

THE EFFECT OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN THE HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM INDUSTRY IN GREECE

Konstantinos S. Skandalis, University of the Aegean
Issam A. Ghazzawi, University of LaVerne

ABSTRACT

Increasing employee engagement and intern commitment is crucial to organizational sustainability and success. Specifically, the purpose of this study is to confirm the importance of transformational leadership in employee engagement by considering the flow of services to customers in the hospitality and tourism industry. This paper is a modest attempt at investigating whether transformational leadership can bring about greater organizational engagement and commitment within the hospitality and tourism industry in Greece as relatively little is known about how employee engagement can be influenced by transformational leadership.

The research contributes to transformational leadership effects literature by providing empirical findings regarding its influence on employees' engagement in the hospitality industry in Greece.

Keywords: *Leadership; transformational leadership; Greek hospitality and tourism industry; organizational commitment; employee engagement.*

INTRODUCTION

The concept of employee engagement (EE) has become the focus of managers in general and human resources departments in many organizations as an important element in organizational success and sustainability. This subject has also generated much interest from practitioners and academics over the past few years and has become a popular topic in management and organizational studies because of its relevance to any organizational setting (e.g. Arrowsmith & Parker, 2013; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Saks & Gruman, 2014).

As tourism in Greece made a strong comeback in 2022 reaching the pre-pandemic 2019 levels, its impact on the economy and society becomes progressively larger and more profound. Tourism paves the way for growth and advancement in all facets of Greek society and, particularly, in the realm of business.

This study is focused on transformational leadership and employee engagement in the tourism and hospitality industry in Greece which is currently undergoing a major strategic improvement, focusing on the extension of the tourist period, the development of higher-value tourist segments, the increase of average daily spending and the opening of new tourist markets. Important to note that a crucial component of a successful hospitality and tourism business is to have managers, supervisors, and leaders who will guide and motivate their employees to think outside the box, make good decisions, take ownership of their work, and solve problems (George & Jones, 2012; Tuna et al., 2011). Similarly, long-term business success is mainly attributable to successful leadership. Having the right organizational leader, someone who can transform or help to build more engaged/committed employees is key to the success of an organization (Carasco-Saul et al., 2015; Vargas et al., 2020).

In this labor-intensive industry—i.e. hospitality and tourism, the pressure on employees is very high and managers require extraordinary leadership ability to influence and motivate their employees to establish business success and ensure employees' satisfaction with their jobs (Vargas et al., 2020). Successful tourism organizations ensure having leadership at all levels who will guide and motivate their employees to be dedicated to the organization and intern to customers. Organizations that focus on ensuring effective leadership may make employees happy and productive to an optimum level. It is an ideal perspective to enhance employees' well-being and thus, performance to attain organizational success as measured with sustained growth, profitability, and a stable workforce. Achieving this seems to be critical for the organization to find out whatever mechanism that may lead to the immersion of employees in work where they experience significance in what they do even when it is most stretching and arduous.

Research studies have suggested that employee dedication and commitment, to the organization, are positively influenced by the organization's *transformational leadership* which might be regarded as a key to organizational transformation (e.g. Erkutlu, 2008; Gill, Flaschner, & Shachar, 2006; Gill & Mathur, 2007; Hinduan et al., 2009). The commitment of employees to an organization is essential as it influences their engagement and further contributes to their retention (e.g. Al-Jabari & Ghazzawi, 2019; Tuna et al., 2011). Employees are usually willing to invest in their work and be committed when they feel supported (e.g. Al-Jabari & Ghazzawi,

2019). This sense of commitment usually provides a greater sense of job satisfaction, which may be a predictor of engagement (Ghazzawi & Smith, 2009; Long et al., 2014; Nelson & Quick, 2009; Toor & Ofori, 2009; Tuna et al., 2011).

Although a plethora of theoretical and empirical studies have been made as regards the significance of transformational leadership in hospitality and tourism organizations in other parts of the world, no study to date has measured such a relationship in the tourism and hospitality industry in Greece. The study argues that transformational leadership (TL) is one of the biggest drivers for this business's success.

Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement by examining the connections between job satisfaction and work motivation. Thus the objectives of the study are:

1. *To review the available literature on the “TL and EE” and its multidimensional constructs.*
2. *To provide an integrated, empirical model that can logically explain varying reasons associated with the impact of the transformational leader on employee engagement.*
3. *To test whether employees' perceived job satisfaction and intrinsic work motivation mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement.*

Accordingly, the current study will contribute to the organizational understanding of this phenomenon in general and within the hospitality and tourism industry in particular, assist these organizations in evaluating their style of leadership, and contribute to the body of research that is presently accessible on the subject.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Transformational leadership and employee engagement

Transformational leadership and leadership behaviors and their practices are well-researched areas in the domain of leadership and management and captured widespread attention from practitioners and academicians. Organizations spend time, effort, and money to develop their leaders for the sole purpose of building leadership abilities to help promote a healthy working environment that in turn brings about desired results for the organizations and their employees (e.g. Ghazzawi, 2022; Tuna et al., 2011).

As one of the most popular approaches to leadership that brings together charisma and effective elements of leadership, transformational leadership has been the focus of much research since the early 1980s, it became a part of what is known as the “New Leadership” paradigm (Bryman, 1992). As it implies, transformational leadership is a process that transforms and brings about positive changes in people as it is concerned with ethics, values, emotions, and goals—it focuses on the exchange relationship between the leader and the followers that is concerned with follower motives, needs satisfaction, goal accomplishment, and treating the employee as a whole person (Northouse, 2019).

The concept of transformational leadership was initially presented by Burns (1978) as a process in which both leader and follower help each other to move to a higher level of morale and motivation. This style of leadership is different from other styles of leadership that solely

focus on administering rewards or punishments such as the transactional style. Transformational leaders are concerned with the transformation or change of followers' fundamental values, goals, and aspirations (Rothfelder, Ottenbacher, & Harrington, 2012).

Work engagement is crucial between transformational leader and their followers for organizational performance in the hospitality industry (e.g. Barkat et al, 2023), equivalently, Hillriegel and Slocum (2009), implied that transformational leadership is needed at all levels in the organization as they need managers with vision, confidence, and determination to help move the organization and its members forward. This leadership behavior has been identified as an important contributing factor in the development of an 'affective' type of organizational commitment (Sahu, Pathardikar, & Kumar, 2018).

The evidence from assorted studies demonstrated that transformational leadership is fundamental to moving followers to meet or even exceed expected performance as well as elevate them to a higher level of commitment and satisfaction (e.g. Bass & Riggio, 2006; Tuna et al., 2011). Although inspiring and creative, they lead people in a fashion where followers try to perform above their capacity while inventing and innovating (Korejan & Shahbazi, 2016). Thus, Avolio, Waldman, and Yammarino et al. (1991) advocated that transformational leaders have done more with their followers than any other leadership type in motivating them to reach goals.

Equally important, transformational leaders in the hospitality industry must focus on realistic selection procedures by hiring frontline employees whose skills, knowledge, and abilities match the requirements of the service job (Baradarani & Kilic, 2018; Lee et al., 2017). Additionally, Baradarani and Kilic (2018) suggested that frontline employees who perceive that their skills and abilities are well-fit with their job requirements will feel positive emotionality that will result in their displaying innovative behaviors. On the other hand, Majid et al. (2023) argued that transformational leadership directly predicts improved role clarity and job engagement in addition to leading employees to job engagement and championing behavior.

Ghazzawi (2022) presupposed that "In addition to influence, leadership involves mutual trust and interaction between a leader and a follower (69)". Leaders inspire employees by creating shared values, beliefs, and visions in a company (Ahn, Adamson, & Dornbusch, 2004). As well, Rafferty and Griffin (2004) propounded that this style of leadership motivates followers to achieve performance beyond expectations by transforming their followers' attitudes, beliefs, and values (see also, Bass, 1985; Yukl, 1999). In essence, the leader inspires her/his followers by providing a sense of meaning to their work and helping them feel a sense of belongingness to the organization (Tracey & Hinkin, 1996). Thus these types of leaders focus on intrinsic motivation and the personal development of their followers (Wan Omar & Hussin, 2013).

In short, this style of leadership focuses on empowering followers and nurturing them in change as it attempts to raise their consciousness and further elevate their self-interest toward the interest of the group (Northouse, 2019). Bass and Avolio (1990) contended that the transformational style of leadership positively impacts the organization and can be taught to people regardless of their organizational level. It can also be used during recruitment, selection, training and development, and/or when promoting someone.

Leaders who transform, usually give their followers pride, respect, and a sense of the organization's mission (Bass & Riggio, 2006). This transforming approach, according to Burns

(1978), creates significant change in the lives of followers and organizations, it redesigns perceptions and values and changes the expectations and aspirations of employees.

Studies investigating the impact of transformational leadership suggested a positive relationship to employee engagement (e.g. Azim et al., 2019; Breevaart et al., 2014; Datche & Mukulu, 2015; Jha & Malviya, 2017; Thisera & Sewwandi, 2018). Others suggested that transformational leadership behaviors were positively associated with employee performance as employees' engagement was moderately related to transformational leadership (e.g. Al-Amin, 2017).

In studying its impact on the hospitality industry, Erkutlu (2008) asserted that transformational leadership behavior stimulates organizational commitment and job satisfaction. It positively impacted creativity and innovation (Slåtten & Mehmetoglu, 2015), employee commitment (e.g. Patiar & Wang, 2016), employee job satisfaction (e.g. Long et al., 2014; Rothfelder, Ottenbacher, & Harrington, 2012), employee engagement (e.g. Thisera & Sewwandi, 2018), and employee productivity and positively helped employee exhibits extra-role customer service (e.g. Kloutsiniotis, Mihail, & Gounioti, 2023). Barkat et al., (2023) suggested that employees and front-line managers in the hospitality industry frequently communicate to meet customers' expectations and the tourism industry. In this regard, the front-line manager must possess flexibility, creativity innovation, and responsiveness to successfully engage with customers and resolve issues promptly (e.g. Baradarani & Kilic, 2018; Barkat et al., 2023; Lisovitch et al., 2021).

Correspondingly, Kang et al. (2019) concluded that transformational leadership practices in the hospitality and tourism industry have an influence on employees' job involvement and reaffirmed that these leaders could enhance employees' job satisfaction.

Transformational leadership in this study is defined as the set of abilities that allow the leader to perform behaviors including inspiring a collective vision, encouraging creativity, recognizing followers' accomplishments, and building trust (Notgrass, 2014).

Accordingly, this style provides followers with a clear sense of purpose that is energizing—a role model for ethical conduct that builds identification with leaders and their articulated vision (e.g. Avolio & Bass, 2004; Tuna et al., 2011). It also stimulates followers by getting them to question the various methods of solving problems and encourages them to examine ways to improve upon them (e.g. Avolio & Bass, 2004; Tuna et al., 2011). Equally, important is the focus of the leader to focus on understanding the needs of each follower and work to get them to develop to their full potential (e.g. Avolio & Bass, 2004; Tuna et al., 2011).

Properly, this article is another attempt to further test and explain the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement.

The four transformational leadership factors

As transformational leaders focus on developing followers and improving their performance, they demonstrate a range of behaviors or dimensions, including charismatic influence or idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and

individualized consideration. Transformational leaders are skilled at motivating employees to perform beyond what's expected. The following are the key transformational leadership factors:

Idealized influence (II) - Also called charisma or idealized influence, it serves as the emotional component of the leader (Antonakis, 2012). It is about inspiring followers. It centers around the leader displaying support for the organization's ideals. Idealized influence is an indication of when followers want to emulate the leader who acts as a strong role model that is worthy of followers' emulation (e.g. George & Jones, 2012; Northouse, 2019). These leaders usually have a high standard of integrity, morality, and ethical standards. It is also described in terms of socialized, behavioral, and ethical charisma (e.g. Afshari & Gibson, 2015; Brown et al., 2015).

The cornerstone of idealized influence is the leader's behaviors and the fundamental attribution of the behavior by the followers (Long et al., 2014). While the behavioral component is based on followers' observations of their leaders, the attribution component is based on perceptions the followers have of their leader (George & Jones, 2012; Long et al., 2014; Northouse, 2019).

Inspirational motivation (IM) - Inspirational Motivation is regarded as the degree to which a leader articulates and communicates an appealing vision that inspires and motivates followers. It is also a description of the leader who communicates high expectations to inspire followers through motivation to be committed, take part in the organization's shared vision, and achieve challenging tasks (Kariuki, 2021; Northouse, 2019). Inspirational motivation is also a product of a leader-subordinate relationship which is governed by rules of behavior, collaboration, and dominance among other variables that are emotionally influenced and cause inspiration.

Intellectual stimulation (IS) - Intellectual stimulation is the method where a leader challenges and stimulates followers' minds to help them recognize problems, explore new ideas, question assumptions, and find innovative solutions to what they face at work. The leader inspires followers' intellectual capabilities and develops their ability and propensity to think about the problem differently (George & Jones, 2012; Zhou, Hirst, & Shipton, 2012). Anjali and Anand (2015) described critical thinking and problem solving as "Enhances one's cognitive development at work and has a tendency to create a deeper connection to the work and a stronger feeling of responsibility to the organization (p. 28).

Individualized consideration (IC) - Individualized consideration could be defined as the extent to which the leader attends to the follower's individual needs, and provides support, encouragement, and needed attention so a follower can perform the job. Northouse (2019) referred to it as the efforts of the leaders to assist followers in becoming fully utilized. It is also the mentoring, coaching, or guiding the follower. These leaders develop followers' potential and establish a supportive environment where individual differences are respected (Cetin & Kinik, 2015).

Dionne et al., (2004) maintained that the individually considerate leader creates a one-to-one relationship with each team member, listens to the follower's concerns, and addresses individual needs. In this paper, five items (measurement indicators as specified in Table 2) are utilized to capture the key transformational leadership factors.

Job satisfaction (JS)

The level of job satisfaction is the second factor of the study as it is the positive feelings about one's job based on her/his evaluation of the characteristics of the job (Robbins & Judge, 2007) while it is also relevant to the leader-follower interaction and relationship. It has the potential to affect a wide range of behaviors in the organization and contribute to levels of well-being (George & Jones, 2012).

While job satisfaction is crucial for any organization to be productive, it is likely to be influenced by the organization's culture and leadership (Girma, 2016). When employees are happy and satisfied with the working conditions, they usually display higher job involvement (Huang et al., 2016). There are many facets of job satisfaction and one of them is the style of leadership. An effective organizational leadership style is capable of stimulating followers and directing their behaviors to achieve the organizational mission and goals (e.g. George & Jones, 2012; Ghazzawi, 2008). Newstrom (2011, p. 220) asserted that "Job satisfaction is a set of favorable or unfavorable feelings and emotions with which employees view their work".

Research evidence concluded that in addition to the quality of the working environment, the management/leadership practices such as the provision of participatory leadership, advancement opportunities, providing sufficient resources for performing tasks, and training and development all have the potential impact on job satisfaction (Ghazzawi, 2008; Seldon & Moynihan, 2000).

It is a mental state that is determined by the degree to which employees perceive their needs to be met (Evans, 1997). Locke (1969) described it as "The pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job as achieving or facilitating one's job values (316)."

Studies evidence from the hospitality industry revealed that leadership and management have the greatest impact on overall satisfaction (e.g. Heimerl, 2020). Satisfied employees are those who enjoy a positive relationship with their supervisor and whose supervisors take a fair approach to subordinates' questions and concerns. Other studies investigating the effect of emotional labor on frontline employees' emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction within the hotel industry showed that employee deep and genuine acting related positively to job satisfaction, while surface acting was negatively associated with job satisfaction (Amissah et al., 2020).

Additionally, while some studies showed that job involvement, affective commitment, and normative commitment increase job satisfaction (e.g. Kuruüzüm, A., Ipekçi Çetin & Irmak, 2009); others showed that the fairness of personal outcomes that employees receive may have more impact on turnover intentions, job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behavior.

When it comes to ensuring customer satisfaction, an employer needs to ensure employee job satisfaction (Hoffman and Ingram, 1992). The widely established perception that a 'happy

employee is a necessity for happy customers' indeed holds in the hospitality context (e.g. Ahmad et al., 2013; Garlick, 2010). Those employees who are happy will be more effective, productive, and involved in their work. Satisfying employees' needs positively reflects on the organization's upgrades of its capabilities for satisfying the needs of its customers (Tansuhaj et al., 1988).

Based on the empirical evidence linking transformational leadership and job satisfaction, the study hypothesizes that Transformational leadership has a positive effect on Job Satisfaction.

Work motivation (WM)

Work motivation is the third variable in the study's investigation as it is a significant aspect of any workplace and is considered to be an essential catalyst for business success, as it promotes employees' effective performance (Vo et. al, 2022).

Work motivation energizes, directs, channels, maintains, and sustains an employee's actions and behaviors (Steers and Porter, 1983). If there is no motivation then there is no job satisfaction which in turn leads to unsatisfied and unproductive employees. Motivation remains a vital factor in organizational psychology, as it helps explain the causes of individual conduct in organizations (Donovan, 2001). An employee who is dissatisfied may leave a company in search of a better place to work.

Work motivation encompasses two constructs - intrinsic and extrinsic (e.g. Ryan and Deci, 2000). While intrinsic motivation is affected by the excitement, joy, personal satisfaction, and the feeling of accomplishment derived from work-related activities and their results (e.g. Bauer et al., 2016; Beukes & Botha, 2013; Legault, 2016); extrinsic motivation is influenced by the organization, the work itself, and the work environment—e.g. social norms, peer influence, financial needs, authority, or promises of reward (Tziner, Shkoler, & Bat Zur, 2019).

Studies evidence from the hospitality industry showed that monetary alone is not enough and that financial rewards do not diminish a person's intrinsic motivation (e.g. Putra et al., 2017). Others suggested that intrinsic motivation is critical for nurturing reciprocity which then enhances organizational commitment (e.g. Kim et al., 2020). Putra et al. asserted that "When extrinsic (e.g., monetary rewards) and intrinsic motivation are applied concurrently in the workplace, intrinsic motivation plays a stronger role in employee engagement than extrinsic motivation (11). Other studies revealed that the attitude of the servant leader in the hospitality industry is one of the mechanisms leaders use to foster creativity and that this mediating role of servant attitude is strengthened as employee intrinsic motivation increases (Ruiz-Palomino & Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara, 2020).

Rockmann and Ballinger (2017) attested that there is increasing evidence that intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are independent, each with unique antecedents and outcomes. In this study, the focus is on how intrinsic work motivation mediates the relationship between transformational leadership, job satisfaction, and employee engagement.

Employee engagement (EE)

There is no consistency in defining employee engagement, or regarding the validity of its measurement, and its concept, (e.g. Kular et al., 2008, Saks & Gruman, 2014). While there is no consistency in defining employee engagement or agreeing on the validity of its measurement, and its concept, (e.g. Kular et al., 2008, Saks & Gruman, 2014); however, some defined employee engagement as an emotional and intellectual commitment to the organization (e.g. Baumark, 2004; Richman 2006; Shaw et. al, 1998). Others explicated the concept as the size of the discretionary effort exhibited by employees in their jobs (e.g. Frank et al 2004).

Kahn (1990), defined personal engagement as, “The simultaneous employment and expression of a person's "preferred self" in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence (physical, cognitive, and emotional), and active, full role performances.” (p. 700).

Analogously, Schaufeli, et al., (2002), defined engagement as the positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Correspondingly, Macey and Schneider (2008) asserted that employee engagement is used at different times to refer to the psychological states, traits, and behaviors as well as their antecedents and outcomes.

The engagement of the employees in providing optimal services to tourism customers (service immersion) is under consideration in this paper. This paper refers to employee engagement (EE) as the workers’ feeling of emotional responsibility towards the organization. It is also the emotional and intellectual state that causes a person to be highly attached to her/his work and its goals (Popescu et al., 2022). In this paper, employees’ engagement was evaluated by measuring participants' immersion when providing services to customers. Zak (2022), defined immersion as, “A neurologic state in which one is attentive to an experience and it resonates emotionally.” (p.44). Kannegieser et al., (2021) suggested that immersion is a state of intense focus and complete concentration on an activity, in which the intrinsic motivation and subjective perception of performance both reach their highest points.

The importance of employees’ immersion in providing services to customers is also stressed by Pahi and Hamid (2015) who claimed that employee commitment enhances loyalty and high quality of service delivery. It is similar to “flow” or to a state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter (Zak & Barazza, 2018). On the same line, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) professed that “While flow states require an active participation in a task, immersive experiences can be purely passive, but have similar positive psychological effects like deep concentration and feelings of awe or transcendence.” (p. 4).

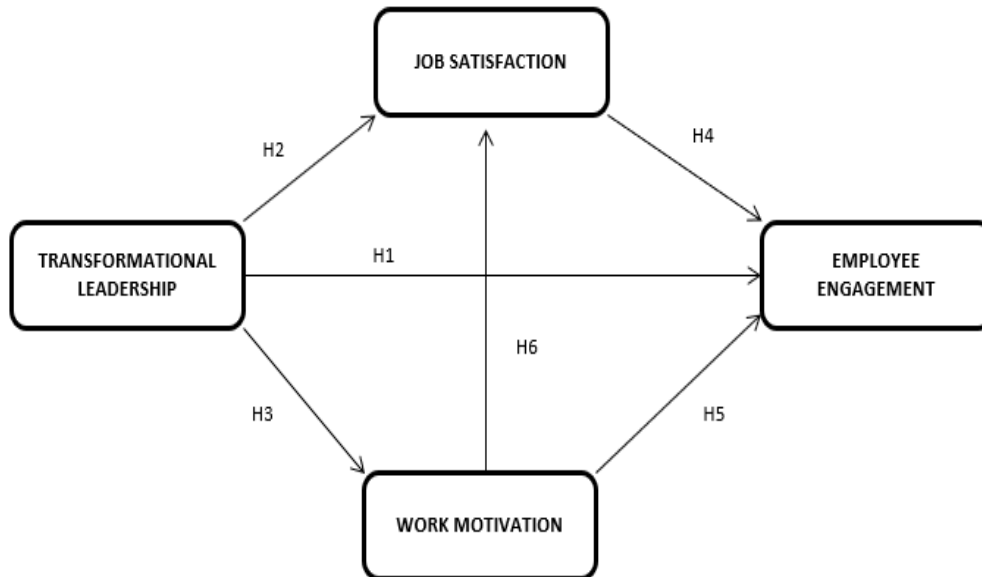
As the tourism and hospitality industry customers’ perceptions and opinions are very important, frontline employees are the link between their establishment and its customers (Buil et al., 2019). Therefore, increasing the identification of the employees with their organization and their engagement is a critical challenge to encourage positive results—namely better performance and behaviors (Buil et al., 2019). Accordingly, one of the biggest challenges for tourism organizations in general, and to the Greek one in a more specific term is to have

effective ways and appropriate leadership that make employees committed to serving their goals, identify with their organization, and understand the purpose that they have been hired for. These employees work towards helping the company face its challenges. Immersed employees will perform their tasks beyond economic reasons so that the establishment can eventually achieve customer satisfaction with the provided services.

This paper argues that an engaged employee in general and a tourism/hospitality employee in particular, helps her/his organization in terms of productivity and financial viability by providing good customer satisfaction. This is equivalent to commitment. Accordingly, this paper adopted the views that service immersion refers to the extent of the employee's dedication and effort to the customer (e.g. Kang et al., 2019) and the attitude of service employees to engage in service for the customer, to strive for the benefit of the customer, and to be dedicated to the service (Peccei and Rosenthal, 1997). Consonantly, Jiang and Zhou (2020) refer to it as employees' interest in their jobs and the energy in their jobs whereas, Ermi and Mäyrä (2005) concluded that "The feeling of immersion is at its most powerful when one can achieve a satisfying balance of challenges and abilities (p.7). Thus, the study established the following hypotheses:

- H1: Transformational leadership positively affects employee engagement*
- H2: Transformational leadership positively affects job satisfaction*
- H3: Transformational leadership positively affects work motivation*
- H4: Job Satisfaction positively affects employee engagement*
- H5: Work Motivation positively affects employee engagement*
- H6: Work Motivation positively affects job satisfaction*
- H7: There is a positive indirect effect of Work Motivation on employee engagement via the mediation role of Job Satisfaction.*
- H8: There is a positive specific indirect effect of transformational leadership on job satisfaction via the mediation role of work motivation*
- H9: There is a positive specific indirect effect of transformational leadership on employee engagement via the mediation roles of work motivation and job satisfaction*

The proposed hypotheses H1 through H6 in this study are visually presented in the conceptual model, i.e. Figure 1.

Figure 1: The conceptual model of the study

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Participants and setting

The study is based on a quantitative survey approach and the data collection included a survey of 300 frontline managers and employees from 10-three, four, and five-star hotels; 11 food and beverage establishments; 7 travel and tourism companies; and 5 entertainment and recreation establishments. Data was collected through face-to-face survey techniques from various touristic areas in Greece in the regions of Attica (Athens center and Athens Riviera), Crete, and Peloponnese during the second half of 2022. The utilization of the quantitative research design is the most suitable approach to explain/analyze the relationships between the various variables (e.g. Barkat et al., 2023; Delice, 2010).

The interviews were conducted face-to-face by one of the co-authors using a questionnaire printed on paper. The original instrument containing study questions was translated from English to Greek by one of the authors and a pilot test was performed using 12 university students to ensure that respondents could easily respond to survey questions. After some adjustments were made, a second pilot study was done using 10 employees in the tourism industry to further validate the instrument. All respondents spoke and wrote Greek fluently. One of the researchers was available in person to answer any questions when needed.

The provided survey and its questionnaires included a cover letter that explained the purpose of the research, the anonymity of data, and the voluntary nature of participation in the study. Additionally, it provided instructions on how to complete the survey. Of the nearly 425 participants solicited from these establishments, 300 frontline managers and employees

volunteered to participate in the current study and completed and returned the survey. Based on that, the response rate was 71%. However, researchers considered 42 forms as invalid as a result of being incomplete or missing other important information. Accordingly, the valid surveys were 258 responses that were deemed valid for further data analysis. Table 1 depicts the demographic characteristics of respondents.

The owners and/or the general managers or the HR managers of all of the targeted establishments were contacted and were briefed regarding the purpose of the study and ensured the confidentiality of personal data. With their help, they assisted in connecting the researchers with the front managers and employees to participate in the study and collect the needed data. Study volunteers were asked to provide information about their age group, gender, education, sector within the tourism industry, and years in the industry at the time of data collection.

Participants profile

Responses showed that participants were 52.3% female and 47.7% male. While the larger part of the respondents came from the age that ranges between 26 to 33 years old (i.e. 31.4%), 27.5% were from the age brackets of 18 and 25, 19.8% were from 34 to 41 years old, 12.4% were from 42 to 50 years old, and 8.9% were 50 years or older.

Participants returned their completed survey to the researcher in person. To ensure the validity and confidentiality of the collected information, participants were guaranteed that all information would remain confidential and would be disclosed only with the participant's permission or as required by law. Confidentiality was maintained by separating the consent forms from the survey questionnaires.

Out of 258 respondents, 48.9% were working in food and beverage companies (i.e. establishments engaged in preparing meals, snacks, and beverages for immediate consumption on and off the premises). Additionally, 30.6% worked in lodging (i.e. hotels, hostels, and other businesses that provide a place for people to sleep overnight), 12.8% worked within the travel and tourism subsector (i.e. businesses related to moving people from place to place— buses, cabs, planes, ships, etc.) and the remaining 7.8% were in the entertainment and recreation subsector (i.e. other activities that people do for rest, relaxation, and enjoyment—or a business that provides visits to places of special interest such as museums, sports, concerts, etc.).

As far as education, 60.1% of the participants had secondary school or trade/technical qualifications, 27.5% had bachelor's degrees, and 12.4% had master's degrees. When years of experience within the tourism and hospitality industry were queried, it revealed that while 42.6% had between one and four years of industry experience, 29.5% had less than one year, and 27.9% had over four years of industry experience.

Table 1
Demographic characteristics

Items	Frequency (N=258)	(%)
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	123	47.7
Female	135	52.3
<u>Age</u>		
18-25	71	27.5
26-33	81	31.4
34-41	51	19.8
42-50	32	12.4
over 50	23	8.9
<u>Sector</u>		
Food and Beverage	126	48.8
Accommodation	79	30.6
Travel and Tourism	33	12.8
Entertainment and Recreation	20	7.8
<u>Respondents' Level of Education</u>		
Secondary/Vocational education	155	60.1
Bachelors Degree	71	27.5
Masters Degree	32	12.4
<u>Years of Experience in the industry</u>		
less than 1 year	76	29.5
1-4 years	110	42.6
More than 4 years	72	27.9
Total	258	100%

Instrument

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of transformational leadership on work motivation, job satisfaction, and employee engagement in the tourism and hospitality industry. As the research method for this paper was based on an empirical/quantitative study and descriptive statistics; the SPSS AMOS software was used to analyze and verify the hypothesis. Based on a literature review, the items and instruments used in the questionnaire to measure the constructs were adapted from previously validated studies to maintain reliability and validity. Five-point Likert scales were used to assess all constructs. Table 2 describes the measures and their indicators.

Transformational leadership was measured utilizing Wright and Pandey (2010) five-item scale. Five-point Likert scale (1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree) was used to measure responses. Cronbach's alpha for the transformational leadership scale is 0.8935.

To measure intrinsic work motivation, a four-item Likert scale was adopted. To record the responses a five-point Likert scale was used (1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree). Cronbach's alpha for the work motivation scale is 0.864 (e.g. Vo, et al., 2022). More specifically

it tries to capture how intrinsic work motivation mediates the relationship between transformational leadership, job satisfaction, and employee engagement. Please refer to Table 2 for the four-item scale.

In this study, Leisha DeHart- Davis et al., (2015) three-item scale was adopted to measure job satisfaction. Five-point Likert scale (1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree) was used. Cronbach's alpha for the job satisfaction scale is 0.8179. Finally, Employee engagement was measured by Kang, M.J. et al. (2019) five-item scale. Five-point Likert scale (1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree) was used. Cronbach's alpha for the work motivation scale is 0.902.

Table 2
Measures

Variables	Measurement indicators	Related research
Transformational Leadership (TL)	The manager clearly articulates his/her vision of the future.	Wright and Pandey, 2010
	The manager leads by setting a good example.	
	The manager challenges me to think about old problems in new ways.	
	The manager says things that make employees proud to be part of the company.	
	The manager has a clear sense of where our company should be in 5 years.	
Job Satisfaction (JS)	Doing my job gives me a sense of personal satisfaction	DeHart-Davis et. al., 2015
	I am proud to work for this organization/company	
	My work is rewarding	
Work motivation (WM) (Intrinsic work motivation)	Indicate how important work is in your life	Vo et. al, 2022
	People who do not work turn lazy	
	Work is a duty toward society	
	Work should always come first, even if it means less spare	
Employee Engagement (EE) (employee's immersion in services to tourism customers)	I think the service I provide to customers is important	Kang, et al., 2019
	I feel proud to provide service to my customers	Tansujah et al., 1988
	I am very interested in things related to the provision of services to customers	
	I want to provide the customer with perfect service	
	I make the most of my ability to provide services to customers	

Responses on a 5-point agree/disagree scale coded 1 (Strongly Disagree) through 5 (Strongly Agree)

Common method bias

Common method bias (CMB) is an important issue in behavioral research and occurs when variations in responses are triggered by the instrument rather than the original preferences of the participants that the instrument tries to unveil. Therefore, it was highlighted in the survey that there was no right or wrong answer in the responses.

Additionally, the survey advised participants to remain neutral and honest while replying to the set of questions. The current research applied the common method bias using Harman's single-factor approach. According to Harman's technique, common method bias exists when one factor emerges from factor analysis and explains more than 50% of the variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The variance extracted using one factor is 39.5%, less than 50%, indicating no common method bias in this study.

Assessment of measurement model

The model fit indices revealed a good model fit as the values of chi-square to degrees of freedom ($\chi^2/df = 1.091$), comparative fit index (CFI = 0.996), Tucker Lewis index (TLI = 0.995), incremental fit index (IFI = 0.996), normed fit index (NFI = 0.951), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA = 0.019), and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR = 0.0336) all satisfied the cut-off criteria. Please refer to Table 3.

Table 3 Model Fit Measures

Model fit Indexes				
Fit Index	Cited	Fit criteria	Results	Fit (Yes/No)
X2			123,235	
DF			113	
X2/DF	(Kline, 2010)	1.00 -5.00	1.091	Yes
RMSEA	(Steiger, 1990)	<.08	0.019	Yes
SRMR	(Hu&Bentler, 1999)	<.08	0.036	Yes
NFI	(Bentler&G.Bonnet, 1980)	>0.80	0.951	Yes
IFI	(Bollen, 1990)	>0.90	0.996	Yes
TLI	(Tucker & Lewis, 1973)	>0.90	0.995	Yes
CFI	(Byrne, 2010)	>0.90	0.996	Yes

Reliability and validity

In this research, reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity which are crucial prerequisites for achieving valid results (Henseler et al., 2015) were assessed. The study verified the scale's reliability and convergent validity by employing the following criteria: Item reliability of the measures by using factor loading (>0.5), Cronbach's alpha, the composite

reliability (CR) of the constructs (>0.7), and the average variance extracted (AVE) (>0.5). Accordingly, all the values of CR lie between the ranges of 0.818–0.902, which confirms the CR of all of the constructs. Furthermore, the AVE criterion allows its value to be greater than 0.50 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988).

The latent variables ranged from 0.751 to 0.828, showing statistically significant loading. The Cronbach's alpha for all the constructs was also above the threshold value of 0.70 suggested by Hair et al. (2011). The AVE values of the constructs ranged from 0.600 to 0.648 and met the criteria. Prior researchers argue that if the values of AVE are above an acceptable level of 0.50, it indicates adequate convergent validity. Table 4 represents all these values while Figure 2 represents the measurement model graphically.

Table 4
Loadings, Cronbach's alpha, Composite Reliability, and Validity Analysis.

Construct	Items	Loading >0.704	Alpha >0.7	CR >0.7	AVE >0.5	
Transformational (TL)	Leadership	TL_1	0.828***	.8935	.896	0.634
		TL_2	0.783***			
		TL_3	0.796***			
		TL_4	0.815***			
		TL_5	0.757***			
Work Motivation (WM)		WM_1	0.767***	.8648	0.865	0.616
		WM_2	0.762***			
		WM_3	0.814***			
		WM_4	0.794***			
Job Satisfaction (JS)		JS_1	0.785***	.8179	0.818	0.600
		JS_2	0.751***			
		JS_3	0.787***			
Employee Engagement (EE)		EE_1	0.786***	.9020	0.902	0.648
		EE_2	0.798***			
		EE_3	0.827***			
		EE_4	0.807***			
		EE_5	0.807***			

† $p < 0.100$ * $p < 0.050$ ** $p < 0.010$ *** $p < 0.001$

As far as discriminant validity, it was calculated using two methods—please refer to Table 5 and Table 6. The first is the Fornell - Larcker criterion and the second is the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT). In the Fornell and Larcker method (Please refer to Table 5), the square root of each latent variable's AVE is greater than the correlation of its coefficient, indicating discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Besides, the discriminant validity was also assessed using the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) criteria (Hair et al., 2010). Table 6 results

indicate that HTMT values were satisfactory and below the threshold of 0.85 as suggested by Henseler et al., (2015), thus indicating discriminant validity in this research.

Finally, the variance inflation factor (VIF) was also examined for all constructs in the study model to test for multicollinearity. The values did not exceed the threshold of 5, indicating no concerns regarding multicollinearity issues on the data.

Figure 2. Measurement model.

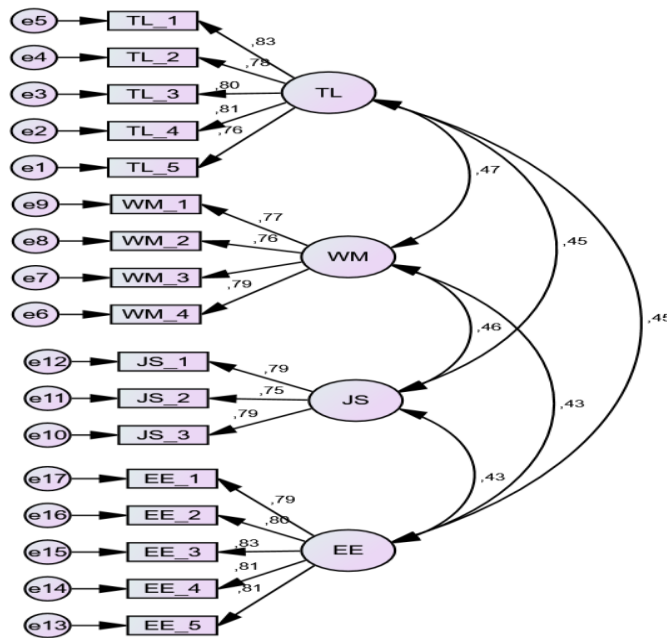


Table 5
Discriminant Validity Analysis (Fornel Larcker) - Convergent Validity

	TL	WM	JS	EE
TL	0,796			
WM	0.472***	0.785		
JS	0.448***	0.456***	0.775	
EE	0.454***	0.428***	0.431***	0.805

Significance of Correlations: † p < 0.100 * p < 0.050 ** p < 0.010 *** p < 0.001

Values on the diagonal (bold) represent the square root of the average variance extracted, while the off-diagonals are correlations.

Table 6
HTMT analysis.

HTMT				
TL				
WM	0.46791877			
JS	0.45308309	0.44942008		
EE	0.45823961	0.42308411	0.43253156	
	TL	WM	JS	EE

Assessment of structural model

The current study assessed the structural model and hypotheses with R-squared (R^2) measures and the path coefficients' level and significance. R-squared (R^2) is the proportion of an endogenous construct's variance explained by its predictor constructs in a regression model. Chin (1998) recommended R^2 values for endogenous latent variables based on: 0.67 (substantial), 0.33 (moderate), and 0.19 (weak). The analysis highlighted that the endogenous constructs, namely WM (.276), JS (0.352) EE (0.351) reflected an effect size that indicates an acceptable model (Please refer to Table 7). To test the hypotheses, the statistical bootstrap technique was applied with the recommended 5000 sample size (Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 7
R-squared Value

Latent Variables	Estimates R^2
WM	.276
JS	.352
EE	.351

RESULTS

The effects of transformational leadership on engagement, job satisfaction, and motivation

Hypothesis 1: Transformational leadership positively affects employee engagement

To test H1, it was found that transformational leadership had a positive and significant effect on employee engagement ($b=0.262$, *** $p < 0.001$). Therefore, H1 was accepted. It reveals that TL positively predicts EE. Study results are consistent with other research results that include Erkutlu (2008), Gill, Flaschner, and Shachar (2006), Gill and Mathur (2007), and Hinduan et al., (2009) who concluded that transformational leadership significantly increases dedication, commitment, and engagement. Accordingly, hypothesis 1 was supported.

Hypothesis 2: Transformational leadership positively affects job satisfaction

When testing H2, it was revealed that transformational leadership had a significant impact on job satisfaction ($b=0.324$, $***p<0.001$). Consequently, H2 was supported. Said result is consistent with other research outcomes, for example, Al-Jabari and Ghazzawi (2019) and Tuna et al., (2011) concluded that transformational leadership has a positive impact on satisfaction and performance.

Hypothesis 3: Transformational leadership positively affects work motivation

When tested H3, the results indicated that transformational leadership had a positive influence on work motivation ($b= 0.526$, $*** p < 0.001$). Thus, H3 was accepted. These results are also consistent with the sheer of research outcomes, including Masi and Cooke (2000), Bass and Riggio (2006), and Tuna et al., (2011) who asserted that transformational leadership is relevant to work motivation and positively impacts it. Therefore, hypothesis 1 was supported.

Please refer to Table 8 and Figure 3 for the tested hypotheses relationships and results.

Figure 3. Graphical representation of the structural model

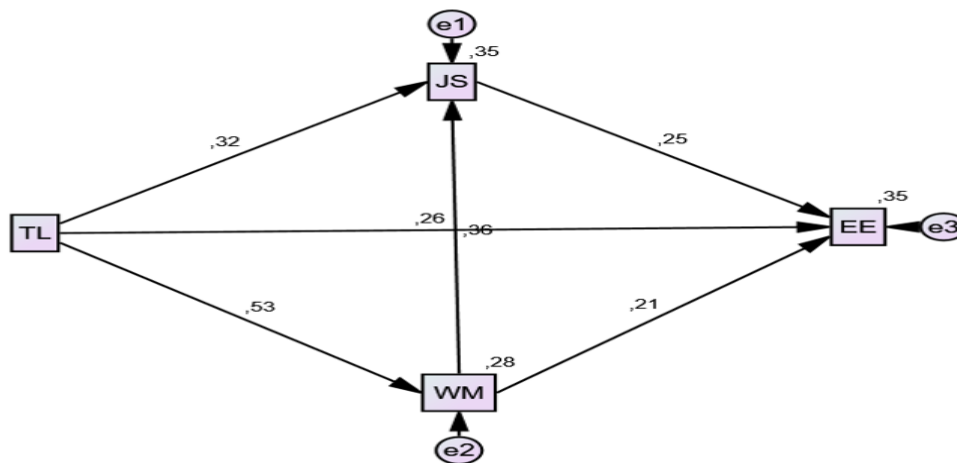


Table 8
Results of hypothesis testing (direct effects)

Hypothesis	Direct Relationships	Estimate Standardized Regression Weights/ Standardized beta	P	Hypothesis Test Decision
H1	EE <--- TL	0,262	***	Supported
H2	JS <--- TL	0,324	***	Supported
H3	WM <--- TL	0,526	***	Supported
H4	EE<--- JS	0,246	***	Supported
H5	EE <--- WM	0,209	***	Supported
H6	JS <--- WM	0,355	***	Supported

Significance of Correlations: † $p < 0.100$ * $p < 0.050$ ** $p < 0.010$ *** $p < 0.001$

The effects of job satisfaction on employee engagement

Hypothesis 4: Job Satisfaction positively affects employee engagement

When testing H4 to validate whether job satisfaction has an impact on employee engagement, study results illustrated that job satisfaction had a positive effect on employee engagement ($b = 0.246$, *** $p < 0.001$). Not surprisingly, H4 was supported. This result is also consistent with other research findings indicating that job satisfaction positively impacts engagement and is an antecedent to engagement, for example, Ghazzawi and Smith (2009), Long et al., (2014), Nelson and Quick (2009), Toor and Ofori (2009), and Tuna et al., (2011).

Motivation and employee engagement

Hypothesis 5: Work Motivation positively affects employee engagement

When testing the relationship between motivation and engagement, the results show a positive relationship. The study supports its H5 that reveals that work motivation affects employee engagement ($b = 0.209$, *** $p < 0.001$). Accordingly, hypothesis 5 was supported. This result is also supported by others, for example, Thomas (2009) who asserted that intrinsic motivation is the force that drives engagement.

Additionally, the result is consistent with Riyanto et al., (2021) who concluded that “Employee involvement shows positive and proactive behavior in the workplace which is a

combination of motivational drive and emotionally attached and managers have a high concern for work that is communicated to achieve company goals (165).

Motivation and job satisfaction

Hypothesis 6: Work Motivation positively affects job satisfaction

Lastly, H6 findings show that work motivation had a significant impact on job satisfaction ($b = 0.355$, $*** p < 0.001$). Hence, H6 was also accepted. The result is also consistent with other empirical research, for example, da Cruz Carvalho et al., (2020) and Stankovska et al., (2017) among others who asserted that job motivation has a direct effect on job satisfaction.

The mediation effects

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of transformational leadership on employee engagement and to know if job satisfaction and work motivation are mediating variables. Additionally, it was hypothesized that transformational leadership (TL) will have a significant indirect relationship with employee engagement. Furthermore, it was expected that work motivation and job satisfaction mediate this relationship while having specific indirect effects.

Hypothesis 7: There is a positive indirect effect of work motivation on employee engagement via the mediation role of job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 8: There is a positive specific indirect effect of transformational leadership on job satisfaction via the mediation role of work motivation

Hypothesis 9: There is a positive specific indirect effect of transformational leadership on employee engagement via the mediation roles of work motivation and job satisfaction

To test hypotheses 7, 8, and 9, a mediation analysis was carried out. Table 9 shows the indirect effects of transformational leadership's relationship to work motivation (WM), job satisfaction (JS), and employee engagement (EE). The indirect effects table reveals that job satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between work motivation and employee engagement. The specific indirect effect (mediation) of WM on EE via the mediator Job Satisfaction is 0.087 ($b=0.087$, $\text{sig./}p=0.001$). Hence, H7 is supported. Also, the specific indirect effect (mediation) of TL on JS via the mediator work motivation is 0.187 ($b=0.187$, $\text{sig./}p=0.001$). Accordingly, the shown results support the study mediation hypotheses. In other terms, for a one-standard-deviation increase in transformational leadership, the study predicted a 0.187 increase in job satisfaction through the mediating variable of work motivation. Accordingly, H8 is accepted.

As far as H9, a mediation analysis was performed to assess the serial mediating role of work motivation and job satisfaction in the relationship between transformational leadership and

employee engagement. The results revealed a significant indirect effect of transformational leadership on employee engagement. The results show $b=0.236$, $\text{sig.}/p=0.001$) via the mediators of work motivation, job satisfaction, and serial mediation through the mediators of work motivation and job satisfaction. In other words, for a one-standard-deviation increase in transformational leadership, the study predicts a .236 increase in employee engagement through the serial mediating role of work motivation and job satisfaction. These findings suggest that having transformational leadership leads to job satisfaction and increases work motivation which, in turn, results in more employee engagement. This is reasonable because when employees experience intrinsic work motivation and feel satisfied, they are more engaged at work. In conclusion, hypotheses 7, 8, and 9 were supported.

Table 9
Mediation Effects

Hypothesis	Indirect Relationships	Estimate Standardized Regression Weights/ Standardized beta	P	Hypothesis Test Decision
H7	EE <--- JS <--- WM	0,087	***	Mediation
H8	JS <--- WM <--- TL	0,187	***	Mediation
H9	EE <--- JS <--- WM <--- TL	0,236	***	Mediation

Significance of Correlations: † $p < 0.100$ * $p < 0.050$ ** $p < 0.010$ *** $p < 0.001$

CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to examine the importance of transformational leadership on employee engagement and to expand the understanding of the mediating role of job satisfaction and work motivation in employee engagement within the hospitality and tourism industry in Greece. As noted before, the objectives were specific to (1) reviewing the available literature on the “TL and EE” and its multidimensional constructs; (2) providing an integrated, empirical model that can logically explain varying reasons associated with the impact of the transformational leader on employee engagement; and (3) testing whether employees' perceived job satisfaction and intrinsic work motivation mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement.

Accordingly, all objectives were accomplished as a comprehensive review of the literature was achieved. Additionally, the major takeaway from this research is the fact that all the proposed hypotheses (Hypotheses 1 through 6) of the study were supported. It validated the conceptualization that transformational leadership affects employee engagement in the hospitality and tourism industry. It is also shown as proposed that job satisfaction and intrinsic work

motivation mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement (i.e. Hypotheses 7, 8, and 9).

While the results of this study acknowledge the complexity of leadership behavior and that individuals' behaviors vary, it proposes that work motivation, job satisfaction, and employee engagement are positively affected by transformational leadership behavior. Accordingly, the findings suggested and strongly confirmed that the transformational leadership style in the hospitality and tourism industry has a positive influence on employee engagement and reaffirms that this kind of leader could enhance employee engagement in the workplace. This study provides a convincing justification that the transformational leadership style generates a positive effect on employees.

A multitude of theoretical and empirical studies have already proved the importance of having transformational leadership in the hospitality and tourism industry (e.g. Avolio & Bass, 2004; Gill et al., 2006; Thisera & Sewwandi, 2018; Tuna et al., 2011); these studies have provided insights to better understand the kind of leadership needed in this industry. What made this study unique is the fact that no study has been conducted to measure the relationship between transformational leadership, work motivation, job satisfaction, and employee engagement in the hospitality and tourism sector in Greece. A case in point, this study's results are in line with others that examined said relationships in different countries and different cultures. It further validated these results.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

While this research was focused on the Greek hospitality and tourism industry, it has several practical implications for HR directors, managers, and leaders in general and professionals within this specific industry who want to lead their subordinates through different methods that inspire and motivate them, intellectually stimulate them, and respond to their needs which will enable their sense of organizational engagement.

First, as innovation is important when dealing with customers in the tourism industry, HR directors, managers, and others in leadership positions must ensure having and maintaining a learning organization that deliberately designs a program(s) to assess their needs for development and support with a focus on innovative front-line staff work behavior. This is a major undertaking as the guidance of HR directors, managers, and key leaders must be apparent and continuous as front-line staff is a key investment hospitality and tourism establishments need to make to enhance performance and the establishment's business capacity. These programs must be designed to focus on enhancing performance or capacity goals through engaging with customers. It should also leverage learning and learning transfer through applying the new methods and skills employees have learned to a new situation or context. Equally important, these programs must have outcome assessments to ensure the meeting of their objectives. For the employees, learning new methods/new skills coupled with having innovative behavior and performance measurement leads to career advancement and organizational success.

Second, the need for encouragement, empowerment, feedback, and rewarding proper behaviors is another key factor in the tourism industry's innovation and performance. HR

directors and other managers need the front-line employees to be innovative in whatever they do, they must provide front-line staff with continuous encouragement to engage, empowerment to do whatever it takes within boundaries to help customers, and provide feedback on how well they respond and resolve customers' issues and keep a happy and satisfied customer. To do it successfully, managers should monitor how well the front-line employees are doing, provide feedback on how well an employee is doing, share good engagement practices and techniques, and reward employees for innovative performance when dealing with customers to help keep the front-line staff enthusiastic, motivated, and engaged. These rewards could be monetary and/or non-monetary ones—some examples of monetary rewards are profit sharing, salary increases, bonuses, and stock options. Other non-monetary rewards could include volunteer time off, fringe benefits, and tangible rewards and gifts. Doing so increases employee engagement and intern improves organizational performance. A case in point, HR directors and other managers must always provide front-line managers with clear/honest, and constructive feedback. An organization must develop its future leadership talent by providing the feedback that matters. Employees look for honest feedback that delineates the capabilities needed to develop to be successful at a higher level. Additionally, management must attend to followers' needs, provide support, and encouragement, and pay attention to them so they can perform their jobs well. While these managers can recognize variations in subordinates' skills, abilities, and growth desires, they need to also create opportunities to enable them to develop their skills and capabilities. According to Champoux (2011), the degree to which the leader shows a genuine interest in subordinates is an important aspect of individualized consideration.

Third, HR directors, managers, and key leaders in the tourism establishment must have open and honest communication with front-line staff. This includes communicating high expectations to inspire them to commit and engage, continuously sharing the organization's vision to make them more involved and be a part of this shared vision, and helping them achieve challenging tasks. Communication includes excitement and enthusiasm about work and organization. Good leaders communicate openly, receive and provide information and ideas from and to others, and be tentative/effective listeners. Additionally, involving followers in the decision-making process and setting their goals is a powerful tool that inspires motivation and engagement as this practice of communicating and involving followers proved to bring about higher levels of loyalty and commitment in addition to providing a healthy organizational climate (e.g. Stringer, 2002).

Finally, in line with Vargas et al., (2020), this study supports that leaders and managers in the tourism industry should be trained in practices to encourage employees' decision-making, guide them to embrace change, help them take ownership and feel proud of their tasks and responsibilities, to let them know about where the establishment should be in the future, to make them think outside the box by thinking about old problems in new ways, to inspire the passion in their job, to lead by setting a good example, and lastly to motivate their employees to unleash their maximum potential to go beyond and above their performance capacity. It is also important that practice managers should have performance measurements. Performance measurement plays a variety of roles in tourism establishments that include providing the basis for reward allocation, providing a basis for promotion or layoffs, identifying high-potential employees, and validating

selection procedures. Having this tool helps managers access employee's past performance and help managers and employees improve future performance.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

As this study attempts to contribute to the knowledge of the effects of transformational leadership on employee engagement, it has some limitations.

One limitation of this study was that it used a convenience sample of hospitality and tourism employees from the regions of Attica (Athens Center and Athens Riviera), Crete, and Peloponnese. Future research might produce different results based on a different sample. Therefore, further research with a larger sample across Greece is suggested to assess the applicability and the generalizability of these findings to the general population of hospitality and tourism employees in Greece.

A second limitation of this study is the fact that its findings were based on a sample of hospitality and tourism employees. Accordingly, the study can make no claims to the generalizability or representations of these results. To assess its applicability to the general population, future comparative research is needed in Greece's other sectors.

Finally, a limitation of this study was that it was done in Greece. Therefore, the study does not provide valuable implications for other countries as the generalizability of these findings to other countries/cultures might not be appropriate.

Despite these limitations, the current research's proposed hypotheses and its findings still have valuable implications and meaningful effects on the literature.

As far as suggestions for future research, first and foremost, more experimental and longitudinal research is needed to ascertain the causal nature of the relationship between transformational leadership and the four factors of transformational leadership—i.e. charismatic influence or idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

Future studies should also explore the impact of transformational leadership in other sectors and different countries to offset some of the outlined limitations.

A final suggestion for future research is to consider the mediating effect of the country's national culture on employee engagement to examine whether the effect of transformational leadership on employees' engagement might produce different results as a consequence of the culture.

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