackson, 2017). The positive relation between transformational leadership and satisfaction with life was also confirmed by Amin et al., (2013).

This project was also aimed at determining the role of transformational leadership in self-esteem. The results suggest that 6% of the variance in self-esteem were explained by transformational leadership feature, with *performance expectations* proving to be only statistically significant predictor of *positive self-esteem*. The predictive value of performance expectations in positive self-esteem was also confirmed by Jackson (2017). This means that when expect high-level performance from subordinates, they start to feel better about themselves because they believe that their leaders are convinced that they do have the abilities to perform well.

Another objective of this study was to determine the role of transformational leadership and self-esteem in subjective experiences of work success. 68% of the variance in subjective experiences of work success was explained by transformational leadership characteristics, with *role modelling, goal acceptance, individual support and intellectual stimulation* proving to be the only statistically significant predictor of subjective experiences of work success. However, with the inclusion of positive self-esteem, the variance explained remained the same (68%) with still *role modelling, goal acceptance, individual support and intellectual stimulation proving* to be only statistically significant predictor of *subjective experiences of work success*. The predictive value of self-esteem in subjective experiences of work success is known (Jackson & Lushozi, 2014b). In addition, the leader's expectations concerning performance of subordinates seem vital for self-esteem. There is substantial evidence that the expectations that one can accomplish one's goals are positively related to motivation and goal attainment (House, 1995). The Transformational leader can stimulate, inspire and transform subordinates to strive harder in order to achieve extraordinary outcomes (Martin & Epitropaki, 2001). Draft (2010) states that this type of leadership inspires followers to believe in their potential, to create a better prospect and future for the organization while believing in the leader personally.

The fourth objective of this study was to determine the role of transformational leadership, self-esteem and subjective experiences of work success in satisfaction with life. A 14% increase was realized with the inclusion of positive self-esteem in the second model with 20% of the variance of satisfaction with life explained by the features of transformational leadership and positive self-esteem, with only positive

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self-esteem proving to be statistically significant predictors. However, no additional variance was explained the inclusion of subjective experiences of work success in the third model with still only positive self-esteem proving to be the only significant predictor of *satisfaction with life*. This finding coincides with previous studies. Self-esteem has been identified as a positive predictor of satisfaction with life (e.g., Campbell 1981; Diener & Diener, 1995; 2009; Zawadzka et al., 2016). This means self-esteem is essential for the experience of satisfaction with life.

The last objective of this study was to determine if a hypothetical model depicting positive self-esteem and subjective experiences of work success mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and satisfaction with life. The results suggest that transformational leadership characteristics had total, indirect and indirect effects on satisfaction with life. In addition, the significance of the total, direct and indirect effect suggests that the link with satisfaction with life is *partially mediated* by positive self-esteem and subjective experiences of work success in this sample. Direct and indirect effects were all positive and reinforced each other to increase satisfaction with life. It can, therefore, be concluded that the path from transformational leadership characteristics to satisfaction with life *is partially mediated* by positive self-esteem and subjective experiences of work success. This means that transformational leadership characteristics, positive self-esteem and subjective experiences of work success are essential for the enhancement of satisfaction with life in this sample.

5.1 Theoretical and Managerial Implications

This investigation makes a few fundamental theoretical contributions. There is a scarcity of research on how different leadership styles influence life satisfaction (Erdogan et al., 2012). This study contributes to the life satisfaction literature by empirically investigating the effects of transformational leadership on this vital marker of well-being. The results suggest that transformational leadership is likely to play a crucial role in escalating employees' life satisfaction. In addition, by investigating the mediating role of positive self-esteem and subjective experiences of work success in the transformational leadership-satisfaction with life association, this study provides useful insight into the underlying processes through which transformational leadership are linked to satisfaction with life. More specifically, the results suggest that the effects of transformational leadership on satisfaction with life was indirectly transmitted through positive self-esteem and subjective experiences of work success. These findings suggest that employees feel more content with their life when leaders boost their self-esteem and success at work through demonstrating transformational leadership. Satisfaction with life research has been criticized on the basis that it has largely ignored the work environment and has mainly examined non-working samples such as children, adolescents, students and people with health problems (Hakanen & Schaufeli 2012; Loewe et al. 2014). Thus, there is a possibility that findings from these non-working samples may not be generalized to the work setting. The present contribution overcomes this limitation and extends the existing research on life satisfaction by exploring the dynamics of satisfaction with life among employees employed in various sectors in the South African workplace.

From a *managerial point of view*, the selection of individuals for leadership positions should be done with a bias towards those employees who holds features of transformational leadership since these characteristics have positive causal links with employee self-esteem, subjective experiences of work success and life satisfaction. It would be particularly important to develop organizational practices that promote respect and support fair treatment for those employees who do not have these qualities. It may even be especially useful for institutions to provide management training to their managers to obtain transformational qualities and skills and instill them in their interactions with subordinates (Puni, et al., 2018). The results suggest that employees experience more self-esteem when leaders expect that they will perform. High-performance expectations confirm that leaders trust that subordinates do have ability, skills, experience and motivation to perform. This, in turn, results in employees feeling better about themselves. This seems to confirm the self-fulling prophecy, namely that If others believe that you are worthwhile, then you more likely to feel worthwhile. In addition, the results also suggest that employees experience more success at work subjectively when leaders provide subordinates with models for performing well, encourage them to accept the goals of the organization, give them challenging assignments while also supporting them individually.

5.2 Limitations and Future Research

The current study has some limitations. The cross-sectional nature of the data used does not allow for rigorous testing of causal links between the variables at hand; therefore, the dynamic nature of the relationships between transformational leadership characteristics, positive self-esteem, subjective experiences of work success and life satisfaction cannot be uncovered with total accuracy. However, the findings constitute a useful basis for considering further research into work-related factors and personal resources that influence satisfaction with life. One also needs to consider that the use of a self-report method may be a limitation of the study. We cannot be sure that self-report measures provide an accurate picture of employees' actual responses to transformational leadership characteristics, positive self-esteem, subjective experiences of work success and satisfaction. Future empirical work could consider the role of demographic variables such as age, gender, socio-economic status with regard to their experiences of transformational leadership characteristics, positive self-esteem, subjective experiences of work success and satisfaction with life in the workplace. Future studies should also consider using longitudinal designs and recruiting larger samples from various state departments in the public sectors as well as various organizations from various sectors in the private sector and not for profit organizations, using mixed methods and according to Adkoli (2017) multiple methods, tools and techniques, such as grounded theory (to develop a theoretical model based on actual ground realities), phenomenology (to understand a phenomenon from participants' perception), ethnography (to gain insights in the organization culture), case studies (to develop in-depth understanding of a case) and narratives (to capture long personal experience). It is advised that researchers interact with the participant in a 'naturalistic setting' as opposed to an artificial 'lab setting' and helps in describing and exploring an issue to 'contextualization' rather than 'generalization'. A

method of 'triangulation' should be used for validating the results. This will facilitate the use of correct context-specific interventions.

6. Conclusion

This study makes several contributions. Life satisfaction research has been criticized on the grounds that it has largely ignored the work domain and has mainly examined non-work populations such as, children, adolescents, students and people with health problems. Very little evidence is available regarding the role of self-esteem and success at work in the relationship between transformational leadership and life satisfaction, world-wide and more especially in South Africa. In addition, this contribution extends our understanding of life satisfaction by incorporating both the bottom-up (work-related predictors such as transformational leadership and subjective experiences of success at work) and top-down approach (using self-esteem as a personal feature) to the study of life satisfaction. Transformational leadership seems to be important for psychological adjustment (how good you feel about yourself) as measured by self-esteem, sociocultural adjustment (how well you perform) as measure by subjective experiences of work success and satisfaction with life. In addition, the positive role of transformational leadership in satisfaction with life seem to be enhanced by a positive self-esteem and how successful you feel at work. These findings seem promising for enhancing overall satisfaction with life through targeting interventions in the workplace that could enhance transformational leadership, self-esteem and subjective experiences of work success.

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