

How Individual-focused Transformational Leadership Enhances Its Influence on Job Performance through Employee Work Engagement

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Abstract

The aim of present study was in line with transformational theory to examine the direct and indirect effect of individual-focused transformational leadership (TFL) on leader-rated Job Performance. Data collected through questionnaires from sample of 202 employees of a national state-owned mobile telecommunications company in China. Afterwards, the hierarchical multiple regressions were adapted to examine the proposed hypotheses. Empirical findings of data provides evidence to support our intended hypothesizes and revealed that individual-focused TFL and Employee Work Engagement (EWE) were significantly related to Job Performance, in which the effect of individual TFL on Job Performance was mediated by the EWE. Practically, indicated that work groups or organizations by stimulating and inspiring leaders who would demonstrate transformational behaviors as a significant prerequisite for employees to be engaged, may be able to increase employees' Job Performance. This study was one of the first to examine antecedents and consequence of EWE simultaneously. More implications for theory, practices for practitioners and future researches are discussed.

Keywords: individual-focused transformational leadership, employee work engagement, job performance

1. Introduction

In today's organizational life change is a fact and every organizations or businesses should take to account and follow changes to retain its relationship in a world of scarceness of resources with extreme competition. However, often the human side of change manages inadequately, thus leaders should involve engaging employees more actively and forming opportunities to vent their impediments and uncertainties. In doing this, leaders are seen as change-oriented means and are considered one of the most operational components for devastating preventive socioeconomic and have become a central issue for practitioners (Hoon Song, Kolb, Hee Lee, & Kyoung Kim, 2012). Therefore identification of proper leadership style is essential (Birasnav, 2014) and accordingly, there has been an interest to discover all features of leadership matter and undeniably. In addition, a review of previous studies suggest that different leadership styles have different techniques to leads their subordinates (Birasnav, 2014) and based on Bass (1985, 1999) transformational leadership theory, in the extent to which a leader influences followers, corresponding subordinates will be more engaged on their works (Breevaart, Bakker, Hetland et al., 2014). Therefore, TFL can be considered as the most effective leadership style in the organizational setting (Bass, 1985; Tyssen, Wald, & Spieth, 2014) which emphasizes on the enhancement of the followers' involvement (Bass, 1985; Tims, Bakker, & Xanthopoulou, 2011) and inspires them to be animated to their work (Ghafoor, Qureshi, Khan, & Hijazi, 2011). In regard to the aforementioned leadership theory and responds to the call for more investigation on the understanding of the processes underlying the effect of leadership behavior on employees' outcome and determination of potential mediators (Breevaart, Bakker, Hetland et al., 2014) this study explored the gap in the literature to survey the influences of individual-focused Transformational Leadership (TFL) and Employee Work Engagement (EWE) on Job Performance. Specifically, we investigated how TFL can improve Job Performance through EWE.

Moreover, EWE has demonstrated in whole organizational issues such as practices, policies and outcomes; thus there has been an upsurge of interest in organizational literature (Bakker, Demerouti, & ten Brummelhuis, 2012; Ghafoor et al., 2011; Hoon Song et al., 2012; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) since the practical results of researches have shown that engaged employees undertake their jobs better (Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2013). In similar vein

scholars have discovered valuable links between EWE and high levels of personal thought with concentration of employees' job (Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2013; Hoon Song et al., 2012) and several authors have stated that in organizational setting TFL can be a very important foundation that affects EWE (Breevaart, Bakker, & Demerouti, 2014; Hoon Song et al., 2012; Kelloway, Turner, Barling, & Loughlin, 2012; Shuck & Reio, 2014; Strom, Sears, & Kelly, 2014; Tims et al., 2011; Vogelgesang, Leroy, & Avolio, 2013; Zhu, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2009).

The aforementioned literature has raised the existence of a close link between organizational effectiveness and EWE and has displayed the way that leaders perform in teams or organizations have considerable effect on EWE. For instance, Tims et al. (2011) have argued that TFL style with having motivational power and inspirational thought can associate to EWE extensively and Bass (1985) claimed that TFL coaches subordinates to be responsible and as a result, followers' psychological meaningfulness will increase. Indeed, TFL with caring about followers' needs helps them to have success in their job and their career progression and prepare their subordinates to take leadership responsibilities and improve their potential (Zhu et al., 2009). In view of that one of the main concerns in this research is to comprehend the influence that leaders have on their followers and explored the way in which TFL attributes may result in higher levels of EWE.

Moreover, TFL is a inimitable and pervasive style for understanding individual and organizational effectiveness, so TFL can implies the motivational foundation for subordinate to amend the way that they see themselves (Bass, 1985; Tse & Chiu, 2014). Lately, scholars have claimed that there is a strong association between TFL and employee work outcomes such as creativity and Job Performance, that eventually improving organizational performance (Birasnav, 2014; García-Morales, Jiménez-Barrionuevo, & Gutiérrez-Gutiérrez, 2012; Ghafoor et al., 2011; Menges, Walter, Vogel, & Bruch, 2011; Shuck & Reio, 2014; Takahashi, Ishikawa, & Kanai, 2012; Tse & Chiu, 2014; Zhang, Wang, & Pearce, 2014; Zhu et al., 2009; Zhu, Newman, Miao, & Hooke, 2013). Indeed, researchers have cited that the feature of leader-follower relationship increases performance and organizational effectiveness (Ghafoor et al., 2011). However, a series of empirical studies have demonstrated that linking specific leader behaviors to Job Performance has been limited (Amabile, Schatzel, Moneta, & Kramer, 2004). In fact, previous studies have supported the effect of TFL on performance with intermediate constructs such as knowledge management, entrepreneurship, culture and so on (García-Morales et al., 2012). Above and beyond, there are prominent studies that support the idea that EWE has significant influence on both individual performance and organizational performance (Bakker & Hakanen, 2013; Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2013; Breevaart, Bakker, & Demerouti, 2014; Hoon Song et al., 2012; Tims et al., 2011; Vogelgesang et al., 2013). Nevertheless, few academics have examined and demonstrated a study to investigate the predictors and consequences of EWE together in an inclusive model (Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2013) and the collected works that have been conducted earlier supplied support for the prominence of the leadership in terms of engagement and performance (Hoon Song et al., 2012; Zhu et al., 2009). However, there are insufficient number of studies to consider the link between TFL, EWE and Job Performance (Shuck & Reio, 2014; Zhu et al., 2009). Thus, it is vigorous to study on employees' engagement is being adopted by TFL as an implement of improving Job Performance (Hoon Song et al., 2012). By doing this and according to the above discussion the motivations for this study are to explore an integrated model of Individual-focused TFL and EWE that illustrates how this relationship interacts to predict Job Performance in specific level.

Therefore, the major contribution of current research was to demonstrate how TFL in individual perspective influence on Job Performance with consideration of mediator role of EWE, which is a new construct in the literature. To-date, few studies have examined how Individual-focused TFL drives EWE and none has considered how this intermediary connection influences Job Performance.

It is worth noting that, recently, leadership scholars have distinguished Individual-focused TFL from Group-focused TFL and have argued that TFL influence on both individual- and group-level outcomes (Wang & Howell, 2010; Wu, Tsui, & Kinicki, 2010). Indeed, Individual-focused TFL expects that one leader can has different behaviors towards each follower and individual-level perspective can speculates to enable followers to develop their abilities and enhance their potential individually (Akinlade, 2014; Wang & Howell, 2010; Wu et al., 2010). In the current research, we studied individual-focused TFL.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1 Transformational Leadership and Job Performance

Refer to the definition of TFL as the exchange of goals and rewards between leaders and subordinates, this leadership approach focuses on the subordinates' reinforcement and their needs through empowering and increasing employees' motivational level and moralities (Ghafoor et al., 2011). Accordingly TFL, by changing

the perceptions of works, assumes to transform the values of employees to inspire them to succeed in their job and responsibility beyond the expectations (Bass, 1985; Tims et al., 2011) and enables employees to become fully aware of their potentials (Zhu et al., 2009). Leaders who have transformational style would provide individualized development and articulate a convincing mutual vision with accomplishing unexpected results (Bass, 1999; Menges et al., 2011; Wang & Howell, 2012).

Moreover over, the past two decades, based on the body of research there are substantial evidences that TFL will cause a wide variety of followers' outcomes and Job Performance (Bass & Avolio, 1997; Birasnav, 2014; García-Morales et al., 2012; Grant, 2012; Tse & Chiu, 2014; Zhu et al., 2009). Indeed, in consistence with TFL theory, leaders through positive behaviors for accelerating employees' level of innovative thinking will improve individual's performance, and organizational performance (Birasnav, 2014) and in regard with Social Influence Processes theory, TFL inspires employees to work harder and encourages them towards a higher level of achievement which can get higher individual performance (Wang & Howell, 2012). For instance Menges et al. (2011) for investigation of performance linkages and mechanism have considered the TFL climate. In similar vein, Strom et al. (2014) have claimed that TFL has been negatively associated with employees' intentions to quit and work stress; also Ghafoor et al. (2011) have shown negative relationship with employees' absenteeism and turnover trough increasing of job satisfaction. Actually, majority of TFL studies have emphasized the associations of TFL as an effective leadership paradigm with Job Performance and fruitful job behaviors (Shuck & Reio, 2014) and supports organizational effectiveness (Zhang, Wang & Pearce, 2013). Consequently, academics can propose that TFL with several specific characteristic such as conductive individualized consideration, subordinates inspiration and stimulation leads employees to have more contributions in their work and with presenting high commitment will improve performance (Tse, Huang, & Lam, 2013). In this way, leaders by performing transformational behavior set high performance standard and try to encourage and support their employees to strength employees' high expectations (Bass, 1985; Zhu et al., 2009). TFL by engaging in visionary behaviors such as visualizing the future stimulates employees to perform beyond the expected tasks and transforms the attentiveness of their followers to collective vision. Therefore TFL style has conveyed great insight in concern of leaders' behavior which ultimately correlates with subordinates' Job Performance positively (Grant, 2012; Zhang et al., 2014). Likewise, TFL modifies the structural features of followers' jobs whit highlighting the meaningful of vision and assisting employees to go beyond their personal benefits to get Job Performance improvement (Grant, 2012). Based on these arguments, we hypothesize:

H1: Individual-focused TFL is positively related to Job Performance.

2.2 Transformational Leadership and Employee Work Engagement

In a review of related literature revealed that there is a high interest between researchers about EWE who have presented different definition of this construct which has a wide-ranging application within and across contexts (Ghafoor et al., 2011; Hoon Song et al., 2012; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Shuck & Reio, 2014; Strom et al., 2014). However, almost all academics in this area of research have cited that EWE leads to high levels of personal thought with concentration in employees' daily task. Therefore EWE perceived in a wide array of organizational practices, policies and outcomes (Hoon Song et al., 2012). According to the Kahn (1990) engagement can be defined as "emphatically connected to others in the service of the work they are doing in ways that display what they think and feel, their creativity, their beliefs and values, and their personal connections to others" (p. 700). Thus, EWE refers to employees who connect themselves into their roles individually and emotionally and they extremely participate and engage in work accomplishments (Kahn, 1990; Vogelgesang et al., 2013).

However, researchers in organizational studies have shown that TFL which emphases on the enhancement of the followers' involvement in the organizational setting (Bass, 1985; Tims et al., 2011) is an important factor and has a positive effect on plentiful of organization-related variables, definitely influences job involvement (Breevaart, Bakker, & Demerouti, 2014; Hoon Song et al., 2012; Kelloway et al., 2012; Shuck & Reio, 2014; Tims et al., 2011; Vogelgesang et al., 2013). Moreover, there has been an exponential growth in publications on this issue in which TFL supports follower feelings of natural work motivation (Vogelgesang et al., 2013) such as active learning who have positive characteristics (Breevaart, Bakker, & Demerouti, 2014; Zhu et al., 2009). It means TFL inspires subordinates to be sensitive and adaptive to their work environment (Ghafoor et al., 2011). Thereby, TFL is imperative antecedent of work engagement and the link between TFL and EWE is worthy more consideration. On the other hand, while leaders care about basic and advanced needs of employees, which is one of the most important characteristics of TFL, subordinates would have high level of EWE (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Zhu et al., 2009) and TFL conceivably play a prominent role in encouraging individuals towards work engagement. In addition, academics proposed that engaged employees implement their work because they are

inherently motivated by their leaders (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010) and this engagement leads them towards working harder and caring more about their task. Actually, leaders with having transformational behaviors provide a meaningful and logical work for their subordinates and contribute to employees' intrinsic motivation, transform an appealing vision of the future and accordingly display high confidence in employees' competency (Breevaart, Bakker, & Demerouti, 2014).

As Bass (1985, 1999) completely and incandescently conceptualized TFL in unique dimensions namely idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and individualized consideration, transformational leaders encourage their subordinates to have more engagement in their work (Hoon Song et al., 2012; Kelloway et al., 2012). For instance, intellectual stimulation as the underdeveloped component of TFL (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004) deals with challenges between leaders and subordinates in concern of different perspective and think in a different way to employees' problems and expectations (Grant, 2012; Kelloway et al., 2012; Tims et al., 2011). In this view, leaders through giving opportunity to handle psychological matters and work-related impediments (Kelloway et al., 2012) help their subordinates to become active thinker and more confident and finally more engaged in their job (Tims et al., 2011). Moreover, employees need specific and individual attentions and devotions (Tims et al., 2011; Tyssen et al., 2014) which TFL involve fully in individual consideration behavior. Thus this leadership style displays an intensifying alignment towards subordinates and demonstrates individualized attention to them to replies to their personal needs appropriately (Bass, 1985).

Together with the aforementioned literature which shows a positive relationship between these two notions, this potential link needs further contemplation with respect to different samples and variables (Shuck & Reio, 2014; Zhu et al., 2009). Therefore we proposed:

H2: Individual- focused TFL is positively related to Employee Work Engagement.

2.3 Transformational Leadership, Employee Work Engagement and Job Performance

Job performance refers to the role performance of employees and their behaviors that directly leads to organizational objectives and outcomes. In essence Job Performance highlights the fact and quality of employees' behavior and performance to meet employees' objective and organizational goals. Moreover Job Performance focuses on the other extra roles or contextual performance such as discretionary behaviors to improve the organizational effectiveness (Bakker et al., 2012). Likely, Job Performance emphasis to what extend employees invest time and energy into their job to achieve all intended result, in doing, in the end, organizational performance will reveal how employees contribute to organizational achievements (Menges et al., 2011).

Moreover, a review of literature confirms that EWE is an important variable in organizational contexts which in recent years has been associated to a number of work-related issues and several essential work consequences, such as positive attitudes, personal health, organizational commitment, personal initiative, job satisfaction, and other-ratings of in- and extra-role performance (Breevaart, Bakker, Hetland, et al., 2014; Shuck & Reio, 2014). Subsequently, numerous studies have been emphasized that work engagement has major influence on both individual performance and organizational performance (Bakker et al., 2012; Bakker & Hakanen, 2013; Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2013; A. Baron, 2012; Tims et al., 2011; Vogelgesang et al., 2013). For example, Gruman and Saks (2011) have claimed that EWE is likely to have a direct impact on enhanced Job Performance in which this positive relationship is in line with model of psychological presence (Kahn, 1990). Actually, as engagement facilitate to employees have innovative experiences and are encouraged to participate with their all needed determinations, engaged employees are eager to go the extra perform and do their job well and may also to get tremendous performance (Bakker et al., 2012; Bakker & Hakanen, 2013; Tims et al., 2011). As such, Ghafoor et al. (2011) have discussed that appropriate engagement causes employees' satisfaction in their job and accordingly improve their psychological state and supports them to implement their task well and more involvement in their organization. In the other hand, as Vogelgesang et al. (2013) have cited, disengaged employees are seen as a challenge or interruption on organizational resources, morale and performance.

In addition, EWE can be constructed for different dimensions of performance (Bakker et al., 2012) and departing from prior studies, obviously, there is a considerable amount of empirical research has been conducted to link EWE to organizational performance. Nevertheless, in terms of Individual Performance which is an essential requirement for organizational effectiveness and outcomes, insufficient research has been performed (Gruman & Saks, 2011). However, Ghafoor et al. (2011) have mentioned that EWE, raise in individual level and by providing confident individual level outcomes such as high commitment, high satisfaction and sense of belongingness to organization with lower intentions to leave has demonstrative impact on individuals' performance. In fact, according to the psychological phenomena EWE covers two psychological components, attention and absorption, which focuses on individual level in the direction of employees' role and involving

them to expand their performance. EWE has a key impact on organizations through pushing individuals to make more contributions to organizational achievement and financial performance (Strom et al., 2014); consequently, makes a competitive advantage to company's survive (Hoon Song et al., 2012).

Furthermore, numerous studies have surveyed the consequence of TFL on performance with intermediate constructs such as knowledge management, culture, entrepreneurship, absorptive capacity and so on (García-Morales et al., 2012). Certainly, leaders who display transformational behavior are supposed to have a significant positive effect on followers' commitment, which is fundamental to the effective consequence of followers' job (Tyssen et al., 2014). Therefore we expect that followers who are aware of transformational behaviors in their leaders are expected to personally identify with such leaders and accordingly would recognize that they can have a more positive effect on their organization (Kahn, 1990; Zhu et al., 2009). Though, as has been confirmed in a number of studies and has been mentioned in previous sections, TFL supposed to has a considerable contribution to individual EWE which has predictive value for Job Performance. In fact, in organizations and work teams leaders need an insightful understanding of in what way or means employees getting more involved and become more engaged in their work to effectively leverage performance (A. Baron, 2012). Since individuals present themselves on cognitive, emotional and physical levels in their role performance, undoubtedly, leaders who have trustful and supportive behavior and accomplishment possibly will foster the EWE which eventually leads to performance perfection (Hoon Song et al., 2012). In this view, TFL as a source of cultural development (Ghafoor et al., 2011) through dedication, inspiring, caring and coaching behavior boost employees' emotional state of involvement to highly engage them with their job and consequently enhance their effectiveness and performance (Ghafoor et al., 2011; Tims et al., 2011; Vogelgesang et al., 2013). However, although the literature provided enough support for association of TFL with EWE and performance, a few researches have studied these three variables simultaneously and, to the best of our knowledge there is no study to empirically investigate the mediation relationship between them in one overall model. In Fig. 1 we delineated the research design and hypotheses of this study graphically. In this view and grounded on the above discussion, we hypothesized:

H3: Employee Work Engagement is positively related to Job Performance.

H4: The positive relationship between Individual-focused TFL and Job Performance will be mediated by EWE.

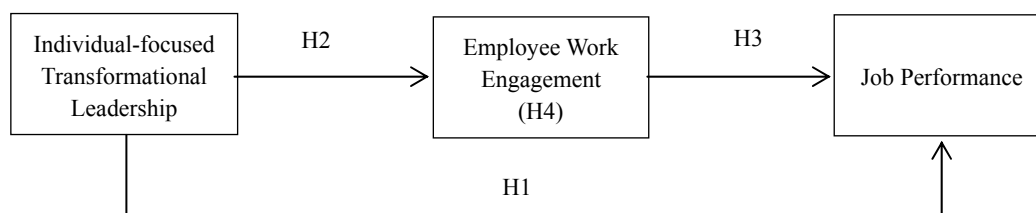


Figure 1. A mediation model of TFL, EWE, and Job Performance at individual level analysis

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants and Procedures

This study was conducted in Chinese context and the data needed collected from a national state-owned mobile telecommunications company in China. The data were collected via both paper-and-pencil and web-based surveys, in which, the confidentiality of the surveys and data was emphasized. Research data were obtained from 202 employees in total which overall response rates were 83%. Moreover 39.6% of participants were male and 60.4% were female. The maximum age of participants was 51 years and minimum was 21 years (Mean age 31.81 years and SD = 5.689). Respondents had an average full time tenure of 8.85 years (SD = 5.81) while, a total of 83.7% of them hold the bachelor degree or lower and 16.3% hold master or higher.

3.2 Survey Measures

Based on the proposed research framework, individual research construct was employed. All surveys included demographic variables, such as gender, age, education, organizational tenure and to all items measured on 5-point Likert-type in different range. Moreover, as measurement scales were originally developed in the west countries or U.S. context, to achieve different language versions of the English instrument that are conceptually

equivalent in the target country/culture we employed forward and backward translation procedure for adaptation of instruments.

3.2.1 Transformational Leadership

Individual-focused TFL was measured by a multilevel TFL scale developed by Wang and Howell (2010) as an appropriate referent for each item to support the alignment of measures in individual level. The individual-focused TFL subscale has 18 items that measure four dimensions: (1) Communicating high expectations (5 Items); (2) Follower development (5 Items); (3) Intellectual stimulation (4 Items); (4) Personal recognition (4 Items). A sample individual-focused TFL item from dimension of Communicating high expectations is "(My leader) encourages me to set high goals for myself"; 1=not at all; 5=frequently, ($\alpha=0.938$).

According to the research that has been conducted by Javidan and Dastmalchian (1993), due to the employees' social proximity to the leader, employees are in an appropriate position to offer a precise explanation of their leader's behaviors. Therefore, respondents required assessing the extent to which their direct supervisor displays TFL behaviors.

3.2.2 Employee Work Engagement (EWE)

Leaders assessed their subordinate's engagement (EWE) using 9-item version of the UWES (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006) from original version of 17-item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) developed by (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). This scale includes three dimensions vigor (3 items), dedication (3 items), and absorption (3 items). A sample item from vigor is "At my work, (Employee) feels strong and vigorous in their job"; 1=almost never; 5=always; ($\alpha=0.712$). This scale is extensively used to measure EWE which has been validated in various studies (Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2013; Hoon Song et al., 2012; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Strom et al., 2014) and as Schaufeli and Bakker (2010) have indicated, UWES is validated generally invariant across different countries and context.

3.2.3 Performance

Individual-level Performance was assessed using a 15-item scale developed by Welbourne, Johnson, and Erez (1998), Bono and Judge (2003). This scale contains three dimensions: Task (3 items), Innovation (4 items) and Self-Direction (8 items) in which leaders evaluate employees' performance. A sample item from dimension of Self-Direction is "(Employee) submits suggestions to improve work"; 1=poor; 5=excellent; ($\alpha=0.765$).

3.3 Analytic Strategy

The objective of this study was to investigate the relationships between the research variables namely TFL, EWE and Job Performance. Given this research purpose, a quantitative approach seemed to be a comprehensive method to gather data through a questionnaire instrument distributed to intended participants. The determination of this research design was to get statistical evidence to gain an understanding of TFL, EWE and Job Performance potential relationships. Therefore the proposed mediational model was accomplished through analysis of collected data which was conducted in one time to determine whether the relationships existed between the research variables. In view of that, a multivariate data analysis approach was conducted, including hierarchical multiple regression, along with correlational and basic descriptive analyses to describe and explain the variables and their relationships. In doing this, the hierarchical multiple regressions was adapted to examine the value of the independent variables (TFL and EWE) to predict the dependent variable (Job Performance) based on the aggregate pattern of the R^2 magnitude change over and done with adding supplementary predictor variables.

Moreover we defined the level of analysis in terms of the unit of measurement, at which the hypotheses are tested. Individual level refers both the independent and the dependent variables are measured at the individual level which the hypotheses are tested at that level (Tsui, Nifadkar, & Amy Yi Ou, 2007).

4. Result

Means, standard deviations, correlations among the variables, as well as Cronbach's values of the scales are presented in Table 1. As shown in Table 1, all studies' constructs in terms of Cronbach's alpha coefficient values (ranges from 0.70 to 0.95) have acceptable ranges of observed item internal consistency level. However, as depicted in table 1 individual TFL was significantly related to both EWE and Job Performance. Likewise, EWE was related to Job Performance. Thereby the hypothesis 1 & 2 were confirmed in which individual TFL is positively related to Job Performance (estimates: 0.688; $p < 0.01$) and EWE (estimates: 0.399; $p < 0.01$). Moreover this result supported hypothesis 3 in which EWE is positively related to Job Performance (estimates: 0.357; $p < 0.01$).

In addition, to test hypothesis 4, mediation effect of EWE in relationship between individual TFL and Job Performance, we conducted mediated regression analyses following R. M. Baron and Kenny (1986). Accordingly we tested the essential conditions for mediation as follow: First, the independent variable (individual TFL) should be significantly related to the independent variable (Job Performance). Second, the independent variable (individual TFL) should be significantly related to the mediator (EWE). Third, the mediator (EWE) should be related to the dependent variable (Job Performance), and finally, the relationship between independent–dependent variables (individual TFL-Job Performance) becomes non-significant, it means there is full mediation, or becomes significantly weaker, it means there is partial mediation after the insertion of the mediator. However, as above mentioned discussion these preliminary analyses regarding the prerequisites for mediation have already met in supporting hypothesis 1, 2 and 3. Afterward, the following three-step Hierarchical Multiple Regression was employed to examine the variables' magnitude of explanation for the amount of shared variance between the independent variables and the dependent variable (see Table 2).

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, inter correlations and internal consistencies (Cronbach's alphas on the diagonal) among the study observed variables ($N=202$)

Observed variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Gender ^a	—	—	1						
2 Age	31.81	5.689	-0.038	1					
3 Degree	—	—	-0.151	-0.086	1				
4 Tenure	8.851	5.812	-0.029	0.808**	-0.077	1			
5 Individual TFL	3.97	0.530	0.084	0.034	0.065	-0.003	(0.938)		
6 EWE	3.91	0.430	-0.020	-0.028	0.046	0.044	0.399**	(0.812)	
7 Performance	3.01	0.397	-0.039	-0.006	0.052	-0.012	0.688**	0.357**	(0.765)

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Correlations are based on standardized scores

^a 1: Male, 2: Female.

As displayed in Table 2, hierarchical regression models are described along with regression coefficient estimates, and R^2 changes through adding supplementary predictors including four controlling variables. In step 1, just control variables were entered to the model. In the second step, we established next model by adding the individual TFL as a significant predictor to explain the dependent variable [$\beta=0.692$, $F = 37.627$, $p < 0.001$; $R^2=0.490$, $\Delta R^2=0.477$]. To summarize, the overall results suggest that an increase in individual TFL has a positive impact on EWE. After that, in step three, we treated Job Performance as a dependent variable by adding the mediator (EWE) to the equation with individual TFL. To clarify, the new equation includes not only individual TFL but also the mediator (EWE). In this step, refer to the hypotheses 4, the mediator (EWE) should be significant, while the previously significant effect of individual TFL should be reduced or become non-significant. As shows in table 2, by adding EWE, the third model increased the adjusted R^2 value to 0.481 [$F = 32.001$, $p < 0.001$; $R^2=0.496$, $\Delta R^2=0.481$]. In other words, approximately 50% variance of the criterion variable could be explicated in association with two offered predictor variables in terms of the amount of shared variances after controlling four demographic variables: age, gender, education level and tenure of the participants. Referring to the results from these three steps of hierarchical regression analysis, we concluded that EWE can functions as a mediator in the relationship between individual TFL and Job Performance. Therefore, Hypotheses 4 is supported. Nevertheless, in a multiple regression model Multicollinearity problem which refers to a condition in which there is the higher level of correlation coefficient among the variables happens in a tolerance of less than 0.20 or 0.10 and/or a Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) of 5 or 10 and above (O'brien, 2007). Accordingly, empirically, this issue was tested by using VIF values in which the results supported that no violation of the multicollinearity among the variables. Moreover, as autocorrelation can be a major problem in data analysis, to examine the manifestation of autocorrelation violation in the residuals from a statistical regression analysis we conducted Durbin-Watson test while there was no autocorrelation in the sample and result indicated the values are independent.

Table 2. Results of hierarchical multiple regression

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	VIF	R ²	F	ΔR^2	DW
Step 1						0.019	0.963		1.854
Constant	3.710	0.269		13.772					
Gender ^a	-0.015	0.058	-0.019	-0.260	1.026				
Age	0.001	0.008	0.019	0.157	2.891				
Degree	0.068	0.036	0.134	1.872	1.033				
Tenure	-0.001	0.008	-0.018	-0.147	2.884				
Step 2						0.490	37.627**	0.477	1.694
Constant	1.962	0.234		8.378					
Gender	-0.071	0.042	-0.087	-1.673	1.036				
Age	-0.004	0.006	-0.060	-0.691	2.904				
Degree	0.039	0.026	0.077	1.479	1.040				
Tenure	0.003	0.006	0.042	0.479	2.892				
Individual TFL	0.519	0.039	0.692	13.445**	1.018				
Step 3						0.496	32.001**	0.481	1.680
Constant	1.714	.282		6.080					
Gender	-0.067	0.042	-0.082	-1.583	1.040				
Age	-0.003	0.006	-0.040	-0.458	2.967				
Degree	0.039	0.026	0.076	1.468	1.040				
Tenure	0.001	0.006	0.022	0.246	2.954				
Individual TFL	0.492	0.042	0.656	11.659**	1.225				
EWE	0.081	0.052	0.088	1.570**	1.222				

Note. ** $p < 0.001$;

a 1: Male, 2: Female;

VIF stands for variance inflation factor;

ΔR^2 stands for Adjusted R Square;

DW stands for Durbin-Watson;

Dependent variable: Job Performance.

5. Discussion

The current study, as one of the first to investigate the main antecedents and consequences of EWE simultaneously, provides insight into how employees become more engaged in their work when they perceive their leaders treat them with a transformational approach. Therefore, this study offers new comprehensions for an overall model that surveys the role of individual-focused TFL to enhance employees' Job Performance through a positive effect on EWE as a full mediator in this relationship. However, this study was carried out in response to a call by Yammarino and Bass (1990) to explore how individual-focused TFL can affect on diverse work attitudes and behaviors in different approaches. Therefore, the current paper extends our understanding of individual TFL components which are equally essential and employ similar effects (Tse & Chiu, 2014; Wu et al., 2010) on individual followers and work outcomes. Moreover, and in line with the above, there are some potential interesting theoretical findings of this paper and the research's results that provide strong support for proposed Hypotheses, in such for interpreting the relationships among studies' variables, TFL, EWE and Job Performance, arising at the individual level of analysis.

First, this study represents a significant new development and contributes to the TFL literature by showing how leaders exert their positive influence on employees' performance. In more detail, as we expected in Hypothesis (1) this study clearly demonstrates that individual TFL positively contributed to the individual effectiveness; simplify, leaders inspire followers' performance to reach beyond expectations. Whereas, in terms of research, most publications on this issue have considered the organizational outcomes such as performance and effectiveness of a particular leadership style (Hoon Song et al., 2012; Tims et al., 2011; Walumbwa, Avolio, & Zhu, 2008). Thus, our findings shed light on the process through which TFL in individual level analysis conveys into boosted performance which has not previously been considered by leadership scholars. Therefore, as Bass (1985) has claimed where employees may have been seen as more confident by the leader or other followers (individualized consideration component of TFL) or subordinates who are considered by their leader as actually very active and independent thinkers (Zhu et al., 2009) the effects may have been higher and accordingly they perform better. In particular, this result suggests that organizational leaders may need to reflect through the

different needs, attributes and preferences of each follower.

Secondly, as illustrated in hypothesis (2) this study goes one step further in the literature on engagement by presenting a coherent model and process in which individual TFL is positively associated with EWE. This notion in line with previous studies (Hoon Song et al., 2012; Tims et al., 2011; Zhu et al., 2009) suggests that leaders who have a relative high number of transformational behavior in their work environment, includes deployment of high expectations in their communications with their followers, intellectual stimulation, with arranging followers development and opportunities for personal recognition were positively related to followers' work engagement. Indeed, Individuals who perceived their leaders are acting with transformational characteristic are more likely to become vigorous, dedicated and absorbed (Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2013). As Bass (1985) cited transformational leaders try to persuade their subordinates to get involved with intended goals. Thus this pattern of results extends our awareness about the importance of leadership style in organizations such as TFL, particularly at the individual level, has the potential contribution to employees' motivation and individual well-being (here EWE). As Strom et al. (2014) have highlighted investigation of leadership style's influences on EWE is valuable to human resource practitioners for both theoretical standpoint and practical perspective.

Thirdly, although previous research has shown the beneficial effects of EWE on organizational performance and business-unit outcomes (Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2013; Breevaart, Bakker, & Demerouti, 2014; Vogelgesang et al., 2013; Walumbwa et al., 2008; Zhu et al., 2009) we are unaware of any studies that present a model of individual work engagement which leads to higher levels of individual job performance. Moreover, in this area of research Walumbwa et al. (2008) have argued that there has been very little conceptual and empirical research to reflect when the performance management process, effectively applied, can help leaders and organization to enhance and sustain high levels of employee engagement. Therefore, this research addressed to this line of research relating employees' behavioral outcomes through its application to EWE and supports for the proposed psychological processes at the individual level as a consequence of work engagement. In essence, engagement is an affective–motivational experience (Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2013).

Finally, we contribute to the literature on EWE by showing that, in the presence of a leader with transformational behavior, EWE can positively influence on the employees' performance. In other words, we illustrated that EWE is salient for improving individual Job Performance, in representing a mediation model for exploring the mechanisms and conditions under which individual TFL has effects on individuals' Job Performance as predicted in Hypotheses 4. In similar studies Breevaart, Bakker, Hetland, et al. (2014) and Tims et al. (2011) have argued that employees are engaged in their work with more satisfaction and high performance when their leaders treat them with some particular characteristic. Our findings are grounded on the theoretical assumptions in which individual TFL facilitates employees' sense of engagement and involvement, and consequently raise their performance. By doing this, the results help to unfold the psychological mechanism that engaged employees are considered by their leaders as enthusiastic with high enactment and their leaders are able to boost their confidence through their TFL approaches.

6. Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

This study has several limitations which need to be addressed. The data needed were collected on a single occasion from two different sources, followers rated TFL and leaders rated their followers' EWE and Job Performance, in which may give rise a risk of common source/method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). In this concern, we made an effort to alleviate this bias by controlling some demographic variables which supposed to have effects on our model's relationships and using reliable and valid scales from previous theoretical and experimental literature and well-developed theories. However, our findings about the means score, the standard deviation, the correlation among the study variables displayed that common method bias is not a serious deficiency in this study. Besides, the limitation of the EWE and Job Performance measurements which comes to collected data from work attitude and leaders' perceptions need to be acknowledged. Another limitation is we constrained our measurement of Job Performance to a few individual follower task performance measures. Finally, potential limitation is the fact that we studied just one Chinese company's employees and their immediate leaders, so this study may not be generalizable across other context or industries.

On the other hand, we aware that data collected from a specific context and industry may yield diverse results in other contexts or industries. Specifically, our focus in current study was on individual level analysis and according to the Hofstede (1984) study Chinese context is a highly collectivistic culture; therefore, future research could be conducted to replicate our study in other countries and cultures by including other appropriate contextual variables as potential moderators. According to the GLOBE study, in consistence with

performance-oriented leadership characteristics, Asian business organizations where environment and organizational culture inspires employees to be interdependent with greater power distance, leaders have a vital role in Job Performance improvement (Hoon Song et al., 2012; Javidan & Carl, 2004).

Moreover, an interesting path to survey in future research is exploring the influence of followers' characteristics as perceived by both the leader and the follower as potential mediators or moderators of the effect of TFL on followers' work engagement and followers' performance across different samples. However, considering the other styles of leadership such as authentic leadership or coaching style in the relationship between EWE and Job Performance would be interesting for future research. Furthermore, although this study only has been conducted in individual level, another possible area of exploration could involve the upper level (i.e. group or organizational level).

7. Conclusion

To conclude, the present study is one of the first to examine antecedents and consequence of EWE simultaneously. By doing this and to our knowledge, we are the first to show that individual-focused TFL is positively related to EWE and provide insight into a possible mechanism relating to individual Job Performance. In sum, the present study provides evidence to support our intended hypothesizes, by applying correlation and regression analysis which results have revealed that individual-focused TFL effects followers' Job Performance through the mediating effect of EWE. Therefore this study recommends that practitioners and organizations would benefit of EWE in the workplace where the relationship between TFL and employees' performance is taken into account.

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