

Mediating Role of Intrinsic Motivation Between Employees' Perceptions of Transformational Leadership & The Job-related Outcomes

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This study examines employees' perceptions of transformational leadership and its association with their levels of task performance and job-related psychological withdrawal when such relationships are mediated by their intrinsic motivation at work. Through relevant literature review, the study hypotheses are postulated and linked by a conceptual latent variable model. The model is tested using data collected from 792 managerial executives working in India and Indians by origin. Data were then subjected to various statistical techniques including structural equation modeling procedures. All the study hypotheses were found acceptable as was the proposed latent variable model. Subsequently, the theoretical and practical implications of the findings were discussed. The study concluded by noting its limitations and scope for future research.

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Introduction

The complexity of the contemporary work environment and the diversity of its attendant workforce require the supervisory capabilities of a few who go on to be labeled as transformational leaders. Accordingly, an individual who occupies such a position is expected to have a strong association with the work-related attitudes, behaviors, and performances of those supervised (Mullins & Christy, 2016).

A transformational leader, conceptualized as one who can transmit the organization's vision through his/her idealized influence into followers' goals, has been shown to escalate the organization's sustained competitive advantage (Iwu-James, 2011). In this connection, employees' perceived transformational leadership (EPTL) qualities result in their enhanced commitment, job satisfaction, and intrinsic motivation (IM) directed toward their task performances (Muchiri et al., 2020). The relevant literature, however, has rarely discussed the exact

mechanisms of how such EPTL translates into employees' augmented task performance (TP) and reduced negative work-directed attitudes such as cynicism, counterproductive work behaviors, deviance, job-related psychological withdrawal (JrPW), and/or apathy (Shahabuddin et al., 2020).

Thus, the objective of this study is to investigate and fulfill the above-stated research gaps by exploring the relationship between EPTL as the antecedent of employees' TP and JrPW while examining the possibility of IM as a potential mediator.

Literature Review & Hypotheses Development

In this section, the related literature is reviewed to examine the associations among the relevant constructs to formulate the study hypotheses.

EPTL and IM: The concept of transformational leadership is based on the followers' perceptions of an individual who provides intellectual stimulation and creates a collective vision of the group's purposes and objectives (Carton et al., 2014). To do so, managers who are speculated as transformational leaders, consider individual employees' abilities and aspirations and consequently design and delegate tasks that are personally meaningful and considered achievable by the latter (Buil et al., 2019). In turn, the follower employees can relate organizational goals with their personal objectives and this intrinsically motivates them to boost their task-related proficiencies and

performances (Tepper et al., 2018). Additionally, unlike transactional leadership, EPTL does not rely on contingent rewards but utilizes tools such as followers' sense of self-interest, sense of optimism, and work-related challenges to boost employee confidence and determination toward problem-solving (Khan et al., 2020). As such, the following hypothesis is propounded.

H1. Employees' perceived transformational leadership shall have a significantly positive association with follower-employees' levels of intrinsic motivation.

IM, TP, and JrPW: When employees are intrinsically motivated, their efforts towards task completion seem less stressful as the completion of the task is viewed as an inducement in itself (Shin & Grant, 2019). Furthermore, research indicates that when employees experience job autonomy that encourages job crafting, their levels of work engagement are considerably improved as a result of the enhanced sense and meaning that they can attribute to their assigned tasks (Kim & Beehr, 2021). Research further reveals that such experiences strengthen employees' psychological capital which in turn reduces their levels of job apathy and work alienation (Tims et al., 2016).

The above discussions form the basis of the following hypotheses.

H2. Intrinsic motivation of employees shall have a significantly positive association with their task performance.

H3. Employees' intrinsic motivation would be associated significantly with reduced levels of job-related psychological withdrawal.

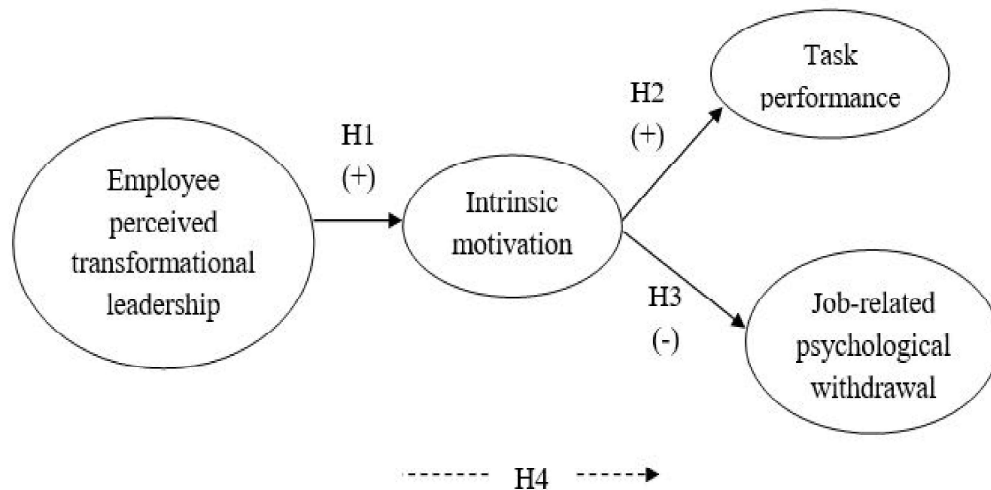
IM as a Mediator: By providing roles and responsibilities that are intellectually stimulating and intrinsically gratifying EPTL can develop favorable employee attitudes commitment, job satisfaction, and mission orientation (Zheng et al., 2021). At the same time, managers who manifest EPTL styles are expected to encourage job-related self-determination and clarity to employees' TP (Rayner & Morgan, 2018). Also, EPTL has been found to ensure employees' perceptions of psychological safety which, in turn, leads to the latter's sense of organizational identification and at-

tenuation of organizationally-directed skepticism and job-directed aloofness (Kuriakose & Soumyaja, 2020). It may also be argued that by providing adequate resources for task completion, EPTL arrests employees' job-related psychological detachment and distractions (Ghosh et al., 2020). Accordingly, the following hypothesis is posited.

H4. Employees' intrinsic motivation shall significantly mediate the relationship between their perceptions of transformational leadership as the primary antecedents of their task performance and job-related psychological withdrawal.

Overall, all the study hypotheses are put together as a conceptual latent variable model (LVM) in Fig. I.

Fig. I The Proposed Conceptual Latent Variable Model



Sample & Procedures

Data for this study were collected through a random survey conducted in multiple organizations spread across India. With

exact data not available for the workforce population, the sample size was approximated using the method when the population is infinite and accordingly, the recommended sample size was 772 (Liu, 2014).

A step-by-step approach was adopted to collect data for this study. First, the Yellow Pages Business Directory of India was consulted to randomly select 60 organizations from all over the country. Then, the human resource (HR) departments of these organizations were contacted and approval was sought for data collection. Eight out of the 60 organizations allowed their employees to take part in the study survey. Three of these eight organizations were from the manufacturing sector and the remaining five were from the services sector. Thereafter, a list of participants who agreed to fill up the study questionnaire was prepared. A cover letter explaining the study purpose, a brief profile of the researcher, a pledge of respondent anonymity, and an assurance that the data being collected was only for academic purposes and served no commercial interest were attached along with each questionnaire. About 1600 study questionnaires were distributed of which 792 filled and usable forms were returned. Thus, the response rate of this survey was 49.5 percent.

All respondents of this survey were full-time managerial cadre executives in their respective organizations. Their average age was 36.88 years and their average work experience was 10.67 years. While 438 respondents were from organizations belonging to the manufacturing sector, the remaining 354 were from those in the services sector. Further, 556 of the respondents were males and 236 were females. Moreover, 55 of the respondents were from the senior level, 283 were from the middle level, and 454 being from the junior levels of the manage-

rial cadres of their respective organizations.

Measures

It may be noted that all four study variables have been measured on a five-point scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

EPTL was measured by adapting the seven-item scale reported by Carless et al. (2000). A sample item of this scale was 'My supervisor instills pride and respect in others and inspires me by being highly competent'. The Cronbach's alpha for this measure was computed as .91.

IM of employees was measured with four items of the scale developed by Lawler III and Hall (1970). A sample item of the measure was 'Doing my job well increases my feeling of self-esteem'. The Cronbach's alpha associated with this measure was .92.

TP. Employees' TP was assessed by adapting nine items of the employee performance inventory reported by Lynch et al. (1999). An example item of this inventory was 'Employees in my organization perform tasks that are expected of them'. One of the nine items, that is, 'Employees in my organization spend time in idle conversation' had to be reverse scored. The Cronbach's alpha for this measure was .85.

To measure *employees' JrPW*, the eight-item scale developed and reported by Lehman and Simpson (1992) was adapted

and utilized. A sample item was ‘Employees in my organization spend work time on personal matters’. The Cronbach’s alpha for this measure was .84.

Control variables. In all analyses that follow, respondents’ age, work experience, sex, managerial position, and the sector to which their organization belonged were treated as control variables. While the respondents’ sex (1 = male, 2 = female) and sector to which their organization belonged (1 = manufacturing, 2 = services) were categorized as dichotomous variables, their managerial position had three categories (1 = senior, 2 = middle, and 3 = junior). Age and work experience of the respondents were treated as ratio variables and were calculated by rounding them off to the nearest year (Kim et al., 2020).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

A single-latent factor approach was considered to inspect the presence of latent variable common method bias (CMB) (Podsakoff et al., 2003). For this study, a common latent variable model (CLVM) associated with the manifest

variables of the four study constructs namely, EPTL, IM, TP, and JrPW was tested against the conceptual LVM proposed earlier (Fig. I) to check for differences in model fit. The comparative-fit-index (CFI) and the incremental-fit-index (IFI) of the proposed model were .94 and .94, respectively whereas, the same indices were .69 and .69, respectively for the CLVM. As such, the CLVM could not be accepted and this eliminated the risk of CMB in the proposed LVM.

Evaluation of the Measurement Model

The measurement model was tested by scrutinizing its reliability and validity as the main criteria of assessment (Ramayah et al., 2011). As per Table I, the composite reliability values ranged from .74 to .87 thus establishing construct reliability while the AVE values varied between .57 and .64 demonstrating convergent validity. As per the results in Table I, the squares of the inter-correlations between the study variables were less than the AVE values which provided evidence of discriminant validity (Koufteros, 1999). Additionally, the

Table I. Evaluation of the Measurement Model

Variables	CR	1	2	3	4
1. EPTL	.87	.59			
2. IM	.81	.17(.32)	.57		
3. TP	.83	.12(.49)	.14 (.47)	.63	
4. JrPW	.74	.10(.40)	.09 (.23)	.08(.21)	.64

Note. $n = 792$; CR is ‘composite reliability’; The diagonal values of the matrix represent the average variance extracted while the off-diagonal values are the squares of the inter-correlations between the study variables; Off-diagonal values in parentheses are results of the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) analysis; ‘EPTL’ is ‘Employees’ perceived transformational leadership’, ‘IM’ is ‘Intrinsic motivation’, ‘TP’ is ‘Task performance’, and ‘JrPW’ is ‘Job-related psychological withdrawal’.

heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) method (Henseler et al., 2016) was applied and as shown in Table I, these values spread from .21 to .49, thus providing further substantiation of discriminant validity.

Configural Invariance Tests

Before carrying out further analyses, the proposed model was tested for configural invariance using the grouping

variables namely, sector, gender, and LoM. Configural invariance examines the equivalence concerning the indicator variables and validity of the study constructs across groups. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 2. As per the results, the measures used were found to be invariant between the various groups and therefore, the results obtained are equally applicable to all groups considered in the present study.

Table 2 Configural Invariance Tests

Grouping Variable	Unconstrained Model		Fully Constrained Model		No. of Groups	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δdf	p-value	Invariant
	χ^2	df	χ^2	df					
Sector	1890.5	347	2131.2	694	2	240.7	347	1.000	YES
Sex	1890.5	347	2271.4	694	2	380.9	347	0.102	YES
LoM	1890.5	347	2365.8	806	3	475.3	459	0.290	YES

Note. $n = 792$; LoM is 'Level of management'.

Descriptive Statistics, Intercorrelations & Internal Reliabilities

Table 3 presents the mean, standard deviations, inter-correlations, and internal reliability indices of the key study

variables. Expectedly, EPTL and IM correlated positively and significantly ($r = .4, p d'' .05$). Further, IM correlated significantly and positively with TP ($r = .37, p d'' .05$) and negatively with JrPW ($r = -.30, p d'' .01$).

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics, Inter-correlations, & Alpha Reliability Indices

Values (→) Variables (↓)	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4
1. EPTL	3.47	.84	(.91)			
2. IM	3.37	1.23	.41*	(.92)		
3. TP	3.67	.54	.34**	.37*	(.85)	
4. JrPW	2.23	.69	-.31**	-.30**	-.28**	(.84)

Note. $n = 792$; * $p d'' .05$, ** $p d'' .01$; SD, Standard Deviation. Cronbach's Alpha reliability indices are reported in parentheses on the diagonal; short forms are as mentioned in the previous table(s) and the text.

EPTL, TP, JrPW, & Analysis of Mediation by IM

In this section, three competing LVMs namely, LVM1, LVM2, and LVM3, represent path models in the absence of mediation, with full mediation, and with *quasi*-mediation respectively by IM between EPTL as the primary exogenous and TP and JrPW as the final endogenous latent variables. The three competing LVMs were cross-examined by subjecting the data to structural equation modeling (SEM) procedures with maximum likelihood estimates using AMOS 24.0 (Arbuckle & Wothke, 1999). To meet the objectives of this study, three absolute fit indices and four comparative fit indices were inspected. The absolute fit indices comprised the normed χ^2 , the goodness-of-fit index (GFI), and the root-mean-square-error-of-approximation (RMSEA). The comparative fit consisted of the comparative-fit-index (CFI), the incremental-fit-index (IFI), the normed-fit-index (NFI), and the relative-fit-index (RFI). As per the literature, the suggested cutoffs for RMSEA $\leq .06$, $1.00 \leq$ normed $\chi^2 \leq 3.00$, and for all the fit indices that is, GFI, CFI, IFI, NFI, and RFI $\geq .90$ (Byrne, 2001). Following these suggested cutoff points a model could be accepted for further analyses only when it met these minimum acceptable threshold values.

For the two LVMs namely, LVM2 and LVM3, which incorporated IM as a mediator, IM regressed significantly and positively on EPTL (standardized

$\beta = .23, p < .01$, LVM2; standardized $\beta = .37, p < .01$, LVM3). As a result, *H1* of the present study was accepted. Furthermore, for LVM1, TP regressed significantly and positively on EPTL (standardized $\beta = .17, p < .01$) but JrPW did not regress significantly on EPTL (standardized $\beta = -.19, p = NS$). For LVM3, TP regressed significantly and positively on EPTL (standardized $\beta = .29, p < .01$) as did JrPW which regressed significantly and negatively on EPTL (standardized $\beta = -.12, p < .01$). Finally, for LVM2 and LVM3, TP regressed significantly and positively on IM (standardized $\beta = .31, p < .01$, LVM2; standardized $\beta = .27, p < .01$, LVM3), but JrPW regressed significantly and negatively on IM for LVM2 only (standardized $\beta = -.40, p < .01$, LVM2; standardized $\beta = -.40, p = NS$, LVM3). As such, *H2* and *H3* of this study were accepted.

When inspecting the absolute and comparative fit indices of the three LVMs, those related to LVM2 were found to not only be above the recommended threshold levels but also had the best fit. For LVM2, the absolute fit indices specifically, the normed χ^2 was 2.44, GFI was .96, RMSEA was .05, and the comparative fit indices namely, CFI and IFI were both .95, NFI was .94, and RFI was .92.

The standardized regression estimates of the accepted model that is, LVM2 are presented in Table 4, and the fit measures comparing the three LVMs namely, LVM1, LVM2, and LVM3 are presented in Table 5.

Table 4. Regression analyses result for the conceptual LVM

Values (→) Paths(↓)	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized	C.R. [†]	Remarks
	b	Standard error	<i>a</i> estimates		
EPTL à IM	.49	.06	.23	3.62	H1 accepted
IM à TP	.41	.07	.31	2.82	H2 accepted
IM à JrPW	-.42	.07	-.40	-4.25	H3 accepted

Note. *n* = 792; short forms are as mentioned in the previous table(s) and in the text; 'LVM' is 'Latent Variable Model'; †C.R. is 'Critical Ratios', a recommended basis for testing the statistical significance of SEM components. C.R.e"±1.96 indicates significance at the 95% level and C.R.e"±2.58 indicates significance at the 99% level.

Table 5 Analysis of Competing LVMs

Values (→) Models(↓)	Fit Indices						
	Absolute Fit Indices			Comparative Fit Indices			
	Normed χ^2	GFI	RMSEA	CFI	IFI	NFI	RFI
LVM1 (no mediation)	4.45	.87	.08	.87	.87	.85	.83
LVM2 (model with IM as a full-mediator)	2.44	.96	.05	.95	.95	.94	.92
LVM3 (model with IM as a quasi-mediator)	3.52	.88	.08	.86	.86	.82	.86

Note. *n* = 792; short forms are as mentioned in the previous table(s) and the text; Minimum acceptable values of the fit indices are as mentioned in the text.

Additional Mediation Analysis

Additional mediation analyses as per the procedures suggested by MacKinnon et al. (1995) were also conducted. With IM as a mediator, two conditions were checked which were: (i) Whether the direct path from the primary antecedents to the final consequent variables was greater than the indirect path through the designated mediator variable and (ii) Whether the direct path remained significant under conditions of mediation. Out of these two, only the second condition was fulfilled with respect to LVM2 and as such, IM was considered a full mediator in the proposed LVM.

Finally, although the application of SEM procedures established IM as a full-mediator and precluded problems of correlated measurement errors, it was decided to conduct the Sobel's (1982), the Aorian's (1944), and the Goodman's (1960) tests as per the z-prime method (MacKinnon et al., 2002) to discount the possibilities of Type-I error while exploring the strength of mediation. Additionally, the ratios of the indirect effects on the total effects of all the mediated paths were computed and expressed as percentages and labeled as 'percentage of mediation'. These results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6 Additional Analysis of Mediation vis-à-vis LVM2

Values (→)Paths (↓)	Additional Mediation Tests		Percentage of mediation	Path Analyses		Results of the additional mediation analyses
	Sobel's test	Aorian's test		Goodman's test	Whether regression estimate of (direct paths) > (paths under mediated condition)?	
EPTL → IM → TP	4.76**	4.74**	28.66	NO	YES	IM fulfills the <i>full</i> -mediator role
EPTL → IM → JrPW	-4.83**	-4.81**	28.35			

Note. $n = 792$; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$; short-forms are as mentioned in the previous table(s) and in the text.

A final test of mediation was performed on LVM2 using the AMOS 24.0 plugin for indirect effects (Gaskin & Lim, 2018). According to the results of this analysis, all mediated paths in LVM2 were found significant which led to the acceptance of $H4$. The results of this test are presented in Table 7.

Theoretical Implications

The acceptance of the first hypothesis has implications from the viewpoint of the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008). This is because EPTL is displayed by a supervisor who allows his/her subordinates to not only be autonomous about the process of goal attainment but also gives them the freedom of choosing the goals themselves as long as individuals' goals are aligned with the group's and the organization's objectives. This, in turn, contributes greatly to subordinates' experienced job meaningfulness and task significance leading to the association of EPTL with IM as propounded by the H1.

Regarding the acceptance of the second hypothesis, the cognitive evaluation theory (CET) (Malek et al., 2020) appears to be especially relevant since the path denoted by the H2 is about the conversion of a motivational force to in-role employee behaviors. With EPTL being the primary antecedent, it is through employees' IM that managers channel their idealized influence among follower-employees who thereafter take upon TP with an inherent interest as propounded by the CET.

Moreover, based on the study findings, the confirmation of the third hypothesis has im-

Table 7 Specific indirect effects

Indirect Path	Unstandardized Estimate	Standardized Estimate	p-Value
EPTL → IM → TP	0.38	0.58*	0.02
EPTL → IM → JrPW	-0.23	-0.12**	0.00

Note. *n* = 792; **p* < .05, ***p* < .01; short-forms are as mentioned in the previous table(s) and the text.

plications from the perspective of the conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll et al., 2018). This is because, as per the H3, a diminution of employees' JrPW would indicate employees' willingness to maintain their in-group status so far as their EPTL is concerned since this would make their jobs innately rewarding.

Finally, the endorsement of the H4 corroborates with the broaden-and-build theory (Kim et al., 2018). This is because, EPTL, by encouraging facets of positive affect such as IM, entuses favorable transmissions of individuals' attitudes to their behavior leading to improved TP and at the same time builds a stock of psychological resources such as optimism and resilience that reduce their levels of JrPW.

Practical Implications

The results of this study have some managerial implications. First, managers displaying EPTL styles may influence the merger of employees' organizational, task, and personal identity leading to higher levels of job-directed IM. With IM shifting the focus of employees' attribution and locus of control from the external to the internal, the latter shall find TP to be more gratifying and JrPW as a state to be refrained from.

Furthermore, intrinsically motivated employees shall display psychological attachment to their work and work environment by evincing stronger voice behaviour and a sense of responsibility and accountability depicting a notable enhancement in their TP and a markedly lower level of JrPW.

Finally, by displaying a sense of camaraderie, being regularly updated about subordinates' resource-related bottlenecks, and providing solutions for the same, managers displaying EPTL can improve employees' IM leading to the latter's superior TP and subdued levels of JrPW.

Limitations & Future Research Scope

The findings of this study need to be evaluated within the ambits of some limitations which also give rise to certain opportunities for future research.

First, this study was carried out among executives in managerial positions working in India and of Indian origin. As such, it rules out cross-cultural and cross-national comparisons of the hypothesized links or the accepted LVM that is, LVM2. Additionally, being cross-sectional in design, the study findings may not be temporally relevant.

However, the study limitations cited above hold some scope for future research. The LVM2 that has been considered here as the most suitable model in so far as addressing the present research concerns may be extended to cross-national, cross-cultural, and/or cross-temporal examinations. It would also be interesting to note the observations of future researchers if this study is placed in the context of a specific sector and/or socio-economic employee cohorts such as telecommuters, contract workers, or those who work from home and are virtually connected.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study investigated the relationship between EPTL styles and their subordinates' levels of IM and whether such a relationship extends to the latter's ameliorated TP and attenuated JrPW. For this purpose, an LVM was conceptualized and data were collected and tested by applying different statistical techniques. Based on the outcomes, a particular LVM namely, LVM2 was considered the most empirically valid model which fulfilled the study hypotheses and objective. Consequently, the theoretical and practical implications of the study results and findings were specified. Despite some limitations, the study concludes by suggesting some areas for future research.

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