

"The Influence of Leadership Styles on Job Satisfaction: The Mediating Role of Motivation and Work Pressure"

Master thesis

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A. Kumarasamy

University of Twente
P.O. Box 217, 7500AE Enschede
The Netherlands

Supervisor(s):

First supervisor: Dr. R.P.A. Loohuis

Second supervisor: Dr. Y. Sahhar

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Preface

The completion of this master's thesis marks the last phase of my University of Twente master's program in business administration. Employee motivation and perceived work pressure serve as mediating elements in the study, which focuses on how various leadership philosophies affect job satisfaction. My long-standing interest in leadership behavior in fast-paced, goal-driven settings especially since I hope to eventually assume a management position in sales made this topic appealing to me.

The Dutch telecom industry's competitive and dynamic environment made it an ideal place to conduct this investigation. I have been challenged and enriched by the opportunity to integrate academic theory with practical commercial application through research in this setting.

I would especially want to thank Dr. R.P.A. Loohuis, my first supervisor, whose knowledgeable advice and insightful criticism were invaluable during this process. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Y. Sahhar, my second supervisor, for his insightful advice and encouragement, which improved the caliber of my thesis.

I also want to express my gratitude to everyone who took the survey and kindly shared their experiences, as well as to everyone who helped make the data gathering process a reality. Finally, I would want to sincerely thank my family and friends for their unwavering support, tolerance, and optimism during this academic adventure.

In addition to honing my research and analytical abilities, my thesis has validated my enthusiasm for developing leaders in business environments. I am happy with the result and appreciative of what I have discovered thus far.

A.Kumarasamy
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Abstract

Purpose – Using motivation and perceived work pressure as mediating factors, this study investigates the relationship between employee job satisfaction and perceptions of three leadership philosophies: transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. The study focuses on Dutch frontline sales workers in the telecom industry, which is known for its rigorous performance standards and continuous client contact.

Method – Purposive sampling was used in a cross-sectional survey approach. Analysis was done on 121 full replies. Thirty items total, spread across five blocks, including outcome measurements, repeated leadership perception assessments, and demographic data. Cronbach's alpha was used to evaluate the scale's reliability, and exploratory factor analysis was used to confirm the factor structure. Nine hypotheses were tested using multiple regression, Pearson correlations, mediation analyses, the Baron and Kenny (1986) framework, and Sobel tests.

Results: Job satisfaction was positively correlated with both transformational and transactional leadership, with motivation acting as a partial mediating factor. The direct negative impact of laissez-faire leadership on satisfaction was totally mediated by increased perceived pressure and reduced motivation. The impact of transformational leadership was somewhat mediated by work pressure, but not by transactional leadership. Gender emerged as a key factor in laissez-faire results, and respondents' subjective perceptions and experiences of leadership styles differed as well.

Research limitations: The study's industry-specific emphasis and cross-sectional approach may restrict its generalizability. For further investigation, multi-sector or longitudinal studies are advised.

Implications for practice the results highlight how crucial leadership understanding is in determining worker happiness and motivation. Depending on the situation and how each person interprets it, even passive leadership approaches might have surprising results. In high-pressure sales settings, managers should modify their strategy to increase positive affect and lessen stress.

Value and originality By methodically contrasting three leadership philosophies in a single, highly competitive work environment, this study adds to the body of knowledge on leadership. It draws attention to the differences in how different demographic groups perceive leadership and provides insightful information on how pressure and motivation mediate the impact of leadership on satisfaction.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background/phenomenon

This study's empirical focus is on frontline salespeople's work satisfaction in high-pressure commercial settings, particularly in the Dutch telecom sector. Strict performance goals, ongoing client engagement, and little autonomy characterize these positions, all of which lead to elevated psychological and emotional stress (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). There is a complicated interaction between job responsibilities and personal well-being since employees must manage the social and emotional demands of customer-facing employment while still meeting continuous sales targets. Job satisfaction, which reflects how workers see and assess their work experience under performance pressure, is a crucial outcome variable in this setting (Ilies et al., 2006).

Because work satisfaction is regularly associated with crucial organizational outcomes including staff retention, productivity, and service quality, it is vital to study this phenomenon (Judge et al., 2001). Because of the constant pressure to achieve outcomes and the limited resources available to employees to recuperate, employee happiness is especially vulnerable in performance-driven environments like frontline sales. Employee perceptions of their jobs have been found to be significantly influenced by leadership; transformational leadership has been linked to increased motivation and satisfaction (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Bass & Riggio, 2006), whereas laissez-faire leadership has been linked to ambiguity and discontent (Skogstad et al., 2007). However, little empirical research has looked at how these leadership philosophies function in sales-specific settings, where direct performance monitoring and high emotional labor may change their impact. Thus, it is both theoretically and practically important to comprehend work satisfaction under these circumstances.

1.2. Literature gap

Research on leadership has long highlighted how various leadership philosophies impact work-related outcomes including performance, motivation, and job satisfaction (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Nonetheless, there are still several significant gaps in the literature, especially in frontline, customer-facing settings like retail sales, where organizational dynamics, leadership requirements, and psychological pressures are different from those in more widely researched fields.

Most of the leadership research focuses on a single leadership style, usually transformational leadership, and looks at how it affects certain results on its own. Additionally, research seldom combines different leadership philosophies into a unified framework or thoroughly examines psychological mediators that may explain the relationship between leadership and job satisfaction, such as motivation and perceived work pressure. However, it is generally accepted that these elements have a key role in how staff members view and react to leadership (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Breevaart et al., 2014).

Organizational contexts have supported the Full Range Leadership Theory (FRLT), which conceptualizes transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Its use in target driven, high-pressure B2C retail environments is limited, nevertheless. Sales floor workers frequently operate under daily performance objectives, are constantly interacting with customers, and are subject to direct supervisory supervision

all of which can influence or change how leadership is viewed. Laissez-faire leadership, for instance, is often perceived as ineffectual and inactive (Skogstad et al., 2007), but in highly independent retail positions, it might be seen as a sign of empowerment or trust (Van Dierendonck et al., 2004). In quantitative research, these interpretations are still not well studied.

Furthermore, despite the fact that work pressure and motivation are frequently mentioned as indicators of job happiness, little is known about their dual roles as mediators in the links between leadership and fulfillment. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) provides the conceptual basis for motivation in this study, but it is not officially adopted as a theoretical framework. Rather, pressure and motivation are employed as useful, situation-specific psychological processes that aid in the explanation of variations in worker satisfaction.

Given these deficiencies, the following contributions are made by this study:

- It evaluates the individual and comparative impacts of all three FRLT leadership philosophies using a single model.
- It makes use of a B2C retail sales environment, which is still underrepresented in leadership research due to its direct customer engagement, ongoing time pressure, and performance expectations.
- It offers a quantitative contribution that combines theory with actual frontline retail environments, providing academics and practitioners with useful insights.
- It evaluates motivation and perceived work pressure as concurrent mediators between leadership style and job satisfaction.

Our understanding of how leadership is experienced and translated into happiness under commercial pressure is deepened by this study, which fills theoretical and contextual gaps in the leadership literature.

1.3. Purpose of the study

A review of the existing literature reveals several shortcomings that limit a comprehensive understanding of how leadership affects employee job satisfaction, particularly in frontline, target-driven sales environments. Without incorporating several techniques into a single conceptual model, the majority of earlier research has concentrated only on individual leadership styles, usually transformational leadership (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Bass & Riggio, 2006). Furthermore, although psychological processes like motivation and perceived work pressure are frequently acknowledged as important in studies, they are rarely examined as concurrent mediators in the relationship between job satisfaction and leadership behavior (Breevaart et al., 2014; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). This has resulted in a fragmented perception of what it means to be a leader in high-pressure situations, particularly when there is a combination of rigorous performance monitoring and emotional labor.

Furthermore, although providing a thorough typology that includes transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire approaches, the Full Range Leadership Theory (Bass & Avolio, 1994) has not been widely applied in business-to-consumer (B2C) sales scenarios. The mix of daily sales targets, ongoing administrative supervision, and direct customer interaction makes these settings special. Because of this, current research may not accurately reflect or transfer to the dynamics found in these kinds of environments. For example, in independent

sales jobs, laissez-faire leadership may be seen as empowering (Van Dierendonck et al., 2004), but it is also frequently regarded as inactive or disengaged (Skogstad et al., 2007). Quantitative approaches have not thoroughly investigated these contradictory views.

Thus, the goal of this research is to investigate how employee work satisfaction in the Dutch telecom sales industry is impacted both directly and indirectly by transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles. In order to provide a more comprehensive and situation-specific knowledge of leadership effectiveness under performance pressure, the study explores the psychological mediators of perceived work pressure and employee motivation.

1.4. Theoretical positioning

The link between leadership and job satisfaction in high-pressure frontline sales settings is examined in this study using two theoretical vantage points. The Full Range Leadership Theory (FRLT), the main theoretical framework, makes a distinction between transactional, transformational, and laissez-faire leadership styles (Bass & Avolio, 1994). The primary lens for classifying leadership behavior and examining its direct impacts on employee outcomes is FRLT. It offers a systematic review across leadership dimensions by offering an organized strategy for comparing various leadership philosophies within a single conceptual framework.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a supplementary theoretical approach to FRLT that explains the psychological mechanisms mediating the link between work satisfaction and leadership. SDT provides insight into how leadership conduct affects employee motivation and perceived autonomy by distinguishing between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). SDT supports the explanatory depth of the model by elucidating how internal psychological processes may transmit or magnify the impacts of leadership styles, even though it is not the primary theoretical area of this work.

This study's main contribution is to the field of leadership theory, namely through the empirical application of FRLT in understudied business situations like business-to-consumer retail sales. By adding motivational and emotional factors, the study broadens the applicability of the theory and shows how leadership works in the face of ongoing performance demands and direct consumer interaction.

1.5. Research process

The purpose of this study is to test a conceptual model that combines three leadership theory's: transformational, transactional, and laissez-fair with two psychological mediators: perceived job pressure and employee motivation. The goal is to provide empirical support for leadership theory. The Full Range Leadership Theory (Bass & Avolio, 1994) and Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) provided theoretical ideas upon which the model was built. It is operationalized through nine assumptions. In high-pressure work contexts, the goal is to develop an integrated model that illustrates how leadership behavior translates into job satisfaction rather than to present a novel theoretical framework.

Since the investigation begins with accepted theories and evaluates certain hypotheses empirically, the research approach is deductive. It looks at how leadership philosophies

affect job satisfaction directly as well as indirectly through work pressure and motivation. With the use of statistical mediation testing utilizing Sobel's technique, this strategy adheres to the mediation analysis logic presented by Baron and Kenny (1986).

The study's methodology is based on a structured, closed-ended survey that was disseminated via Qualtrics. 121 responses from Dutch frontline sales staff are included in the sample, gathered via non-probability purposive sampling. Key constructs are measured in the study using composite and single-item scales, and RStudio and JASP software are used to analyze the data using regression and mediation models.

The Dutch telecom retail industry serves as the study's empirical environment. It is renowned for its high managerial control, continuous customer-facing activities, and strong performance focus. Because it depicts a real-world setting where leadership conduct is expected to have noticeable impacts on motivation and satisfaction, this context was selected (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Examining this context aids in bridging the gap between practical organizational dynamics on commercial frontlines and leadership theory.

1.6. Contribution of the study

This study contributes in a number of ways to both practical management and scholarly research. The Full Range Leadership Theory (FRLT) is theoretically expanded upon by experimentally evaluating its three leadership philosophies transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire in the little-studied field of frontline sales. The study provides a more comprehensive view of how leadership conduct affects job satisfaction under commercial pressure by including employee motivation and perceived work pressure as mediators. This approach evaluates the relative impacts of leadership styles within a single framework, whereas previous research has usually looked at them separately.

In the real world, the study offers managers and organizational leaders in sales-driven industries like telecom useful information. By elucidating which leadership behaviors are most likely to promote employee engagement and well-being in high-demand settings, the findings can help guide leadership development programs. Organizations may lower turnover, raise employee happiness, and boost productivity by comprehending these dynamics.

1.7. Outline of the study

There are five major chapters in this thesis. The issue description, the research setting, and the formulation of the research questions and hypotheses are all covered in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 reviews the body of research on employee well-being and leadership styles in order to create a theoretical framework. The study design, sample plan, tools, and data analysis techniques are all covered in Chapter 3's methodology section. The empirical findings, including descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and mediation tests, are presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 concludes by outlining study limitations, discussing the results in light of the literature, emphasizing theoretical and practical consequences, and suggesting future research options.

2. Theoretical background

An individual's overall emotional assessment of their job and work environment is known as job satisfaction, and it is a crucial outcome variable in organizational research (Locke, 1976). It has long been known that one of the most important indicators of work happiness is leadership. Although earlier research has shown that leadership style directly affects employee satisfaction (Judge & Piccolo, 2004), more recent research indicates that psychological processes like employee motivation and perceived work pressure may also play a role in explaining this relationship (Breevaart et al., 2014; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Such mediating mechanisms might help explain why certain leadership philosophies are better at promoting contentment than others in dynamic, performance-driven settings like the sales industry.

The current study expands on Bass and Avolio's (1994) Full Range Leadership Theory (FRLT), which provides a multifaceted framework for classifying leadership behavior, in order to investigate these dynamics. Three styles are distinguished by FRLT: transactional, laissez-faire, and transformative. Each of these approaches elicits unique reactions from workers, which might have varying effects on job satisfaction. For instance, transformational leadership has been linked to improved staff development, goal alignment, and intrinsic motivation (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Additionally, it could act as a protective barrier against stresses at work (Gregersen et al., 2014). Although transactional leadership, which is predicated on performance evaluation and dependent compensation, might provide structure and predictability, it might not be as appealing to employees in the long run (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Inaction and retreat are hallmarks of laissez-faire leadership, which is frequently associated with uncertainty, elevated pressure, and decreased satisfaction (Skogstad et al., 2007).

This study uses two mediating variables motivation and perceived work pressure to examine the ways in which leadership styles may affect job satisfaction. Established psychological theories serve as the foundation for this. Leadership behaviors that promote competence and autonomy can boost intrinsic motivation, which in turn promotes employee well-being, according to Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Similarly, supportive leadership may operate as a buffer against perceived job pressure, lowering stress and discontent, according to models of occupational stress (e.g., Karasek, 1979). A more comprehensive view of how leadership affects psychological outcomes beyond direct impacts is made possible by include these mediators, which also supports recommendations in the literature to investigate intermediary pathways (Breevaart et al., 2014; Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

The next sections propose nine hypotheses based on current empirical and conceptual research and offer a theoretical basis for each construct.

2.1. leadership styles and job satisfaction

Performance, retention, and psychological well-being are just a few of the individual and organizational outcomes that have been repeatedly connected to work satisfaction in the organizational sciences (Judge et al., 2001). Despite the extensive research on work satisfaction antecedents, leadership style continues to be one of the most significant. This section examines the unique relationships between work satisfaction and the three

leadership philosophies transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire described in the Full Range Leadership Theory (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Transformational leadership and job satisfaction

The capacity of a leader to inspire, motivate, and develop staff members by clearly articulating a vision and promoting personal development is what defines transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Transformational leaders create a meaningful workplace where staff members feel appreciated and acknowledged instead of depending on outside rewards. According to Ilies et al. (2006), this leadership style stimulates important psychological processes that have a direct impact on work satisfaction, such as identification with corporate goals and a sense of competence. Out of all the leadership styles, transformational leadership showed the highest positive link with work satisfaction, according to a meta-analysis by Judge and Piccolo (2004). The fundamental mechanism stems from transformational leaders' capacity to provide workers' demands for connection, significance, and recognition all of which are essential components of job happiness (Ilies et al., 2006). In light of this data, we speculate:

H1. Transformational leadership is positively associated with employee job satisfaction' positive affect

Transactional leadership and job satisfaction

On the other hand, transactional leadership is characterized by an emphasis on performance monitoring, contingent compensation, and job clarity. It highlights the contractual relationship between a leader and their followers, wherein non-compliance is addressed and effort is rewarded (Bass, 1997). The structure and regularity it provides can nonetheless promote a feeling of justice and security, two crucial predictors of work satisfaction, even if it is less emotionally engaging than transformational leadership (Podsakoff et al., 2006). But according to Breevaart et al. (2014), this leadership approach could be deficient in the motivating and growth-oriented elements that result in greater or longer-lasting pleasure. Therefore, it is anticipated that transactional leadership will have a negligible influence in contrast. Consequently, we speculate:

H2. Transactional leadership is expected to have a neutral to moderately positive association with employee job satisfaction' neutral affect

Laissez-faire leadership and job satisfaction

The absence of active leadership is referred to as laissez-faire leadership. This group of leaders avoids making decisions, doesn't give feedback, and is psychologically inaccessible to their followers (Bass & Avolio, 1994). This approach is the most harmful to employee outcomes, especially when it comes to satisfaction, according to a number of studies (Skogstad et al., 2007). Decreased morale, increased stress, and role uncertainty are frequently the results of inadequate support, direction, and acknowledgment. The foundations of job happiness may be undermined if employees under laissez-faire leadership believe their workplace is chaotic or uncaring (Hetland et al., 2011). In light of this logic, we speculate:

H3. Laissez-faire leadership is negatively associated with employee job satisfaction' negative affect

2.2. motivation as a mediator

Performance, engagement, and general work happiness are all significantly influenced by employee motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Not only can motivation affect individual results in organizational settings, but it also works as a mediator between employee attitudes and leadership conduct. Numerous studies have shown that leadership philosophies have a big impact on the kind and level of motivation that workers feel (Gagné & Deci, 2005).

One well-known paradigm for comprehending motivation is Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (1985). Although it is not the main theoretical framework utilized in this study, SDT is utilized to conceptually elucidate the mediator variable "motivation." SDT specifically makes a distinction between intrinsic motivation, which results from the satisfaction of fundamental psychological demands like autonomy, competence, and relatedness, and extrinsic motivation, which is fueled by outside incentives or pressures. SDT enhances the understanding of how various leadership philosophies may impact workers' internalization of work objectives and, therefore, their job happiness in the setting of this study.

Transformational Leadership and motivation

It is well recognized that transformational leaders foster an environment of independence, purpose, and personal development. They improve intrinsic motivation by bringing individual goals into line with company ideals (Bass & Riggio, 2006). According to research, these leaders help their staff members' psychological needs, especially those related to competence and autonomy, which are essential to SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Employees feel more motivated, involved, and in control of their job as a consequence. This internal drive is a potent moderator that improves performance and job happiness. In light of this logic, we speculate:

H4. Transformational leadership increases motivation, leading to higher job satisfaction.

Transactional Leadership and Motivation

Clear expectations and organized incentive systems are the foundation of transactional leadership. This type of external regulation, according to SDT, encourages regulated motivational styles that may be useful for attaining performance goals in the near term (Deci et al., 1989). Transactional leadership may nonetheless encourage moderate motivation even if it lacks transformational leadership's deeper emotional involvement, especially in task-oriented settings (Bass, 1997). However, because the link is more contractual than developmental in character, the impact on intrinsic drive is frequently restricted. In light of this logic, we speculate:

H5. Transactional leadership modestly increases motivation, leading to slightly higher job satisfaction.

Laissez-faire Leadership and Motivation

In contrast, laissez-faire leadership is frequently linked to a lack of guidance, feedback, and engagement. According to SDT, this approach does not satisfy the fundamental psychological requirements of workers, especially those for relatedness and competence (Hetland et al., 2011). Employees may get demotivated in the lack of structure and support, particularly in positions that call for direction and reinforcement. Although some extremely

self-motivated people could flourish with no guidance, this often has a detrimental and erratic effect on employee motivation. In light of this logic, we speculate:

H6. Laissez-faire leadership reduces motivation, leading to lower job satisfaction.

2.3. Work pressure as a mediator

Employee well-being, productivity, and job satisfaction are all significantly impacted by perceived work pressure, often known as workload stress (LePine et al., 2005; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Depending on how it is handled and interpreted, work pressure which is defined as the subjective perception of excessive expectations or inadequate resources can either help or hurt performance (Podsakoff et al., 2007). In order to shape these impressions, leadership is essential. Task clarity, emotional support, and resource availability are all influenced by leaders, and these factors have an impact on how staff members perceive and react to demands at work.

According to recent research, a leader's approach can either lessen or increase the effects of work-related stress (Gregersen et al., 2014). As a result, the link between leadership and job happiness may be mediated by work pressure. Unless leadership activities minimize these impacts, employees who feel high job pressure are more likely to experience emotional weariness, disengagement, and decreased satisfaction (Breevaart et al., 2014).

Transformational Leadership and Work Pressure

Transformational leaders create an environment that is empowering and supportive, which lowers perceived job pressure. They offer emotional support, define objectives, and assist staff in reinterpreting obstacles as chances for development by means of motivating inspiration and personalized attention (Bass & Riggio, 2006). This improves resilience under stress and lessens the subjective load of activities (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). Through meeting psychological requirements and coordinating individual objectives with company ideals, transformational leadership reduces stress reactions and encourages long-term involvement.

H7. Transformational leadership reduces work pressure, leading to higher job satisfaction.

Transactional Leadership and Work Pressure

It is less clear how transactional leadership affects job pressure. On the one hand, task-related stress can be decreased by reducing ambiguity through the implementation of structured incentive systems and unambiguous expectations (Podsakoff et al., 2007). However, when targets are strict or overly tracked, an undue focus on performance indicators and external goals may lead to pressure (Bass, 1997). Because of this, transactional leadership may continue to have a neutral impact on work-related stress, neither greatly reducing nor increasing it, particularly in high-demand settings like sales.

H8. Transactional leadership has no significant effect on work pressure, and thus no mediated effect on job satisfaction.

Laissez-faire Leadership and Work Pressure

Because laissez-faire leadership lacks support and participation, it is often associated with higher levels of perceived job pressure. Workers under this leadership style frequently experience stress and job uncertainty as a result of unclear expectations, poor coordination, and little feedback (Skogstad et al., 2007). Even ordinary chores might cause irritation or

overburden if they are not guided or resource facilitated. Laissez-faire leadership increases the burden of autonomy by letting staff members handle difficult responsibilities alone, especially in performance-driven environments.

H9. Laissez-faire leadership increases work pressure, leading to lower job satisfaction.

2.4. conceptual model

The purpose of this study is to explain how leadership styles affect employee work satisfaction by putting out a conceptual model based on the Full Range Leadership Theory (FRLT). According to the model, work satisfaction is the dependent variable (outcome), while leadership style more especially, transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire is the independent variable (predictor). It is claimed that leadership influences satisfaction both directly and indirectly through two psychological mechanisms: perceived job pressure and staff motivation.

Although FRLT informs the general structure, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) provides further insight into the mediating function of motivation. SDT is not a basic theory; rather, it is used to improve our knowledge of how and why leadership styles, especially transformational ones, may support psychological requirements like relatedness, competence, and autonomy, which in turn may promote intrinsic motivation. In this way, SDT reinforces the theoretical connection between employee motivation and leadership behavior, but it is still a supplemental framework that only addresses one part of the model.

To account for background factors that can affect results apart from leadership style, control variables such as age, gender, education level, and work function are included. Their inclusion aids in identifying the fundamental model variables' distinct explanatory strength.

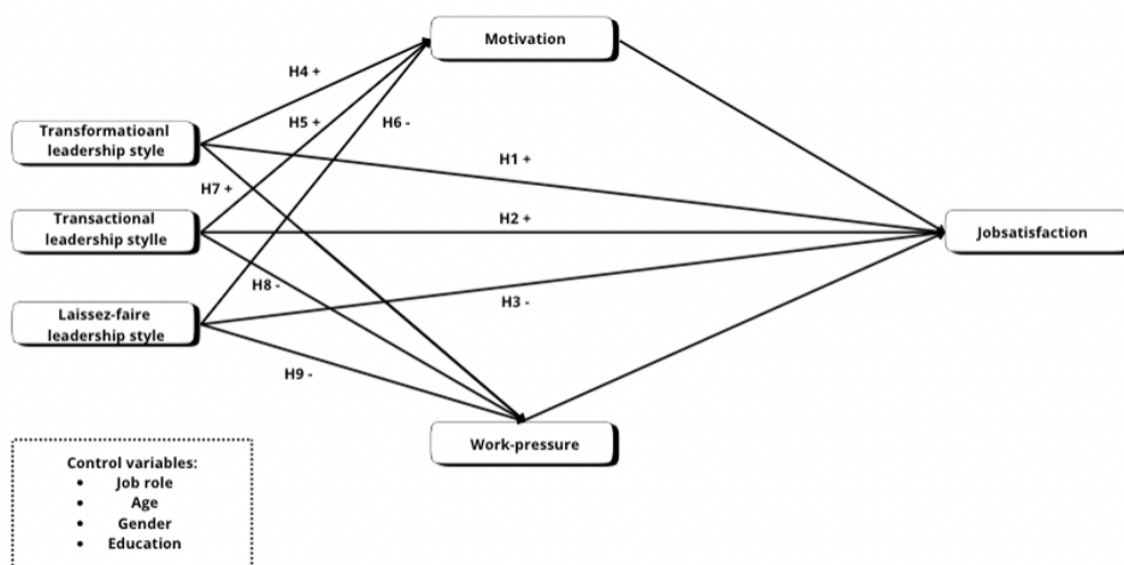


Figure 1: Hypothetical framework

3. methodology

3.1. Research design

The quantitative cross-sectional research approach used in this study is suitable for examining theoretical relationships between variables at one particular moment in time (Sedgwick, 2014). This goal is to investigate how three different leadership philosophies affect job satisfaction and evaluate how employee motivation and perceived work pressure function as mediators.

A structured online survey that was delivered using the Qualtrics platform was utilized to gather data. This approach is frequently used in organizational research to effectively gather standardized responses on attitudes and perceptions (Stockemer, 2019). Thirty items total, broken down into five content chunks, made up the survey:

Demographic variables: gender, age, education, and job function in Block 1 (Q1–Q4) Items pertaining to transformational leadership are found in Block 2 (Q5–Q12); transactional leadership is found in Block 3 (Q13–Q20); laissez-faire leadership is found in Block 4 (Q21–Q28); and perceived leadership style and motivating influence are found in Block 5 (Q29–Q30).

Five of the eight questions used to test each leadership style were chosen to create composite scores. According to guidelines for parsimonious models in applied research, single-item indicators for each leadership style were used to measure motivation, work pressure, and job satisfaction (MacKinnon et al., 2007; Hayes, 2018). Instead than focusing on causation, this study uses a cross-sectional technique to find patterns and relationships. Nonetheless, this approach is widely recognized as a design for empirical research in the applied social sciences as it is well-suited for testing hypotheses in a realistic timescale (Wang & Cheng, 2020).

Appendix A provides the whole survey's items and organization.

3.2. Sampling and data collection

A structured online survey that was given using the Qualtrics platform was used to gather data in order to examine the proposed linkages. The distribution of the survey took place from October 7, 2023, until May 12, 2025.

Targeting frontline workers in the Dutch telecom industry, particularly those in customer-facing, sales-oriented positions, a non-probability purposive sampling approach was used. Because of its high-performance demands, such as sales targets, time constraints, and interpersonal workload, this professional context was specifically chosen to study how leadership affects job satisfaction, motivation, and perceived work pressure (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

The three biggest telecom companies in the Netherlands used internal communication channels to attract participants. There was no analysis or recording of employer-specific

data. In compliance with ethical research guidelines, confidentiality and anonymity were rigorously maintained.

All participation was anonymous and completely optional. The invitation included information on data confidentiality, the study's goal, and the expected completion time (5–10 minutes). Participants had to be at least 18 years old and working in a sales position that involved direct interaction with customers. There were no rewards offered, and participants were free to leave at any moment without facing any repercussions.

The poll was filled out by 141 individuals in total. In accordance with accepted practices for handling missing data, listwise deletion was utilized to eliminate all incomplete cases in order to maintain data integrity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). There were 121 complete replies in the final analytical sample.

3.3. measures

A structured online survey with thirty closed-ended questions broken down into five theme blocks was used to test the components in this study. Demographic data, such as gender, age group, educational attainment, and current employment status, were collected in the first block (Questions 1–4). The next three blocks each addressed a different leadership style: transactional (Qs. 13–20), transformational (Qs. 5–12), and laissez-faire (Qs. 21–28). Eight statements with comparable wording that reflected the appropriate leadership style were included in each block. A five-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting "strongly disagree" and 5 denoting "strongly agree," was used by respondents to score their level of agreement. Q5–Q9 for transformational (TL_mean), Q13–Q17 for transactional (TR_mean), and Q21–Q25 for laissez-faire leadership (LF_mean) were the five key perception items used to construct a composite score for each style. According to standard composite scale procedures, these mean scores were included as independent variables in the study (Field, 2018). Eight elements from the Full Range Leadership Theory made up the initial transformational leadership scale (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Only the first five pieces, nevertheless, were kept for additional examination. This choice was made with the intention of increasing construct clarity as well as theoretical concerns. The Cronbach's alpha for the resulting five-item scale was 0.58. In exploratory research, if the concept is theoretically well-established and the sample is not too big, this number is considered acceptable even though it is below the traditional 0.70 level (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1978).

A single targeted item within each style block was used to evaluate motivation and perceived work pressure once for each leadership type. When assessing the expected motivating impact of that leadership technique, the seventh statement in the series (Questions 10, 18, and 26) was always the motivation item. The next items (Questions 11, 19, and 27) evaluated the respondent's anticipated pressure and balance experience under the specified style. The same five-point Likert scale was utilized for all items. Three pressure variables (TL_pressure, TR_pressure, and LF_pressure) and three motivation variables (TL_motivation, TR_motivation, and LF_motivation) were produced from these six responses and were used as mediating variables in the ensuing regression and mediation models (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Preacher & Hayes, 2004).

The last statement in each sequence (Questions 12, 20, and 28) was used to gauge job satisfaction within each leadership style block. Participants scored how much they thought the designated leadership style would increase their overall work satisfaction. Three distinct outcome variables TL_satisfaction, TR_satisfaction, and LF_satisfaction was created from these assessments and used as the primary dependent variables in the hypothesis test. This method is consistent with research that uses scenario-based self-report measures to evaluate perceived behavioral outcomes in leadership studies (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Breevaart et al., 2014).

3.4. Control variables

Based on earlier studies that connected demographics to motivation, work satisfaction, and leadership perception, a number of control variables were included to the regression analyses to increase their validity (Abid et al., 2018).

Because there is evidence that leadership preferences and work satisfaction might vary across sexes, gender (male/female) was taken into account (Eagly & Carli, 2003).

Since generational variations may affect leadership evaluations and stress tolerance, age was broken down into six groups (e.g., <20, 20–25, 26–30, 31–35, 36–50, and 50+) (Ng & Feldman, 2010).

Since educational background may influence expectations of leadership and intrinsic motivation, education level (VO, MBO, HBO, WO) was added (Rowold, 2008).

To take into consideration role-related differences in leadership exposure, the job function (Sales Advisor vs. Assistant Manager) was included. (Wegge and others, 2007).

To separate the impacts of leadership styles on job satisfaction and the mediating function of motivation and work pressure, these variables were added as covariates to the regression models.

3.5. Data analysis

Rstudio and Jasp were used for all analyses. To guarantee that the data were legitimate, trustworthy, and appropriate for verifying the proposed relationships, the analytical process adhered to a predetermined order. Data preparation and assumption verification, scale reliability and dimensionality evaluation, regression-based hypothesis testing, and mediation analysis utilizing a causal step method were the four primary steps in this process.

Data Screening and Normality Assessment

Checking for completeness and outliers was part of the first data screening process. For inferential analysis, only questionnaires that were completely filled out (N = 121) were kept. When lost data is random and limited, this listwise deletion method is in line with best practices (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019).

The distributional characteristics of the twenty-four leadership items on the Likert scale were then evaluated. Each item's skewness and kurtosis values were computed to confirm the univariate normality assumption. According to Adams (2017), values in the range of -1 to +1 were deemed acceptable. In order to support the usage of parametric tests like multiple regression analyses and Pearson correlations, it was crucial to meet this assumption.

Scale Construction and Internal Consistency

To reflect opinions on the three leadership philosophies, composite variables were created. Five perception-based questions were used to measure the transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire styles. The composite scores (TL_mean, TR_mean, and LF_mean) were computed as the mean of these items.

Cronbach's alpha was used to evaluate the internal consistency of these scales (α). In exploratory research, values between .60 and .70 may be allowed, while α values above .70 are typically regarded as acceptable (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1978). The items' capacity to be construed as representing a single underlying concept was ascertained with the use of these reliability estimations.

Within each leadership condition, motivation, job satisfaction, and work pressure were examined separately. Single-item measures are frequently employed for direct perceptual constructs and were assessed for construct validity through correlation patterns and mediation roles in subsequent studies, despite the fact that they do not permit internal consistency testing (Hayes, 2018).

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Using Promax rotation and minimal residual extraction, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed to evaluate the dimensional structure of the leadership style items while accounting for correlation across latent categories. When identifying possible factor groups without enforcing a preexisting structure is the aim, this method works well (Fabrigar et al., 1999).

The data's suitability for factor analysis was examined using:

- R^2 and adjusted R^2 (explained variance),
- Standardized and unstandardized coefficients (β and B),
- Confidence intervals and significance levels (typically $p < .05$).

This investigation verified that the questions were meaningfully grouped into three groups that matched the theoretical leadership aspects.

Analysis of Regression and Correlation

To examine the relationships between leadership styles and outcome characteristics, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed. These tests assessed the strength and direction of bivariate correlations and searched for potential multicollinearity between independent variables. Correlation coefficients were evaluated as minor ($r \approx .10$), moderate ($r \approx .30$), or high ($r \geq .50$) with a significance threshold of $p < .05$ (Cohen, 1988).

A series of simple linear regressions were then used to investigate the direct effects of leadership styles on job satisfaction. Each regression used the related satisfaction item as the dependent variable and one of the leadership composites as a predictor. The regression assumptions (linearity, homoscedasticity, and independence of residuals) were evaluated using the Durbin-Watson statistic and residual plots; values close to 2 indicate no autocorrelation (Field, 2018).

The strength of each regression model was assessed using:

- R2 and modified R2 (explained variance);
- Confidence intervals and significance levels (typically $p < .05$); Standardized and unstandardized coefficients (β and B).

Analysis of Mediation

The Baron and Kenny (1986) three-step causal model was used to do mediation studies in order to determine if work pressure or motivation mediated the link between leadership styles and job satisfaction:

1. Use path c to demonstrate how the independent variable (X) governs the dependent variable (Y).
2. Use path a to demonstrate how X predicts the mediator (M).
3. Use path b to demonstrate how M predicts Y while accounting for X.

Mediation is present if c' (the direct path from X to Y after adjusting for M) is little or not significant.

Finding partial or complete mediation was made possible by this methodical approach. The Sobel test was used with the following formula to determine the indirect effect's ($a \times b$) statistical significance:

$$Z = \frac{a \cdot b}{\sqrt{b^2 \cdot s_a^2 + a^2 \cdot s_b^2}}$$

Where:

- a and b are unstandardized coefficients from the respective regression paths,
- s_a and s_b are their standard errors.

A substantial indirect impact was shown by a z-score of $p < .05$. This offered more proof that the relationship between leadership and satisfaction may be explained by either pressure or motivation.

Examination of Demographic Factors

Lastly, to determine if outcome variables differed substantially among demographic categories (gender, age, education, and job function), one-way ANOVA tests were performed. These assessments aided in determining if contextual elements may mitigate the association between job results and leadership perceptions. Effect sizes (η^2) were presented to show the intensity of group-level differences, and results that were statistically significant ($p < .05$) were taken with caution (Cohen, 1988).

4. Results

4.1. Data Preparation and Cleaning

The dataset was thoroughly cleaned before statistical analysis to guarantee its validity, completeness, and eligibility for inferential testing. A standardized 30-item questionnaire was given to each of the 141 respondents in the original dataset. Following the collection of demographic information by the first four items, there were two final perceptual items (Questions 29 and 30) and twenty-four items (Questions 5–28) that assessed three different leadership styles across eight dimensions each.

121 participants finished all of the Likert-scale items (Q5–Q28), which serve as the study's analytical foundation, according to the results of the inspection. To exclude incomplete responses here defined as any participant who did not answer at least one of the 30 questions we used listwise deletion in accordance with best practices in data analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). This produced a final, complete sample of $n = 121$ that could be used for regression modeling, factor analysis, and scale reliability testing.

The first four questions gender, age, job function, and highest level of education were used to calculate demographic characteristics. Table 4.1 provides a summary of these attributes. To present a demographic picture of the sample, descriptive counts, cumulative percentages, and relative percentages are given.

	Category	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Gender	female	40	66,9 %	66,9 %
	male	81	33,1 %	100 %
Age	younger than 20 years	2	1,7 %	1,7 %
	20 – 25 years	43	35,5 %	37,2 %
	26 – 30 Years	17	14 %	51,2 %
	31 – 35 Years	16	13,2 %	64,4 %
	36 – 50 years	20	16,5 %	80,9 %
	50 + years	23	19 %	99,9 % = 100%
Function	assistant manager (ASM)	32	26,4 %	26,4 %
	sales advisor	89	73,6 %	100 %
Education	Pre-vocational education	4	3,3 %	3,3 %
	Senior secondary vocational education (MBO)	31	25,6 %	28,9 %
	University of applied sciences (HBO)	49	40,5 %	69,4 %
	University (WO)	37	30,6 %	100 %

Table 1: Sample characteristics

4.2. Normality test

For each of the 24 distinct Likert questions in the leadership questionnaire, skewness and kurtosis statistics were calculated to see if the data satisfied the presumption of univariate normality. Since each question was created to evaluate a unique psychological concept (such as fairness, competence, or motivation), which are examined independently in the discussion chapter, this method was chosen over testing composite variables.

Skewness and kurtosis values between -1 and +1 are considered to be suggestive of approaching normalcy, according standard criteria (Adams, 2017). Most of the items were well within these limits, as Table 4.2.1 illustrates. There were a few deviations observed, such as Item 8's kurtosis of -1.07, which indicated a somewhat platykurtic distribution, and Item 12's skewness of -0.97 and kurtosis of 1.12, which were close to the upper boundaries of acceptable normalcy.

The assumption of univariate normality is generally supported by the distributional properties of the majority of items. In further analyses, this justifies the use of parametric techniques such multiple linear regression and Pearson correlation (Field, 2018).

The complete normalcy test may be found in Appendix B.

4.3. Reliability and Intercorrelations of Leadership Constructs

Prior to investigating the connections between leadership characteristics and outcome variables, Cronbach's alpha (α) was used to evaluate internal consistency. Five impression measures, each with a 5-point Likert scale (1 being strongly disagreed with and 5 being strongly agreed with), were used to calculate reliability for each leadership style. In exploratory research, values between .60 and .70 are acceptable, but α values $\geq .70$ suggest strong dependability, according to traditional standards (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1978).

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Transformational	5	.73
Transactional	5	.63
Laissez-Faire	5	.80

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha results

Strong internal consistency was shown by the Laissez-Faire scale ($\alpha = .86$). While the Transformational leadership scale produced a lower alpha ($\alpha = .58$), Transactional leadership demonstrated adequate reliability ($\alpha = .61$). This suggests that the items, including fairness, recognition, and clarity, may not constitute a closely united construct in this group.

The views of leadership style and the outcome variables that were linked to them motivation, perceived work pressure, and job satisfaction were then correlated using Pearson's analysis. The matrix had twelve variables: nine single-item outcome variables unique to each leadership style and three composite leadership scores (TL_mean, TR_mean, and LF_mean). The descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients are shown in Table 4.2.

Motivation ($r = .35, p < .01$) and work satisfaction ($r = .50, p < .01$) were positively connected with transformational leadership. There was a moderate but non-significant association between it and felt job pressure ($r = .37, p > .05$). There was a substantial and positive correlation between transactional leadership and satisfaction ($r = .28, p < .01$), pressure ($r = .43, p < .01$), and motivation ($r = .52, p < .01$). Laissez-Faire leadership was also highly and positively connected with job satisfaction ($r = .71, p < .01$), work pressure ($r = .68, p < .01$), and motivation ($r = .67, p < .01$), which is contrary to theoretical assumptions. Discriminant validity was shown by the modest intercorrelations across leadership styles ($r = .19$ between TL and TR, $r = -.01$ between TL and LF, and $r = .06$ between TR and LF) (Bass & Riggio, 2006). The three styles seemed to be easily distinguished by the respondents.

Transformational leadership was rated best on average ($M = 4.10, SD = 0.48$), followed by transactional leadership ($M = 3.61, SD = 0.60$), according to descriptive data. Laissez-Faire leadership had the most critical evaluation ($M = 2.26, SD = 0.94$), suggesting that respondents had a generally unfavorable opinion of it. While LF was seen more differently by respondents, the minimal standard deviations for TL and TR indicate consistent perception among respondents.

	Mean	SD	TL_mean	TR_mean	LF_mean	TL_motivation	TR_motivation	LF_motivation	TL_satisfaction	TR_satisfaction	LF_satisfaction	TL_pressure	TR_pressure	LF_pressure
TL_mean	4.09	0.47	(0.73)											
TR_mean	3.57	0.57	0.09	(0.63)										
LF_mean	2.3	0.95	-0.12	0.07	(0.80)									
TL_motivation	4.08	0.8	0.56**	-0.01	-0.08									
TR_motivation	3.57	0.97	-0.03	0.70**	0.09	-0.09								
LF_motivation	2.43	1.3	-0.17	0.07	0.80**	-0.15	0.07							
TL_satisfaction	4.12	0.88	0.70**	0.04	-0.12	0.34**	0.07	-0.09						
TR_satisfaction	3.51	0.91	-0.06	0.49**	0.01	-0.15	0.29**	-0.03	0.03					
LF_satisfaction	2.39	1.26	-0.25**	0.05	0.83**	-0.19*	0.10	0.65**	-0.19*	0.03				
TL_pressure	4.03	0.8	0.58**	0.04	-0.16	0.20*	-0.07	-0.18	0.34**	0.01	-0.18*			
TR_pressure	3.4	1.06	0.03	0.64**	0.02	-0.14	0.39**	0.03	0.06	0.20*	-0.00	0.10		
LF_pressure	2.3	1.22	-0.11	-0.00	0.82**	-0.03	0.09	0.67**	-0.11	-0.07	0.71**	-0.15	-0.05	

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations, and Pearson Correlations for Leadership Styles and Style-Specific Mediator Items (N = 121)

**Note. Values in parentheses on the diagonal represent Cronbach's alpha. Correlations with $p < .05$ are marked with *, and those with $p < .01$ with **.*

4.4. Descriptive Statistics and Composite Variables

For the primary variables in the analysis leadership perceptions (TL_mean, TR_mean, and LF_mean) and the outcome variables of motivation, job satisfaction, and felt work pressure descriptive statistics were computed. Composite scores based on the mean of five questions per style (Q5–Q9 for TL, Q13–Q17 for TR, and Q21–Q25 for LF) were used to calculate leadership perceptions. For every type, single-item measures of motivation, pressure, and satisfaction were used (Hayes, 2018; MacKinnon et al., 2007).

Transformational leadership had the highest average score ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 0.47$), as seen in Table 4.3, suggesting that respondents had generally positive opinions of it. While laissez-faire leadership earned the lowest ratings ($M = 2.26$, $SD = 0.93$), transactional leadership came in second with a moderate mean ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.60$), indicating more diverse and critical judgments (Skogstad et al., 2007).

According to results, transformational leadership also received the greatest ratings for work pressure ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.79$), job satisfaction ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 0.87$), and motivation ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.80$). According to Judge and Piccolo (2004), laissez-faire leadership is associated with inactive and ineffectual leadership styles, as seen by its lowest scores on all outcome dimensions, including motivation ($M = 2.42$), satisfaction ($M = 2.38$), and pressure ($M = 2.29$).

While the greater variance in LF ratings indicates more varied respondent experiences, the comparatively low standard deviations for TL and TR perceptions indicate consistency in how these leadership styles were viewed (Field, 2018; Pallant, 2020). The interpretation of patterns in the next correlation and mediation studies is guided by these descriptive findings.

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max
TL_mean	4.09	0.47	2.00	5.00
TR_mean	3.60	0.60	2.00	5.00
LF_mean	2.26	0.93	1.00	5.00
TL_motivation	4.08	0.80	1.00	5.00
TR_motivation	3.57	0.97	1.00	5.00
LF_motivation	2.42	1.29	1.00	5.00
TL_pressure	4.03	0.79	1.00	5.00
TR_pressure	3.39	1.06	1.00	5.00
LF_pressure	2.29	1.22	1.00	5.00
TL_satisfaction	4.11	0.87	1.00	5.00
TR_satisfaction	3.51	0.91	1.00	5.00
LF_satisfaction	2.38	1.26	1.00	5.00

Table 4: Table 4.3. Descriptive Statistics for Composite and Single-Item Constructs ($N = 121$)

4.5. Assumption Testing and Exploratory Factor Analysis

The 15 leadership items five evaluating transformational (V5–V9), transactional (V13–V17), and laissez-faire (V21–V25) leadership were used in an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to evaluate the structural validity of the leadership perception scale. Because these measures captured overlapping psychological aspects like motivation, clarity, fairness, and recognition, factor analysis is a good way to find hidden structures.

Testing Assumptions

The data's appropriateness for factor analysis was assessed using two tests. A mediocre to excellent level of overall adequacy was indicated by the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sample adequacy, which was .735 (Kaiser, 1974). The majority of individual item MSAs were above .60, with values ranging from .52 (V9) to .86 (V21). Furthermore, the correlation matrix was factorable, as confirmed by the substantial results of Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2(105) = 444.99, p < .001$) (Field, 2018).

Structure and Factor Extraction

In order to account for oblique correlation between factors, the minimal residual approach with Promax rotation was used for factor extraction. According to theoretical predictions, a three-factor solution was chosen based on a parallel analysis (Bass & Avolio, 1994). 36.4% of the variation was explained by the rotational solution, with Factor 1 accounting for 19.0%, Factor 2 for 9.0%, and Factor 3 for 8.5%.

With high loadings ranging from .62 to .89, Factor 1 caught all five laissez-faire elements (V21–V25), essentially supporting the predicted structure.

The transactional style was represented by Factor 2, where V13–V14 and V16–V17 loaded between .49 and .60. Three transformational elements (V7–V9) with loadings ranging from .47 to .59 were grouped by Factor 3.

Nevertheless, a number of the items had poor psychometric qualities. Poor alignment with any one latent factor was shown by items V5 and V6 (transformational) and V15 (transactional), which showed low factor loadings ($< .40$) and high uniqueness values (.83–.86). These things were marked as troublesome.

Appendix D contains the whole JASP output of the exploratory factor analysis, which includes rotational loadings, Bartlett's test, and KMO values.

Theoretical Considerations and Analytical Choice

All of the original items were kept for further examination in spite of these psychometric restrictions. Based on Bass and Avolio's (1995) Multifactor Leadership Theory, each item was created to symbolize a unique and crucial component of leadership behavior, such as competence, fairness, or passivity.

The inclusion of all components was considered methodologically justified due to the exploratory character of the study and the recognized precedence for the use of theory-driven composites in social science research (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1978; Cortina, 1993). However, given the reduced internal consistency ($\alpha = .58$; see Section 4.2), outcomes involving transformative leadership should be regarded with caution.

Some elements had high uniqueness values and low factor loadings, but their theoretical significance supported their inclusion in the composite constructs. Leadership is defined explicitly as a multifaceted construct by the Full Range Leadership Theory (Bass & Avolio, 1994), wherein seemingly different behavioral manifestations collectively form wider leadership styles. The theoretical completeness of the concept may be compromised if these elements were eliminated purely on the basis of statistical criteria. Striking a balance between theoretical faithfulness and empirical fit is essential in exploratory research, especially in applied organizational contexts (Cortina, 1993; Hinkin, 1998). To maintain compatibility with the FRLT's conceptual framework and to guarantee content validity in leadership assessment, all components were kept in the final model.

4.6. Hypotheses testing

Job satisfaction and transformative leadership (H1)

To test Hypothesis 1, a straightforward linear regression analysis was performed to see if work satisfaction is significantly predicted by perceptions of transformational leadership. Five measures (Q5–Q9) indicating fairness, competence, recognition, clarity, and appreciation were used to calculate the independent variable (TL_mean). One question (Q12) was used to gauge job satisfaction in the transformational leadership condition.

The model explained 25.0% of the variation in work satisfaction ($R^2 = .25$, Adj. $R^2 = .24$), which is regarded as a modest effect size in behavioral research (Cohen, 1988), and it was statistically significant, $F(1, 119) = 39.65$, $p < .001$. There was no autocorrelation in the residuals, as indicated by the Durbin-Watson value of 2.23 (Field, 2018).

With a 95% confidence range of [0.63, 1.20], the transformational leadership regression coefficient was significant ($B = 0.92$, $SE = 0.15$, $t(119) = 6.30$, $p < .001$). With $B = 0.36$ and $p = .55$, the intercept was not significant. This implies that when transformative leadership is seen more favorably, satisfaction levels rise significantly.

The first hypothesis that transformative leadership has a positive correlation with work satisfaction is empirically supported by these findings. Thus, the idea is accepted (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004; Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Hypothesis 2 – The Effect of Transactional Leadership on Job Satisfaction

A straightforward linear regression was used to test Hypothesis 2, with work satisfaction (Q20) as the result and transactional leadership perception (TR_mean) as the independent variable. Five measures (Q13–Q17) measuring fairness, clarity, recognition, competence, and appreciation within the transactional leadership style were averaged to create the predictor.

With $F(1, 119) = 9.83$, $p = .002$, the model was statistically significant and could account for 7.6% of the variation in work satisfaction ($R^2 = .076$, Adj. $R^2 = .069$). There was no autocorrelation in the residuals, as indicated by the Durbin-Watson value of 1.98 (Field, 2018).

With a 95% confidence range of [0.15, 0.68], the regression coefficient was significant ($B = 0.42$, $SE = 0.13$, $t(119) = 3.14$, $p = .002$). According to these results, work satisfaction is somewhat greater when transactional leadership evaluations are higher.

As a result, Hypothesis 2 is approved, demonstrating a little but noteworthy positive correlation between work satisfaction and transactional leadership.

Hypothesis 3 – The Effect of Laissez-Faire Leadership on Job Satisfaction

A linear regression analysis was conducted to evaluate Hypothesis 3, with work satisfaction under laissez-faire leadership (Q28) as the result and perceived laissez-faire leadership (LF_mean) as the predictor. The average of five measures (Q21–Q25) that measured characteristics including avoidance, passivity, lack of direction, and clarity served as the predictor variable.

The model explained 49.8% of the variation in work satisfaction ($R^2 = .498$, Adj. $R^2 = .494$) and was statistically significant ($F(1, 119) = 118.06$, $p < .001$). With a 95% confidence range of $[0.78, 1.12]$, the regression coefficient was positive and very significant, with $B = 0.95$, $SE = 0.09$, $t(119) = 10.87$, $p < .001$. The initial hypothesis, which predicted a negative link based on previous research, was contradicted by these findings, which show that greater assessments of laissez-faire leadership are related with higher work satisfaction (Skogstad et al., 2007; Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

Hypothesis 3 is thus unsupported. Remarkably, there seems to be a positive correlation between contentment and laissez-faire leadership in this group. One explanation might be that, especially for workers who value freedom in their jobs, respondents view this leadership style as a type of autonomy or trust rather than just passivity. This view, however, is at odds with the subjective answers to Question 30, where participants who described their boss as laissez-faire on average had the lowest motivating impact ratings ($M = 2.39$). This discrepancy implies that acknowledged leadership action and its perceived motivating impact could not always coincide, perhaps as a result of different personal or situational interpretations of passive leadership.

In summary, despite the statistical model's high positive correlation, the underlying dynamics could be more intricate and call for deeper research. The original version of the theory is rejected.

Hypothesis 4: Transformational Leadership Increases Motivation, Leading to Higher Job Satisfaction

Using the three-step regression method suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986), a mediation study was carried out to determine if motivation mediates the link between transformational leadership and work satisfaction. This approach was chosen because it is still a commonly used paradigm for evaluating indirect effects and is particularly helpful for confirming the relevance of mediation routes when paired with Sobel's test (Zhao et al., 2010).

A straightforward linear regression in the first step verified that transformative leadership was a significant predictor of work satisfaction (route c), with $\beta = .92$ and $p < .001$. Motivation (route a) was strongly predicted by transformational leadership in the second stage ($\beta = .58$, $p < .001$). Both motivation and transformational leadership were included as predictors of work satisfaction in the third regression. While the direct effect of transformational

leadership (route c') remained significant but decreased ($\beta = .79$, $p < .001$), suggesting partial mediation, motivation substantially predicted satisfaction (path b), $\beta = .21$, $p = .023$.

A Sobel test was used to officially assess the indirect effect's ($a \times b$) significance. Motivation partially mediates the association between transformational leadership and work satisfaction, according to the significant finding ($z = 2.27$, $\beta = .12$, $p = .023$).

To sum up, Hypothesis 4 is validated. Through its beneficial effects on employee motivation, transformational leadership directly and indirectly raises work satisfaction. This is consistent with other research that highlights transformational leadership's motivating element in influencing workplace results (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

Hypothesis 5: Transactional Leadership Increases Motivation, Leading to Higher Job Satisfaction

A three-step regression technique based on Baron and Kenny's (1986) mediation model was used to determine if employee motivation mediates the connection between transactional leadership and job satisfaction. A Sobel test is used to statistically assess the size and significance of the mediation effect, and this approach enables the systematic assessment of both the direct and indirect effects (Preacher & Hayes, 2004).

Initially, a test of the overall impact of transactional leadership on work satisfaction (route c) revealed a significant result ($\beta = .53$, $p < .001$). Second, employee motivation was substantially predicted by transactional leadership (route a), $\beta = .68$, $p < .001$. Both motivation and transactional leadership were entered as indicators of work satisfaction in the third phase. While the direct influence of transactional leadership was diminished but still significant (path c'), $\beta = .26$, $p = .044$, indicating partial mediation, motivation remained a significant predictor (path b), $\beta = .40$, $p < .001$.

The Sobel test verified that motivation mediates the relationship between transactional leadership and work satisfaction, confirming that the indirect impact was statistically significant ($z = 3.94$, $\beta = .27$, $p < .001$).

In conclusion, Hypothesis 5 is validated. In line with previous research on contingent rewards and structured feedback as motivators, the results show that transactional leadership improves work satisfaction both directly and indirectly through enhanced employee motivation (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

Hypothesis 6: Laissez-Faire Leadership Reduces Motivation, Leading to Lower Job Satisfaction

In order to assess Hypothesis 6, the Baron and Kenny (1986) technique was employed to investigate if the connection between work satisfaction and laissez-faire leadership is mediated by employee motivation. It is common practice to examine mediation using this step-by-step method, which enables the detection of both direct and indirect effects. Additionally, the relevance of the indirect path was verified using the Sobel test (Preacher & Hayes, 2004).

Testing the overall impact of laissez-faire leadership on work satisfaction (route c) in the first

stage revealed a significantly negative result ($\beta = -.37, p = .002$). In the second phase, employee motivation was likewise strongly predicted by laissez-faire leadership (route a), with $\beta = -.45, p < .001$, suggesting that passive leadership deters motivation.

The third phase includes motivation and laissez-faire leadership as predictors of work satisfaction. While the direct effect of laissez-faire leadership on satisfaction became non-significant (route c'), $\beta = -.11, p = .288$, motivation remained a significant predictor (path b), $\beta = .59, p < .001$, suggesting that motivation completely mediates the effect of laissez-faire leadership on contentment.

With $z = -3.47, \beta = -.26, p < .001$, the Sobel test validated this mediation effect and bolstered the importance of the indirect channel from laissez-faire leadership to satisfaction through decreased motivation.

To sum up, Hypothesis 6 has complete support. In line with earlier studies that associate passive leadership with disengagement and a decline in organizational commitment, these findings imply that the detrimental effects of laissez-faire leadership on job satisfaction can be fully attributed to its demotivating effect (Skogstad et al., 2007; Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Hypothesis 7: Transformational Leadership Reduces Work Pressure, Leading to Higher Job Satisfaction

A mediation analysis was performed using the Baron and Kenny (1986) technique in order to assess Hypothesis 7. This method ascertains if the link between transformational leadership and job happiness is mediated by work pressure. The statistical significance of the indirect impact was evaluated using the Sobel test (Preacher & Hayes, 2004).

A regression analysis conducted in the first phase showed a high positive correlation between transformational leadership and work satisfaction (route c), with $\beta = .92, p < .001$. In the second stage, work pressure was strongly predicted by transformational leadership (route a), $\beta = -.62, p < .001$, indicating that lower levels of pressure are linked to stronger transformational leadership.

Work pressure was a significant predictor (path b), $\beta = -.20, p = .035$, when both transformational leadership and work pressure were added to the model that predicted job satisfaction in the third step. In contrast, the direct effect of transformational leadership on satisfaction (path c') was still significant but decreased, $\beta = .79, p < .001$. This implies a partial mediation.

With $z = 2.12, \beta = .12, p = .034$, the Sobel test validated the mediation effect, showing that there is a statistically significant indirect relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction through reduced work pressure.

All things considered, Hypothesis 7 is validated. The findings show that transformational leadership helps lower work pressure, which contributes to an improvement in job satisfaction. This research confirms earlier findings that empowered leadership has a stress-buffering impact (Breevaart et al., 2014; Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Hypothesis 8: Transactional Leadership Has No Significant Effect on Work Pressure, and Thus No Mediated Effect on Job Satisfaction

Using the traditional method of Baron and Kenny (1986), a mediation analysis was conducted to investigate Hypothesis 8. This approach was adopted to distinguish between direct and indirect effects and assess whether work pressure mediates the association between transactional leadership and job satisfaction. The indirect path's importance was evaluated using the Sobel test (Preacher & Hayes, 2004).

Job satisfaction (route c) was strongly predicted by transactional leadership in the first step ($\beta = .42$, $p = .002$), suggesting a small direct beneficial influence. In the second stage, work pressure was similarly significantly predicted by transactional leadership (route a), with $\beta = .76$, $p < .001$, indicating that higher degrees of transactional leadership are linked to higher pressure levels.

However, in the third stage, work pressure did not substantially predict job satisfaction (route b), $\beta = .09$, $p = .302$, when both transactional leadership and pressure were included as predictors of job satisfaction. Transactional leadership's direct impact on satisfaction was nevertheless significant (path c'), with $\beta = .35$ and $p = .019$, suggesting that the main effect was unaffected by pressure.

There was no significant indirect impact, as confirmed by the non-significant result of the Sobel test ($z = 1.04$, $\beta = .07$, $p = .296$).

In summary, Hypothesis 8 is validated: whereas transactional leadership is linked to higher levels of work pressure, job satisfaction is not substantially impacted by this pressure. As a result, there is no mediation. According to certain ideas (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Bass & Avolio, 1994), transactional leadership may increase operational demands without necessarily influencing emotional results like contentment.

Hypothesis 9: Laissez-Faire Leadership Increases Work Pressure, Leading to Lower Job Satisfaction

The Baron and Kenny (1986) three-step procedure, which is frequently employed in psychology research to evaluate indirect effects, was utilized to do a mediation study in order to examine Hypothesis 9. The mediation path's statistical significance was assessed using the Sobel test (Preacher & Hayes, 2004).

In Step 1, work satisfaction (route c) was strongly predicted by laissez-faire leadership ($\beta = -0.37$, $p = .002$), suggesting a negative relationship between the two. In Step 2, it was confirmed that more passive leadership causes higher stress and pressure among employees. Laissez-faire leadership also highly predicted perceived job pressure (route a), $\beta = 0.89$, $p < .001$.

Step 3 involved adding work pressure and laissez-faire leadership to the regression model that predicted job satisfaction. The direct impact of laissez-faire leadership on satisfaction was no longer significant (route c'), $\beta = -0.11$, $p = .288$; nevertheless, work pressure was a significant predictor (path b), $\beta = -0.44$, $p < .001$.

A substantial indirect impact was verified by the Sobel test ($z = -3.94$, $\beta = -0.264$, $p < .001$), suggesting that motivation completely mediates the connection between work satisfaction and laissez-faire leadership.

These findings provide strong evidence in favor of Hypothesis 9. Increased work pressure as a result of laissez-faire leadership completely explains the decline in job satisfaction. The existence of comprehensive mediation is supported by the lack of a discernible direct consequence following the mediator's involvement (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

4.7. Perceived Leadership Style and Self-Reported Impact

Two last survey questions were analyzed to gather participants' subjective opinions of their supervisor's leadership style (Question 29) and the degree to which that style affected their motivation and performance (Question 30), in order to supplement the regression-based analyses. Transformational leadership was indicated by the majority of respondents ($N = 62$; 51.2%), followed by transactional leadership ($N = 35$; 28.9%) and laissez-faire leadership ($N = 24$; 19.8%).

There were descriptive differences in the mean effect evaluations for the following groups: transactional ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 0.96$), laissez-faire ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.99$), and transformational leadership ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 0.90$). A one-way ANOVA, however, showed no discernible variation in the three groups' perceptions of motivating influence ($F(2, 118) = 1.59$, $p = .209$, $\eta^2 = .03$). This implies that, statistically speaking, the respondent's chosen leadership style did not substantially predict the degree to which they were inspired or influenced by their boss.

Nevertheless, significant descriptive patterns were found through additional exploratory research. According to known theoretical relationships, respondents who recognized transformational leadership also reported higher TL_motivation and TL_satisfaction ratings (Bass & Avolio, 1994). However, even though they rated the motivating influence of laissez-faire leadership similarly to the other groups ($M = 3.88$), those who chose it reported lower levels of satisfaction and somewhat higher levels of pressure. It's interesting to note that older participants were more likely to choose laissez-faire leadership as their supervisor's best quality. This raises the possibility of a discrepancy between recognition and appraisal, maybe pointing to older or more seasoned workers' increased perceptual awareness of passive leadership.

Overall, the correlation between acknowledged leadership styles and validated motivation/satisfaction ratings supports the idea of perceptual congruence, even if the perceived leadership style did not substantially explain variance in self-reported motivation and performance impact (Question 30). This convergence implies that employees' motivating experience is related to their ability to identify and understand their leaders' actions, even in the lack of statistical significance.

4.8. Demographic Differences in Leadership Perception and Impact

A series of one-way ANOVAs were performed for the four demographic variables (gender, age, education, and job function) across eleven outcome variables (the perceived presence

of each leadership style (TL_mean, TR_mean, and LF_mean) and the corresponding levels of motivation, job satisfaction, and work pressure for each style) in order to determine whether background characteristics influenced perceptions of leadership and their associated effects.

Gender

Gender emerged as a significant differentiator in perceptions of laissez-faire leadership and its outcomes. Compared to women, males reported substantially higher scores on LF_mean ($F(1, 119) = 14.82, p < .001$), indicating that they thought their supervisor was more hands-off or passive. Men also reported greater levels of LF_pressure ($F(1, 119) = 11.51, p = .001$), LF_motivation ($F(1, 119) = 7.38, p = .008$), and LF_satisfaction ($F(1, 119) = 10.85, p = .001$), which may seem paradoxical. These findings suggest that various genders may have different interpretations or experiences of laissez-faire leadership. Although this leadership style has historically been viewed as unsuccessful, it seems that some male employees react well to it, either as a result of more autonomy or changed expectations regarding management engagement.

Education

There were no statistically significant variations in leadership perception or outcome factors based on educational background (all $ps > .05$). Transformational leadership was rated somewhat higher by university-educated (WO) respondents than by other categories, although these differences were not statistically significant. This implies that opinions on leadership activities and their outcomes are much the same throughout this sample's educational levels.

Additionally, in the ANOVA models, age did not exhibit statistically significant main effects. Even though they also reported poorer satisfaction and increased work pressure overall, respondents 50 years of age and older were more likely to describe their supervisor as having a laissez-faire leadership style. This was an intriguing descriptive pattern. Even if they do not support passive leadership practices, older employees may be more conscious of them, suggesting a generational gap in leadership exposure.

Job Function

There was no significant correlation between job function (assistant manager vs. sales adviser) and differences in leadership results or views (all $ps > .10$). The effect sizes for LF_pressure and TR_satisfaction, however, were close to the medium threshold ($\eta^2 \approx .07$), indicating that these effects may become statistically significant with a bigger sample. The impact of organizational role on leadership experience is still up for debate.

4.9. Subjective Recognition and Alignment with Validated Measures

Responses to Questions 29 (perceived leadership style) and 30 (self-rated impact) were compared with the validated outcome variables in order to investigate perceptual alignment in more detail. Descriptive trends matched previous regression results, however the ANOVA in Section 4.6.2 did not show any significant group-level variations in perceived motivating influence between types.

Higher TL_motivation and TL_satisfaction ratings were reported by respondents ($N = 62$)

who said that transformational leadership was similar to their supervisor, confirming the construct validity of the measure and being consistent with theoretical predictions (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Even though they assigned a neutral impact score ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.99$), those who chose laissez-faire leadership ($N = 24$) evaluated their job pressure greater and their level of satisfaction lower. Notably, there were disproportionately more elderly responders (50+) in this group, supporting the notion that acknowledgment does not equate to endorsement. This can be a result of seasoned workers' perceived accustomation to passive leadership.

The transactional group ($N = 35$), on the other hand, had no discernible variation in motivation or satisfaction ratings, confirming its neutral or context-dependent function in this sample.

All of these results point to a certain level of perceptual congruence: respondents' composite scores show significant differences even if they did not intentionally rank their leader's influence as better or worse. This lends credence to the theoretical and empirical differentiation between the acknowledged leadership style and its experienced ramifications.

4.10. Summary of Results

In order to determine if and how various leadership philosophies affect job satisfaction, both directly and indirectly through motivation and work pressure, nine hypotheses were evaluated, as detailed in Chapter 4. A visual summary of the examined associations is provided by the final conceptual model (see Figure X), which is based on Baron and Kenny's (1986) traditional mediation framework and enhanced by Sobel tests for indirect effect significance (Preacher & Hayes, 2004).

There were statistically significant direct effects on work satisfaction from all three leadership philosophies: transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. In line with other research on the beneficial psychological effects of active leadership, contentment was favorably correlated with both transformational and transactional leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Contrary to theoretical expectations, laissez-faire leadership showed a significant positive direct effect on job satisfaction, although this contradicts its typically negative portrayal in the literature (Skogstad et al., 2007).

The association between each leadership style and work satisfaction was shown to be considerably mediated by motivation, according to mediation studies. Motivation served as a partial mediator in the transformational and transactional leadership cases, which means that higher motivation only partially explained the impact on satisfaction. Motivation served as a complete mediator for laissez-faire leadership, suggesting that the style's detrimental impact on satisfaction was solely due to its demotivating effects. This is consistent with theoretical models of the psychological disengagement consequences of passive leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Transformational leadership had a partially mediated impact with respect to work pressure as a mediator, indicating that it partially contributes to satisfaction by reducing stress (Breevaart et al., 2014). Despite raising pressure, transactional leadership did not substantially lower satisfaction, which prevented mediation. The decline in work satisfaction, on the other hand, was entirely explained by laissez-faire leadership, which markedly raised

pressure. This is an example of full mediation, which has also been noted in studies on destructive leadership (Skogstad et al., 2007).

Gender impacted perceptions of laissez-faire leadership and its effects, according to exploratory research. There may be gender disparities in how passive leadership is experienced, since males reported feeling more stressed and motivated under laissez-faire leadership than women ($p < .01$). Male respondents' unexpectedly high levels of stress and motivation may be a reflection of different definitions of autonomy, despite the fact that laissez-faire leadership is typically seen as unsuccessful. Instead than being perceived as negligence, some workers especially men may view less managerial meddling as an increase in trust, flexibility, or freedom. This could account for the paradoxical increase in motivation in spite of increased reported pressure, indicating that interpretations of passive leadership that favor autonomy may mitigate its otherwise detrimental consequences, at least temporarily. In line with other research on demographic consistency in leadership perception, age, education, and job function did not significantly moderate the impact (all $ps > .05$) (Yukl, 2013).

Finally, participants who recognized transformational leadership also scored higher on TL_motivation and TL_satisfaction, indicating a partial perceptual congruence with validated leadership dimensions, as supported by their subjective answers to Questions 29 and 30. This bolsters the interpretative significance of perceptual congruence and the construct validity of the composite scales (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Hypothesis	Relationship Tested	Effect size (β)	Significance (p)	Accepted
H1	Transformational leadership → Job satisfaction	0.92	< .001	Yes
H2	Transactional leadership → Job satisfaction	0.42	.002	Yes
H3	Laissez-faire leadership → Job satisfaction	0.95	< .001	No
H4	TL → Motivation → Job satisfaction	0.12	.023	Partially accepted
H5	TR → Motivation → Job satisfaction	0.27	< .001	Partially accepted
H6	LF → Motivation → Job satisfaction	-0.26	< .001	Yes
H7	TL → Work pressure → Job satisfaction	0.12	.034	Partially accepted
H8	TR → Work pressure → Job satisfaction	0.07	.296	Yes
H9	LF → Work pressure → Job satisfaction	-0.26	< .001	Yes

Table 5: Overview of hypothesis test results

5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1. Discussion

This study examined the relationship between employee job satisfaction and three distinct leadership philosophies transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire in a high-pressure sales setting, using motivation and perceived work pressure as mediating factors. Although the results mostly support current leadership theory, they also offer important new information about context-dependent effects and the psychological processes underlying effective leadership.

The positive effect of transformational leadership on job satisfaction confirms long-standing theoretical claims (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). The notion that transformational leaders not only inspire but also establish psychologically secure and stress-free work environments is supported by the fact that this impact was partially mediated by both motivation and decreased felt pressure (Breevaart et al., 2014; Gregersen et al., 2014). These results support the wide application of Full Range Leadership Theory (FRLT) in business situations and are especially pertinent in performance-driven industries.

Through motivation, transactional leadership also had a strong beneficial impact on satisfaction. One important discovery, though, was that work pressure did not act as a mediator. Transactional leadership did not substantially lower satisfaction, despite raising felt pressure (H8). This implies that when pressure is combined with explicit expectations and rewards, employees may perceive it differently.

Contrary to theoretical assumptions, the most surprising result was the direct positive correlation between work satisfaction and laissez-faire leadership (Skogstad et al., 2007). This link was entirely explained by increased pressure and decreased motivation, according to mediation studies. This suggests that the observed pleasure was not due to laissez-faire leadership in and of itself, but rather to a surface-level perception that may have been connected to autonomy or freedom. The context-dependency of passive leadership has to be reexamined in light of this finding. Male respondents, in particular, gave laissez-faire leadership and its results much higher ratings than female respondents, indicating that perceptions of leadership varied by gender (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Furthermore, role autonomy may influence how passive leadership is seen, either as a lack of support or as empowerment.

Lastly, these findings highlight how crucial it is to differentiate between the psychological effects of leadership as it is really experienced and how it is perceived. Employees may see a lack of intervention as trust or flexibility, but the underlying impacts on stress and motivation may be detrimental. These subtleties imply that leadership effectiveness must be understood through the mediating psychological mechanisms involved and cannot be deduced only from satisfaction levels.

Overall, this study adds to a more nuanced view of passive leadership and reinforces the value of active leadership approaches, especially in business and gender-diverse settings. The results highlight how difficult it is to evaluate leadership and how context shapes how leadership is understood and executed.

5.2. Contribution to literature

By applying the Full Range Leadership Theory (FRLT; Bass & Avolio, 1994) to a high-pressure, customer-facing sales workplace, this study adds to the body of literature on leadership. Despite the fact that transformative leadership has been extensively associated with favorable employee outcomes (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Bass & Riggio, 2006), this study demonstrates that these benefits continue to exist even in jobs that are target-driven. Both motivation and less work pressure partially mediated the strong positive relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.92$, $p < .001$), which supports earlier research showing that transformational leaders mitigate stress and meet basic psychological needs (Breevaart et al., 2014; Gregersen et al., 2014).

The study further supports the importance of transactional leadership by demonstrating that motivation, not work pressure, mediates a substantial beneficial impact on job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.42$, $p = .002$). This supports past findings that transactional leaders, especially in organized settings, improve reward effort and clarity (Podsakoff et al., 2006; Bass, 1997). Additionally, it supports the Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), which maintains that when transactional interactions are seen as fair and predictable, commitment may result. Notably, fresh perspectives are provided by the introduction of laissez-faire leadership. While previous research frequently links this approach to bad performance and disengagement (Skogstad et al., 2007), our study discovered a positive direct association with work satisfaction ($\beta = 0.95$, $p < .001$), which was totally mediated by lower motivation and more pressure. These results imply that underlying psychological stress may be concealed by outward displays of autonomy (Van Dierendonck et al., 2004; Hetland et al., 2011).

Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the theoretical knowledge of leadership impact mechanisms by examining the direct and indirect impacts of leadership styles through two mediators: perceived pressure and motivation. It supports arguments for more sophisticated theories of leadership by highlighting the need of using psychological mediators to elucidate how leadership practices affect results (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Preacher & Hayes, 2004).

Furthermore, the complex research on transactional leadership casts doubt on the frequently mechanical depiction of this approach, indicating that, when combined with motivational clarity, even organized leadership may enhance work satisfaction. This broadens current theoretical viewpoints by bringing them into line with social exchange dynamics in modern work environments.

The results on laissez-faire leadership present the most conceptually difficult contribution. Despite adverse indirect effects, the good direct correlation with satisfaction raises the possibility that views of leadership vary depending on the situation. Passive leadership may be seen as independence or trust in settings that value autonomy or among seasoned workers. The self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which emphasizes autonomy as a source of intrinsic motivation, is in line with this viewpoint. The observed complete mediation, however, suggests that these advantages are conditional and not always present. Lastly, these findings highlight the theoretical significance of environment and perception in leadership studies. Job type, corporate culture, and demographics like gender influence how employees perceive leadership conduct, especially passive methods (Eagly & Johannesen-

Schmidt, 2001). Such contextual and perceptual factors ought to be incorporated into future theoretical models in order to better represent leadership effectiveness in a variety of contexts.

5.3. Practical implications

The study's findings offer a number of practical suggestions for businesses looking to improve worker engagement, happiness, and health via leadership techniques. Above all, the favorable direct and indirect benefits of transformational leadership on work satisfaction serve as a reminder of the need of cultivating leaders who are not just motivating but also reliable in providing guidance, support, and clarity. A more engaged and contented workforce is the result of these actions, which are essential to transformational leadership and promote intrinsic motivation and decrease perceived workload (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

Thus, it is recommended that organizations fund leadership development initiatives that teach supervisors transformative behaviors like transparent goal-setting, equitable decision-making, and frequent constructive criticism. Although not examined separately, these behavioral elements complement transformational leadership's overall efficacy and foster a positive, psychologically supportive workplace (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Although it had less of an impact on satisfaction than transformational leadership, transactional leadership did have some good effects, especially in terms of motivation. This implies that clear expectations and performance-based incentive programs are still effective means of inspiring workers (Bass, 1990). Transactional leaders must, however, supplement their organized approach with consideration for employee well-being in order to minimize stress accumulation, as this style did not significantly reduce job pressure (Yukl, 2013).

In this sample, laissez-faire leadership surprisingly showed a positive direct influence on satisfaction. This suggests that workers could choose a hands-off attitude in some situations, such as independent work settings. Skogstad et al. (2007) state that the style's detrimental indirect consequences, such as increased pressure and decreased motivation, draw attention to the dangers of inconsistent communication or a lack of direction. Organizations should be cautious when interpreting this conclusion because, while perceived independence may be valued in the short term, performance and long-term satisfaction may suffer in the absence of fundamental leadership characteristics like fairness, feedback, and clear expectations (Van Dierendonck et al., 2004).

All things considered, these results highlight that leadership style is insufficient on its own. Instead, what makes leadership genuinely effective is the constant application of fundamental leadership skills, such being clear, being equitable, and encouraging staff growth. Therefore, organizations have to take a two-pronged approach: encouraging transformative principles while making sure that the fundamental behavioral underpinnings of leadership are ingrained in routine administrative procedures

5.4. Limitations and Future Research Directions

Through employee motivation and perceived pressure, this study advances our understanding of the direct and indirect effects of various leadership philosophies on work satisfaction. However, a number of restrictions should be noted, along with possible avenues for further investigation.

Cross-Sectional Design and Causality

Data for the study was collected at a single moment in time using a cross-sectional approach. The design limits the capacity to make definitive causal conclusions, even if the studies showed substantial relationships (Rindfleisch et al., 2008). To investigate the directionality of these associations and evaluate their evolution over time, future studies should employ experimental or longitudinal approaches.

Self-Report Bias and Common Method Variance

Self-report tools were used to measure every variable in the study, which might have introduced common method bias and social desirability (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Future studies might lessen this bias by comparing self-reports with peer or supervisor ratings, even in the face of anonymity and procedural remedies (Spector, 2006). On the other hand, behavioral or observational measures could provide more resilience.

Sample Composition and Cultural Generalizability

Because the sample was limited to Dutch employees, the results cannot be applied to other institutional or cultural situations. Leadership perceptions can differ significantly between individualistic and collectivist civilizations, or across different levels of power distance, according to Hofstede's cultural dimensions (1983). To determine whether the links hold true in other nations or cultural contexts, cross-cultural replication is required.

Omitted Variables: Work Experience and Autonomy

Work experience was excluded from the analysis of demographic factors such as gender, age, education, and job function. Considering that older sample participants were more likely to identify laissez-faire leadership, this is a noteworthy omission. It's possible that this effect is more a function of cumulative job experience than age. According to Gillet et al. (2011), seasoned workers could need less oversight and view passive leadership as autonomy rather than neglect. To differentiate between age-related and experience-based interpretations of leadership, future research should account for or explicitly investigate the moderating influence of tenure or task familiarity.

Measures of Aggregate Leadership and Dimensional Nuance

A composite of several underlying variables, such as fairness, involvement, pressure, and recognition, was used to measure each leadership style. Nevertheless, the distinct predictive power of these subdimensions was not examined in the current investigation. Future studies should examine the potential differential effects of particular facets of transactional, transformational, or laissez-faire leadership styles on worker satisfaction and motivation.

Leadership Interpretation and the Dynamics of Remote Work

The larger corporate environment has moved toward hybrid and sales distant models, even though this study did not specifically address remote vs on-site work situations. In these

settings, perceptions of pressure, support, and autonomy might vary greatly. Researchers have to look into whether policies governing distant labor, communication methods, or physical presence mitigate the consequences of leadership.

Future studies can more effectively separate the processes via which leadership influences employee outcomes and pinpoint the contextual elements that influence these connections by addressing these limitations.

5.5. Conclusion

This thesis investigated the effects of transactional, transformational, and laissez-faire leadership styles on job satisfaction, using perceived work pressure and motivation as mediating factors. According to well-established theory, transformational leadership was the most consistently positive predictor of happiness in a Dutch high-pressure sales workplace (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Reinforcing its psychological and relationship advantages, its effect was partially mediated by decreased felt pressure and greater motivation (Breevaart et al., 2014).

The results on laissez-faire leadership were especially startling. The investigation showed a large positive direct effect on job satisfaction, despite the fact that this approach is often considered harmful (Skogstad et al., 2007). However, this impact was entirely mediated, meaning that it was counterbalanced by a decrease in motivation and an increase in pressure. This suggests that employees may experience psychological strain while initially feeling autonomous or trusted (Van Dierendonck et al., 2004). This dichotomy emphasizes how crucial perception and circumstance are when assessing leadership.

According to Podsakoff et al. (2006), transactional leadership also shown a strong positive correlation with satisfaction, albeit only through higher motivation rather than lower pressure. This implies that, although the effect was not as strong as that observed under laissez-faire leadership, performance-driven expectations could be more acceptable when combined with explicit rewards.

The findings support leadership theory by showing the need of including mediators linked to stress and motivation (Baron & Kenny, 1986) and by emphasizing how gender and other contextual and individual characteristics influence how leaders are seen (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001).

Practically speaking, the results emphasize the value of leadership development that emphasizes psychological support, motivation, and clarity (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Although autonomy could be valued in some contexts, it shouldn't take the place of fundamental leadership traits like support, fairness, and feedback.

Notwithstanding its drawbacks, such as its cross-sectional design and dependence on self-report data (Podsakoff et al., 2003), this thesis provides fresh perspectives on the psychological processes behind leadership styles. It demonstrates how surface-level effectiveness can mask underlying impacts on stress and motivation, highlighting the necessity for a sophisticated approach to leadership in complicated work situations.

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Appendix A – Survey

Titel: Onderzoek naar leiderschapsstijlen en werknemerstevredenheid

Onderzoeker Aathisan Kumarasamy

Institutie: University of Twente

Contact Informatie: +31644215821 – a.kumarasamy@student.utwente.nl

Doel van het onderzoek:

Het doel van dit onderzoek is om te bepalen hoe verschillende leiderschapsstijlen (transformationeel, transactioneel en laissez-faire) invloed hebben op de werknemerstevredenheid van medewerkers in een hoog competitieve business-to-consumer (B2C) omgeving. Met uw deelname kunnen we deze dynamieken beter begrijpen en de leiderschapspraktijken van de organisatie verbeteren. Dit onderzoek wordt uitgevoerd vanuit de afdeling Business Administration aan de Universiteit van Twente, in het kader van een master thesis.

Wat Deelname Inhoudt:

- **Enquête:** U wordt gevraagd om een online vragenlijst in te vullen over uw ervaringen met verschillende leiderschapsstijlen en uw werktevredenheid.
- **Gegevensverzameling:** Uw antwoorden worden anoniem verzameld en geanalyseerd om patronen en inzichten met betrekking tot leiderschapseffectiviteit te identificeren. De Gegevens worden vernietigd na het analyseren en anonimiseren van de benodigde informatie.

Tijd:

Het invullen van de vragenlijst kost vijftien tot twintig minuten.

Risico's en voordelen:

- **Risico's:** Dit onderzoek heeft weinig risico's. Als u zich ongemakkelijk of gestrest voelt bij het beantwoorden van bepaalde vragen, kunt u op elk gewenst moment de enquête overslaan of stoppen.
- **Voordelen:** Uw deelname aan dit onderzoek kan leiden tot betere leiderschapspraktijken en hogere medewerkerstevredenheid. Hoewel er geen directe voordelen zijn voor de persoon die het geeft, biedt feedback een waardevolle manier om de werkomgeving te verbeteren.

Vertrouwelijkheid:

Uw antwoorden worden strikt vertrouwelijk behandeld en uitsluitend voor onderzoeksdoeleinden gebruikt. Alle gegevens worden geanonimiseerd, zodat identificatie van individuen onmogelijk is. Alleen samengevoegde resultaten zullen in rapporten worden opgenomen. In overeenstemming met de ethische normen van de Universiteit Twente wordt de verwerking van gegevens met uiterste zorg uitgevoerd.

Vrijwillige Deelname:

Deelname aan dit onderzoek is volledig uw eigen beslissing. U heeft het recht om het

onderzoek op elk moment te beëindigen zonder expliciet te verklaren waarom. Uw relatie met werkgever zal niet worden beïnvloed door uw beslissing om deel te nemen.

Voor vragen kunt u met mij contact opnemen via het mailadres:

Demografisch						
1. Wat is je functie binnen het bedrijf?	Sales adviseur	Assistant manager				
2. Wat is je leeftijd?	Jonger dan 20 jaar	20 – 25 jaar	26 – 30 jaar	31 – 35 jaar	36 – 50 jaar	50 + jaar
3. Wat is je geslacht?	Man	Vrouw	Anders			
4. Wat is uw hoogst behaalde educatie kwalificatie?	Voortgezet onderwijs (VO)	Middelbaar beroepsonderwijs (MBO)	Hoger beroepsonderwijs (HBO)	Wetenschappelijk onderzoek (WO)	PhD	

a.kumarasamy@student.utwente.nl

Succes en met vriendelijke groet, A. Kumarasamy

U krijgt nu stellingen voorgelegd van 3 verschillende leiderschapsstijlen. Na het lezen van elke stelling vult u telkens in hoe tevreden u bent over deze stijl aan de hand van 8 vragen.

1 = Helemaal oneens 2 = Oneens 3 = Neutraal 4 = Eens 5 = Helemaal eens

Transformationele leiderschap

Uw leidinggevende richt zich op het inspireren en motiveren van medewerkers om hun persoonlijke belangen te overstijgen en te streven naar het bereiken van hogere doelen. Uw leidinggevende ondersteunt persoonlijke groei, moedigt innovatie aan en communiceert een duidelijke visie voor de toekomst.

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Onder deze leiderschapsstijl zou mijn leidinggevende mij eerlijk behandelen.					
2. Ik geloof dat mijn leidinggevende onder deze leiderschapsstijl competent is in zijn/haar werk.					
3. Onder deze leiderschapsstijl zou mijn leidinggevende goed werk van mijn kant erkennen en belonen.					
4. Onder deze leiderschapsstijl zou mijn leidinggevende mij duidelijke en bruikbare instructies geven					
5. Onder deze leiderschapsstijl zou ik mij gewaardeerd voelen door mijn leidinggevende.					

6. Ik zou me meer gemotiveerd voelen om goed te presteren onder deze leiderschapsstijl.					
7. Onder deze leiderschapsstijl zou ik een goede balans ervaren tussen werkdruk en werkplezier.					
8. Deze leiderschapsstijl zou mijn algemene tevredenheid over mijn werk verbeteren.					

Transactionele leiderschap

Uw leidinggevende legt de nadruk op het uitwisselen van inspanningen tegen beloningen.

Uw leidinggevende doet dat duidelijke verwachtingen, beloont goede prestaties en corrigeert fouten. Er is een focus op het behalen van afgesproken doelen via strikte regels en procedures

(8 questions)					
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Onder deze leiderschapsstijl zou mijn leidinggevende mij eerlijk behandelen.					
2. Ik geloof dat mijn leidinggevende onder deze leiderschapsstijl competent is in zijn/haar werk.					
3. Onder deze leiderschapsstijl zou mijn leidinggevende goed werk van mijn kant erkennen en belonen.					
4. Onder deze leiderschapsstijl zou mijn leidinggevende mij duidelijke en bruikbare instructies geven					
5. Onder deze leiderschapsstijl zou ik mij gewaardeerd voelen door mijn leidinggevende.					
6. Ik zou me meer gemotiveerd voelen om goed te presteren onder deze leiderschapsstijl.					
7. Onder deze leiderschapsstijl zou ik een goede balans ervaren tussen werkdruk en werkplezier.					
8. Deze leiderschapsstijl zou mijn algemene tevredenheid over mijn werk verbeteren.					

Laissez-faire leiderschap

uw leidinggevende oefent weinig tot geen directe controle over de beslissingen van medewerkers. Medewerkers worden vrijgelaten om zelfstandig te werken, en de leidinggevende grijpt alleen in wanneer het absoluut noodzakelijk is

(8 questions)					
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Onder deze leiderschapsstijl zou mijn leidinggevende mij eerlijk behandelen.					
2. Ik geloof dat mijn leidinggevende onder deze leiderschapsstijl competent is in zijn/haar werk.					
3. Onder deze leiderschapsstijl zou mijn leidinggevende goed werk van mijn kant erkennen en belonen.					
4. Onder deze leiderschapsstijl zou mijn leidinggevende mij duidelijke en bruikbare instructies geven					

5. Onder deze leiderschapsstijl zou ik mij gewaardeerd voelen door mijn leidinggevende.					
6. Ik zou me meer gemotiveerd voelen om goed te presteren onder deze leiderschapsstijl.					
7. Onder deze leiderschapsstijl zou ik een goede balans ervaren tussen werkdruk en werkplezier.					
8. Deze leiderschapsstijl zou mijn algemene tevredenheid over mijn werk verbeteren.					

Tot slot nog deze vragen

Inzoom vragen (2 questions)					
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Welke van de drie leiderschapsstijlen komt het meest overeen met jouw eigen manager?					
2. In hoeverre denk je dat de leiderschapsstijl van jouw huidige manager jouw motivatie en prestaties beïnvloedt					

Appendix B – normality test normality test

Skewness and kurtosis statistics were computed for each of the 24 Likert-scale items (Q5–Q28), which correspond to perceptions of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership, in order to evaluate the assumption of univariate normality. Adams (2017) states that values in the range of -1 to +1 are suitable for estimating normal distributions in behavioral data.

Item	Skewness	Kurtosis
Vraag 5	-0,324	-0,777
Vraag 6	-0,321	-0,532
Vraag 7	-0,596	0,462
Vraag 8	-0,12	-1,065
Vraag 9	-0,869	0,281
Vraag 10	-0,733	0,774
Vraag 11	-0,159	-1,134
Vraag 12	-0,969	1,123
Vraag 13	-0,377	-0,389
Vraag 14	-0,13	-0,775
Vraag 15	-0,458	-0,23
Vraag 16	-0,075	-0,813
Vraag 17	-0,395	-0,641
Vraag 18	-0,253	-0,471
Vraag 19	-0,254	-0,708
Vraag 20	-0,398	0,087
Vraag 21	0,351	-0,888
Vraag 22	0,791	-0,14
Vraag 23	0,882	-0,164
Vraag 24	0,66	0,016
Vraag 25	0,599	-0,568
Vraag 26	0,639	-0,577
Vraag 27	0,544	-0,785
Vraag 28	0,541	-0,765

Interpretation:

The majority of values were within the permissible range of -1 to +1, indicating that the items were roughly distributed normally. Although there were few exceptions (such as Q11 and Q12, where the kurtosis was more than |1|), they weren't significant enough to go against the parametric assumptions (Field, 2018).

Appendix C – adjusted Cronbach's Alpha test results

The three leadership style constructs' internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) is shown in this appendix, along with a Pearson correlation matrix of all composite leadership variables and the single-item outcome measures that go along with them.

Reliability of Leadership Style Scales

Leadership Style	Items Used	Cronbach's α	Interpretation
Transformational	Q5–Q9	.58	Below acceptable threshold
Transactional	Q13–Q17	.61	Acceptable for exploratory use
Laissez-Faire	Q21–Q25	.86	Strong internal consistency

Appendix D – Exploratory Factor Analysis

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Vraag 10
Vraag 11
Vraag 12
Vraag 18
Vraag 19
Vraag 20
Vraag 26
Vraag 27
Vraag 28

Vraag 14
Vraag 15
Vraag 16
Vraag 17
Vraag 21
Vraag 22
Vraag 23
Vraag 24
Vraag 25

Number of Factors based on
☒ Parallel analysis
☐ Based on PC
☐ Based on FA
Seed 1234
☐ Eigenvalues
Eigenvalues above 1
☐ Manual
Number of factors 1
Factoring method
Minimum residual

Rotation
☐ Orthogonal
☒ Oblique
none
promax
Base analysis on
☒ Correlation matrix
☐ Covariance matrix
☐ Polychoric/tetrachoric correlation matrix

Results

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Test

	MSA
Overall MSA	0.735
Vraag 5	0.661
Vraag 6	0.552
Vraag 7	0.647
Vraag 8	0.708
Vraag 9	0.526
Vraag 13	0.689
Vraag 14	0.678
Vraag 15	0.663
Vraag 16	0.618
Vraag 17	0.627
Vraag 21	0.864
Vraag 22	0.753
Vraag 23	0.765
Vraag 24	0.838
Vraag 25	0.817

Bartlett's Test

X ²	df	p
444.992	105.000	< .001

Factoring method
Minimum residual

Display loadings above
0.4

Order factor loadings by
☒ Factor size
☐ Variables

Assumption checks
☒ KMO test
☒ Bartlett's test

Tables
☐ Structure matrix
☐ Factor correlations
☐ Additional fit indices
☐ Residual matrix
☐ Parallel analysis
☐ Based on PC
☐ Based on FA
Plots
☐ Path diagram
☐ Scree plot
☐ Parallel analysis results
Missing Values
☒ Exclude cases pairwise
☐ Exclude cases listwise

Chi-squared Test

	Value	df	p
Model	66.986	63	0.342

Factor Loadings

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Uniqueness
Vraag 23	0.885			0.221
Vraag 22	0.794			0.354
Vraag 25	0.765			0.420
Vraag 21	0.676			0.545
Vraag 24	0.618			0.613
Vraag 13		0.602		0.626
Vraag 14		0.572		0.694
Vraag 17		0.572		0.701
Vraag 16		0.486		0.710
Vraag 9			0.591	0.683
Vraag 7			0.575	0.700
Vraag 8			0.474	0.734
Vraag 5				0.829
Vraag 6				0.855
Vraag 15				0.856

Note. Applied rotation method is promax.