“How transformational leadership affects job performance among hospital employees: Does power distance matter?”

AUTHORS	Lan Huynh Thi Xuan Duy Dao Huan My Nguyen Thi Dung Han Pham Dinh

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Lan Huynh Thi Xuan (Vietnam), **Duy Dao Huan** (Vietnam),
My Nguyen Thi Dung (Vietnam), **Han Pham Dinh** (Vietnam)

HOW TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AFFECTS JOB PERFORMANCE AMONG HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES: DOES POWER DISTANCE MATTER?

Abstract

This study aims to examine the impact of transformational leadership on job performance, emphasizing the mediating roles of work engagement, work motivation, and organizational culture, as well as the moderating effect of power distance. A total of 500 survey questionnaires were distributed in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam, with 341 valid responses analyzed using structural equation modeling (Smart-PLS). The findings indicate that transformational leadership has a small direct effect on job performance and work engagement but demonstrates a moderate impact on work motivation and a significant influence on organizational culture. Work engagement, work motivation, and organizational culture mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and job performance. Additionally, the results reveal that power distance moderates the effect of transformational leadership on work motivation but not on job performance, work engagement, and organizational culture. Employees with a high power distance tend to weaken the positive relationship between transformational leadership and work motivation, thereby reducing job performance. The study provides insights into leadership strategies in hierarchical healthcare environments of Vietnam.

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Lan Huynh Thi Xuan, Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Business Administration, Tay Do University, Vietnam.

Duy Dao Huan, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Business Administration, Tay Do University, Vietnam.

My Nguyen Thi Dung, Ph.D., Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Business Administration, Hung Vuong University, Vietnam.

Han Pham Dinh, Ph.D., Lecturer, Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Business Administration, Tay Do University, Vietnam. (Corresponding author)

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INTRODUCTION

The Mekong Delta region, a crucial economic hub in Vietnam, is home to approximately 18 million people (General Statistics Office, n.d.). With its rapidly growing population, the demand for healthcare services is rising. However, the region faces significant challenges in its healthcare sector, including workforce shortages, underdeveloped infrastructure, and high job pressure for medical staff. Employees in public hospitals often operate under stressful working conditions with limited resources and inadequate salaries, which lead to diminished work motivation, reduced engagement, and declining job performance. These challenges present serious barriers to improving the quality of healthcare services in the region.

Transformational leadership has been widely acknowledged as an effective approach for enhancing organizational performance, employee satisfaction, and engagement. Characterized by its ability to inspire employees, encourage personal development, and promote organizational cohesion, transformational leadership holds promise for addressing the pressing human resource challenges in public healthcare

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institutions. While its positive effects have been extensively studied in developed nations, the application of transformational leadership in developing countries, particularly in public sector organizations, remains underexplored.

In regions like the Mekong Delta, cultural factors such as power distance are crucial in shaping organizational dynamics. High power distance, which reflects hierarchical relationships and unequal power distribution, is deeply embedded in Vietnamese organizations. It can limit the effectiveness of transformational leadership by constraining leader-employee interactions and reducing opportunities for collaboration and inspiration. Thus, understanding how power distance influences the effectiveness of transformational leadership in healthcare institutions is vital for improving job performance.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Various theoretical frameworks have been developed to examine the impact of leadership and organizational factors on job performance. In healthcare settings, transformational leadership, work engagement, work motivation, and organizational culture have been recognized as crucial elements influencing employee performance.

The transformational leadership theory (Bass & Riggio, 2006) underscores the role of leaders in motivating employees to exceed their perceived limits through four dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. By fostering trust, innovation, and a shared vision, transformational leaders inspire employees to perform at higher levels. Empirical evidence, such as Jung and Sosik (2002) and Sürücü et al. (2022), demonstrates that transformational leadership enhances creativity, collaboration, and motivation – key drivers of job performance. Furthermore, Montgomery et al. (2015) show that in healthcare settings, transformational leadership reduces burnout and increases patient care quality, directly impacting organizational outcomes. Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) supports this relationship by explaining how employees reciprocate transformational leaders' support with higher commitment and effort. Similarly, social cognitive theory (Bandura & National Institute of Mental Health, 1986) highlights the role of leaders in modeling behaviors that enhance employees' self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation, driving improved performance.

In today's competitive global economy, organizations prioritize measurable job performance by establishing clear work standards to assess employee outcomes and behaviors. Job performance reflects the expected value of an employee's contributions over a specific period (Vuong, 2022), serving as a critical determinant of organizational success. According to Ojo et al. (2018), it encompasses actions aligned with organizational objectives, which are vital for sustained growth and competitiveness. Effective job performance benefits both organizations and employees by fostering individual development and aligning personal goals with corporate strategies. Employees who meet or exceed performance standards demonstrate adaptability, innovation, and dedication, contributing to improved productivity and long-term organizational success. Moreover, job performance includes not only outcomes but also the ethical and efficient processes used to achieve them. This dual focus ensures adherence to organizational values while driving success, making it a cornerstone of effective management.

Work engagement, as defined by Kahn (1990), involves the investment of employees' physical, cognitive, and emotional energies in their tasks. Engaged employees exhibit attentiveness, proactivity, and emotional connection, which enhance productivity, creativity, and work quality. In contrast, disengagement leads to withdrawal and reduced commitment, negatively affecting job performance. Harter et al. (2013) and Schaufeli et al. (2002) highlight that high engagement correlates with superior performance metrics, including greater productivity, reduced turnover, and enhanced customer satisfaction. In healthcare, work engagement improves patient outcomes and reduces staff burnout (Montgomery et al., 2015).

Work motivation includes intrinsic factors (e.g., autonomy, achievement) and extrinsic factors (e.g., financial rewards, job security). Herzberg's two-factor theory emphasizes the intrinsic motivators' role in fostering creativity and autonomy, while extrinsic motivators ensure alignment with organizational goals. Empirical evidence demonstrates that motivated employees excel in problem-solving and productivity (Akram et al., 2021; Vuong, 2022). Intrinsically motivated employees invest emotionally and cognitively in tasks, enhancing their engagement and job performance (Chua & Ayoko, 2021; Liaw et al., 2010).

Organizational culture, defined by shared values and norms, significantly impacts performance outcomes. The competing values framework (Cameron & Quinn, 2011) identifies four cultural types – clan, adhocracy, hierarchy, and market – each influencing behavior and productivity differently. For example, clan cultures promote trust and collaboration, while adhocracy cultures drive innovation. In healthcare, structured cultures emphasizing responsibility enhance leadership effectiveness, boosting motivation and protocol adherence (Hartnell et al., 2011). However, limited research exists on cultural impacts in developing countries like Vietnam, where collectivism and hierarchical structures dominate.

Transformational leadership inspires individual development and collective success through four dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass & Riggio, 2006). These elements foster trust and align individual aspirations with organizational goals (Jung & Sosik, 2002). Sürücü et al. (2022) confirm its ability to enhance job performance by increasing motivation and encouraging creativity and collaboration. Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) supports this by suggesting that employees reciprocate with leaders' support, which results in improved performance and commitment. Transformational leadership fosters intrinsic motivation by aligning personal values with organizational objectives. According to social cognitive theory (Bandura & National Institute of Mental Health, 1986), leaders model behaviors that enhance self-efficacy and intrinsic drive. Akram et al. (2021) and Giao et al. (2020) highlight that motivated employees demonstrate superior innovation, productivity, and commitment, resulting in organizational success. Leaders who address both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators create an environment conducive to exceptional performance (Vuong, 2022).

Transformational leadership also influences organizational culture by promoting innovation, trust, and shared values. According to Mahalinga Shiva and Suar (2012), this leadership style fosters openness and cohesion, aligning cultural norms with organizational objectives. Xenikou and Simosi (2006) found that transformational leadership drives proactive behaviors and adaptability, enhancing organizational effectiveness. In healthcare, transformational leadership nurtures supportive cultures that enhance employee and organizational outcomes. Transformational leaders foster psychological safety (Kahn, 1992) and engagement by providing individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation. Chua and Ayoko (2021) and Harter et al. (2013) show that transformational leadership enhances engagement, leading to higher productivity, customer satisfaction, and lower turnover. Transformational leadership facilitates full commitment and improved performance by inspiring employees to align personal and organizational goals.

Power distance, conceptualized by Hofstede (2001), reflects the degree to which individuals accept and expect hierarchical inequalities. At the individual level, power distance shapes employees' responses to leadership behaviors. High power distance employees prioritize structured guidance, while low power distance employees prefer egalitarian relationships and participatory leadership (Kirkman et al., 2009). In high power distance cultures, the focus of transformational leadership on autonomy and innovation may misalign with employees' expectations, reducing engagement and performance outcomes. Conversely, low power distance employees thrive under transformational leadership, valuing collaboration and shared vision (Lian et al., 2012). High power distance environments often align with hierarchical structures, where formal authority guides behavior, limiting the effectiveness of transformational leadership. In contrast, low power distance cultures amplify the impact of transformational leadership on innovation, trust, and collaboration (Hartnell et al., 2011). In the healthcare sector, particularly in

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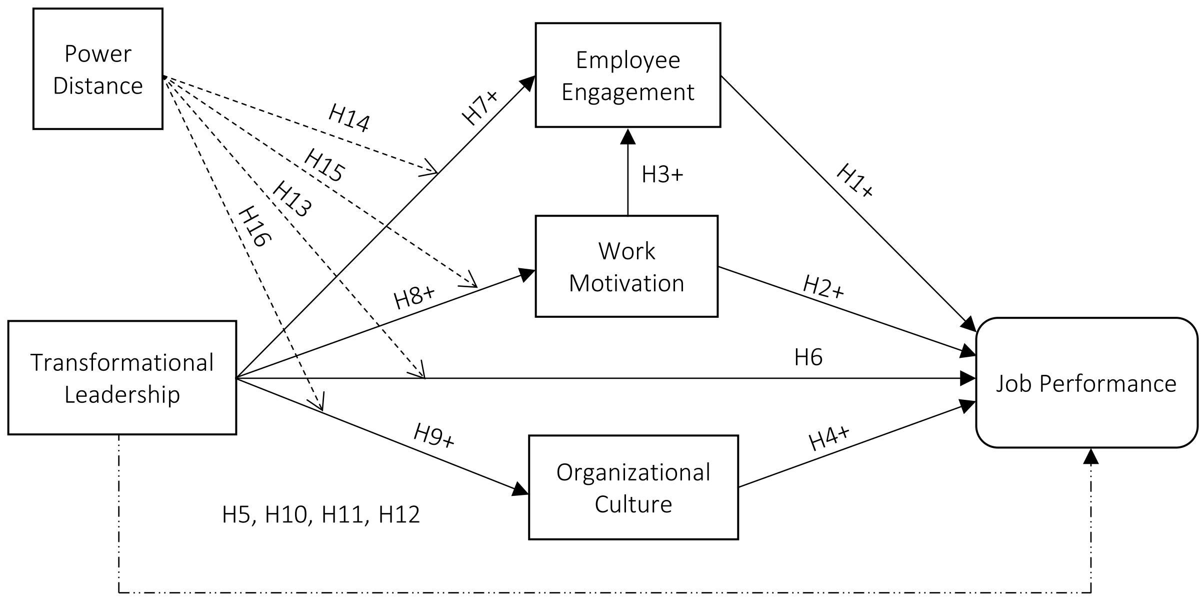

Figure 1. Conceptual framework

Vietnam, high collectivism and respect for hierarchy may intensify the moderating effects of power distance. Leaders in high power distance cultures may need to adapt transformational behaviors to include structured guidance and clear communication to meet employee expectations.

This literature review has explored the relationships among transformational leadership, work engagement, work motivation, organizational culture, and job performance. Empirical evidence supports the critical role of transformational leadership in enhancing job performance, mediated by work engagement and work motivation, and moderated by organizational culture and power distance.

The study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of transformational leadership on job performance in the healthcare sector, focusing on these interconnected variables (Figure 1). The hypotheses proposed are as follows:

H1: Work engagement positively affects job performance.

H2: Work motivation positively affects job performance.

H3: Work motivation positively affects work engagement.

H4: Organizational culture positively affects job performance.

H5: Work engagement mediates the link between work motivation and job performance.

H6: Transformational leadership positively affects job performance.

H7: Transformational leadership positively affects work engagement.

H8: Transformational leadership positively affects work motivation.

H9: Transformational leadership positively affects organizational culture.

H10: Work engagement mediates the link between transformational leadership and job performance.

H11: Work motivation mediates the link between transformational leadership and job performance.

H12: Organizational culture mediates the link between transformational leadership and job performance.

H13: Power distance moderates the link between transformational leadership and job performance.

H14: Power distance moderates the link between transformational leadership and work engagement.

H15: Power distance moderates the link between transformational leadership and work motivation.

H16: Power distance moderates the link between transformational leadership and organizational culture.

2. METHOD

This study utilized a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods. Initially, measurement scales were developed based on an extensive literature review and previous research. These scales were translated into Vietnamese and subjected to a back-translation process with the assistance of linguistic experts to ensure accuracy. This step was critical in eliminating language bias and ensuring conceptual equivalence between the source and translated instruments. A focus group comprising 10 participants, including five managers and five employees, was formed to refine measurement scales. This process aimed to ensure that the scales were culturally appropriate and professionally relevant. By combining managerial perspectives with employee insights, the group addressed potential disparities arising from varying cultural and professional contexts. The feedback helped tailor the scales to accurately reflect the work environment and interpersonal dynamics, ensuring the measurements were both inclusive and valid for the study's specific objectives.

Table 1. Results of the pilot test

Construct	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha	The minimum value of corrected item - total correlation
Organizational culture	4	0.856	0.677
Job performance	4	0.863	0.698
Power distance	5	0.840	0.599
Transformational leadership	5	0.812	0.538
Work engagement	6	0.867	0.569
Work motivation	4	0.902	0.772

To assess the reliability and validity of the revised scales, a pilot study (Table 1) was conducted. A sample of 50 employees from hospitals in Can Tho City and Vinh Long province assessed the suitability and reliability of the scales. Reliability analysis was performed using SPSS version 24, with Cronbach's alpha used as the key metric. Based on Hair, Black, et al. (2019), a Cronbach's alpha value above 0.7 and a corrected item-total correlation exceeding 0.3 indicate acceptable reliability. The lowest Cronbach's alpha and item-total correlation values were 0.796 and 0.456, respectively, surpassing these thresholds.

Table 2. Demographic characteristics

N = 341		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	201	58.9
	Male	140	41.1
Marital status	Single	128	37.5
	Married	213	62.5
Age groups	18–25	73	21.4
	26–35	82	24.0
	36–45	96	28.2
	>45	90	26.4
Educational level	Diploma	71	20.8
	Pass Course	99	29.0
	Bachelor's	123	36.1
	Master's and Above	48	14.1

The primary data collection phase followed the pilot study. The revised scales were then employed in the primary survey, targeting employees in public hospitals in Vietnam's Mekong Delta region. This region was selected due to its unique cultural characteristics, hierarchical work environment, and high job demands on healthcare workers. Particularly, healthcare workers in this area often face high work pressure, requiring engagement and motivation to enhance job performance and improve healthcare service quality. A convenience

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sampling method was used, given the challenges of accessing busy healthcare staff. Based on the "10 times rule" for PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2022), the target sample size was 300–500. Out of 500 distributed questionnaires, 415 responses were returned (83% response rate). After excluding 74 incomplete questionnaires, 341 valid responses were analyzed. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are summarized in Table 2.

All variables in the conceptual model were measured using validated multi-item scales adapted from prior studies, employing a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree (Appendix A). Organizational culture was measured using professionalism, distance from management, regularity, and integration (Almutairi et al., 2022; Hofstede, 2001). Job performance was assessed through task and contextual performance (Dizgah et al., 2012). Power distance utilized scales from Kirkman et al. (2009). Transformational leadership, measured via the multifactor leadership questionnaire (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Wright et al., 2012), included idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Work engagement employed the Utrecht work engagement scale (Schaufeli et al., 2006), encompassing vigor, dedication, and absorption. Lastly, work motivation was adapted from Herzberg's two-factor theory, focusing on achievement, recognition, and advancement (Al Banin et al., 2020; Luthans, 2002).

The study employs partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) to analyze data, a method suitable for complex models with multiple latent variables (Hair et al., 2022). PLS-SEM is chosen due to its strengths in handling small to medium sample sizes, non-normal data distribution, and models with mediating or moderating variables. The analysis process using PLS-SEM consists of four distinct steps. First, the measurement model is evaluated to ensure reliability and validity, including discriminant validity. Second, the structural model is assessed to analyze the relationships between latent variables. Third, hypotheses testing is conducted, which involves examining direct, mediating, and moderating effects. Finally, the goodness-of-fit of the constructs is assessed to confirm the overall model quality.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To assess indicator loadings and their significance, standardized loadings must meet a threshold of 0.708 or higher with a *t*-statistic exceeding ±1.96 for a two-tailed test at the 5% significance level (Hair et al., 2022). Alternatively, Wood (2005) proposed using confidence intervals in PLS-SEM, where intervals excluding zero indicate statistical significance, providing a more nuanced interpretation compared to dichotomous *t*-tests (Cohen, 1994). Indicator reliability, measured by squaring individual loadings, quantifies the shared variance between an indicator and its associated construct (Hair et al., 2021). Table 3 and Figure 2 show that the lowest standardized loading is 0.718 (WE4), with a minimum *t*-statistic of 19.872. Indicator reliability for all items exceeds 0.5, confirming the acceptance of loadings and their significance.

Construct reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR), with both requiring values above 0.70 for acceptance. Since CR accounts for weighted indicators, it is preferred over Cronbach's alpha. However, values exceeding 0.95 indicate redundancy, suggesting the items lack diversity and measure the same concept (Hair, Risher, et al., 2019). In this study, Cronbach's alpha and CR values for all constructs range from 0.841 to 0.930, staying below the redundancy threshold of 0.95, confirming construct reliability. Convergent validity was assessed through the average variance extracted (AVE), which measures the shared variance between a construct and its indicators. AVE values should meet or exceed 0.5 (50%). Table 3 and Figure 2 show that AVE values for all constructs are 0.610 or higher, ensuring convergent validity.

Discriminant validity, which evaluates construct distinctiveness, is established when the AVE exceeds the shared variance between constructs. Methods used include the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) and the Fornell–Larcker criterion (Henseler et al., 2015). HTMT ratios below 0.85 indicate satisfactory discriminant validity. The analysis results satisfy both criteria, as shown in Table 4. The study relies on HTMT ratios to confirm that the constructs are conceptually distinct, further validating the measurement model.

Table 3. Summary results of coefficients in the PLS-SEM model

Constructs	Items	Outer Loadings	T-statistics	Indicator reliability	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	Collinearity
Job Performance	JP1	0.836	46.117	0.699	0.709	0.863	0.907	2.068
	JP2	0.856	58.030	0.733				2.181
	JP3	0.835	45.585	0.697				1.967
	JP4	0.840	48.911	0.706				2.009
Organizational Culture	OC1	0.841	42.269	0.707	0.744	0.885	0.921	2.023
	OC2	0.873	56.757	0.762				2.497
	OC3	0.868	50.184	0.753				2.346
	OC4	0.869	52.561	0.755				2.391
Power Distance	PD1	0.800	35.585	0.640	0.611	0.841	0.887	1.835
	PD2	0.806	39.895	0.650				1.876
	PD3	0.799	37.523	0.638				1.842
	PD4	0.740	19.872	0.548				1.587
	PD5	0.764	28.614	0.584				1.609
Transformational Leadership	TL1	0.854	49.967	0.729	0.692	0.889	0.918	2.488
	TL2	0.838	51.414	0.702				2.122
	TL3	0.817	39.279	0.667				2.141
	TL4	0.820	43.155	0.672				2.060
	TL5	0.831	45.427	0.691				2.111
Work Motivation	WM1	0.865	64.861	0.748	0.769	0.900	0.930	2.430
	WM2	0.878	75.453	0.771				2.514
	WM3	0.876	74.980	0.767				2.451
	WM4	0.888	77.537	0.789				2.697
Work Engagement	WE1	0.719	20.957	0.517	0.610	0.871	0.903	2.002
	WE2	0.800	30.542	0.640				2.070
	WE3	0.820	35.394	0.672				2.197
	WE4	0.718	19.922	0.516				2.017
	WE5	0.780	22.682	0.608				1.903
	WE6	0.839	41.865	0.704				2.299

Table 4. Discriminant validity (HTMT and Fornell–Larcker criterion)

Construct	JP	OC	PD	TL	WM	WE	PD*PL	OC*PL
Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)								
OC	0.832							
PD	0.514	0.447						
TL	0.759	0.730	0.372					
WM	0.828	0.654	0.418	0.533				
WE	0.820	0.652	0.438	0.593	0.605			
PDxPL	0.197	0.238	0.172	0.193	0.229	0.174		
OCxPL	0.249	0.336	0.227	0.222	0.300	0.271	0.545	
Fornell–Larcker criterion								
JP	0.842							
OC	0.728	0.863						
PD	0.438	0.385	0.782					
TL	0.667	0.648	0.322	0.832				
WM	0.731	0.584	0.365	0.478	0.877			
WE	0.712	0.571	0.376	0.522	0.536	0.779		

Note: JP = job performance; WE = work engagement; WM = work motivation; TL = transformational leadership; OC = organizational culture; PD = power distance.

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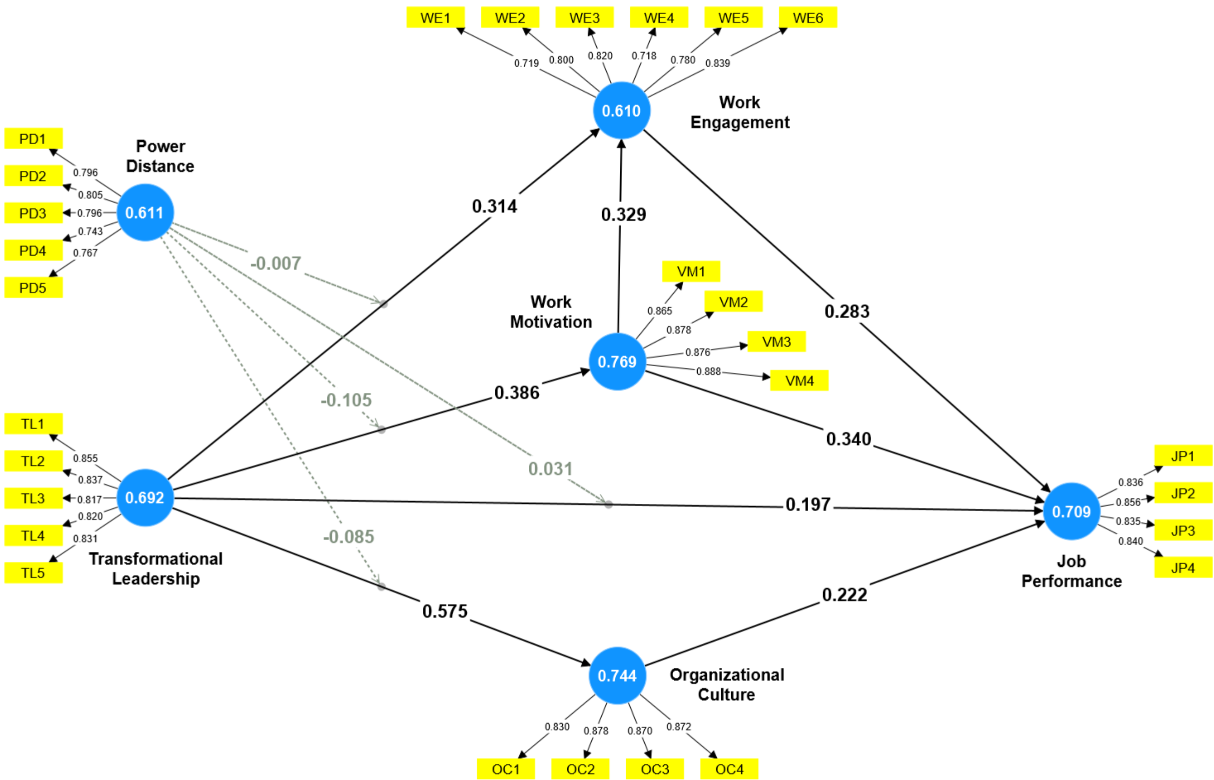

Figure 2. Measurement model

Building on the satisfactory outcomes of the measurement model, the structural model assessment was conducted to evaluate the hypotheses posited in this study. Key aspects, including multicollinearity, direct effects, mediation, moderation, and model predictive power, were systematically analyzed to ensure robustness and validity. Multicollinearity within the model was assessed using the variance inflation factor (VIF). High multicollinearity could distort the size and signs of beta coefficients. In this study, all VIF values were below the threshold of 3.0, as recommended by Cenfetelli and Bassellier (2009), confirming that multicollinearity was not a concern. This indicates the absence of redundancy among predictors and ensures reliable estimation of path coefficients.

The direct effects of transformational leadership and other variables on job performance were tested. Table 5 demonstrates that transformational leadership positively influenced job performance ($\beta = 0.119$, $t = 6.215$, $p = 0.000$), work motivation ($\beta = 0.386$, $t = 8.280$, $p = 0.000$), organizational culture ($\beta = 0.575$, $t = 16.324$, $p = 0.000$), and work engagement ($\beta = 0.314$, $t = 6.524$, $p = 0.000$). Furthermore, work motivation ($\beta = 0.343$, $t = 11.159$, $p = 0.000$), work engagement ($\beta = 0.286$, $t = 8.565$, $p = 0.000$), and organizational culture ($\beta = 0.234$, $t = 6.205$, $p = 0.000$) exhibited positive effects on job performance. Additionally, work motivation positively influenced work engagement ($\beta = 0.328$, $t = 7.626$, $p = 0.000$). These results highlight the central role of transformational leadership in directly enhancing job performance and indirectly influencing it through work motivation, organizational culture, and work engagement. The significant effects of work motivation and work engagement on job performance suggest that motivation and engagement are key pathways through which leadership impacts performance. Similarly, the strong influence of organizational culture on job performance underlines the importance of a supportive and aligned organizational culture. Collectively, these findings support hypotheses H1, H2, H3, H4, H6, H7, H8, and H9, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of the impact of transformational leadership on organizational outcomes.

The mediating effects of work motivation, organizational culture, and work engagement were analyzed using the indirect effect framework, with results presented in Table 6. Work motivation ($\beta = 0.131$, $t = 7.267$, $p = 0.000$), organizational cul-

Table 5. Direct path analysis

Hypothesis	Path	Coefficient	T-statistics	P-values	Decision	f^2
H1	WE → JP	0.283	8.491	0.000	Accepted	0.196
H2	WM → JP	0.340	11.021	0.000	Accepted	0.284
H3	WM → WE	0.329	7.634	0.000	Accepted	0.128
H4	OC → JP	0.222	5.946	0.000	Accepted	0.093
H6	TL → JP	0.197	6.234	0.000	Accepted	0.088
H7	TL → WE	0.314	6.517	0.000	Accepted	0.122
H8	TL → WM	0.386	8.271	0.000	Accepted	0.185
H9	TL → OC	0.575	16.324	0.000	Accepted	0.544

Note: JP = job performance; WE = work engagement; WM = work motivation; TL = transformational leadership; OC = organizational culture.

ture ($\beta = 0.128$, $t = 6.047$, $p = 0.000$), and work engagement ($\beta = 0.089$, $t = 5.118$, $p = 0.000$) mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and job performance. Additionally, work engagement mediated the link between work motivation and job performance ($\beta = 0.093$, $t = 5.677$, $p = 0.000$). These findings confirm that transformational leadership indirectly improves job performance by positively affecting work motivation, organizational culture, and work engagement. Transformational leaders not only influence performance directly but also foster motivation, engagement, and a supportive culture that enhances job performance. The mediation of the work motivation–job performance relationship by work engagement further highlights engagement's critical role. These results support hypotheses H4, H8, and H9.

The interaction effects of power distance on the relationships between transformational leadership and other variables were examined. As reported in Table 7, the interaction effects of transformational leadership x power distance on job performance ($\beta = 0.031$, $t = 0.1295$, $p = 0.195$), organizational culture ($\beta = -0.007$, $t = 0.160$, $p = 0.873$), and work engagement ($\beta = -0.085$, $t = 1.893$, $p = 0.058$) were insignificant, thus rejecting hypotheses H13, H14, and H16. However, power distance significantly moderated the relationship between transformational leadership and work motivation ($\beta = -0.105$, $t = 2.654$, $p = 0.008$), thereby supporting hypothesis H15. These results indicate that while power distance does not significantly influence the effects of transformational leadership on performance, culture, or engagement, it plays a role in shaping how employees perceive the impact of transformational leadership on motivation. Specifically, employees with higher power distance are less responsive to the motivational aspects of transformational leadership, reflecting the influence of hierarchical expectations on leadership effectiveness.

The model's predictive power was evaluated using R^2, f^2, and Q^2 metrics (Rigdon, 2012; Sarstedt et al., 2014). R^2 values indicate the proportion of variance explained by the model, with substantial results for job performance (0.767), organizational culture (0.467), work engagement (0.399), and work motivation (0.297). Effect sizes (f^2) ranged from small to large, with values above 0.35 indicating strong relationships. Specifically, transformational leadership demonstrated a large effect on organizational culture and a medium effect on work motivation and work engagement. Q^2 values of 0.492 (job performance), 0.453 (organizational culture), 0.305 (work engagement),

Table 6. Mediating path analysis

Hypothesis	Path	Coefficient	T-statistics	P-values	Decision
H5	WM → WE → JP	0.093	5.677	0.000	Accepted
H10	TL → WE → JP	0.089	5.118	0.000	Accepted
H11	TL → WM → JP	0.131	7.267	0.000	Accepted
H12	TL → OC → JP	0.128	6.047	0.000	Accepted

Note: JP = job performance; WE = work engagement; WM = work motivation; TL = transformational leadership; OC = organizational culture.

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Table 7. Moderating path analysis

Hypothesis	Path	Coefficient	T-statistics	P-values	Decision
H13	TL → JP	0.197	6.234	0.000	Rejected
	PD x TL → JP (moderating effect 1)	0.031	1.295	0.195	
H14	TL → WE	0.314	6.517	0.000	Rejected
	PD x TL → WE (moderating effect 2)	–0.007	0.160	0.873	
H15	TL → WM	0.386	8.271	0.000	Accepted
	PD x TL → WM (moderating effect 3)	–0.105	2.654	0.008	
H16	TL → OC	0.575	16.324	0.000	Rejected
	PD x TL → OC (moderating effect 4)	–0.085	1.893	0.058	

Note: JP = job performance; WE = work engagement; WM = work motivation; TL = transformational leadership; OC = organizational culture; PD = power distance.

Table 8. Global fit measure (GoF) and Q^2 predict

Constructs	Average variance extracted (AVE)	R-square	Q^2predict
Job performance	0.709	0.765	0.492
Organizational culture	0.744	0.467	0.453
Power distance	0.611		
Transformational leadership	0.692		
Work motivation	0.610	0.399	0.305
Work engagement	0.769	0.290	0.277
Average AVE	0.689		
Average R2	0.480		
GoF = √(Average AVE* Average R2)	0.575		

and 0.277 (work motivation) further confirmed the model's medium predictive relevance (Geisser, 1974; Stone, 1974).

The global fit measure (GoF) was computed following the procedure by Tenenhaus et al. (2005) to validate the model's overall explanatory power. The GoF value of 0.575, derived from the geometric mean of the average R^2 (0.480) and AVE (0.689) (Table 8), exceeds the threshold of 0.36 for a large effect, as recommended by Henseler et al. (2016). These results demonstrate that the proposed model not only has strong explanatory power but also exhibits significant predictive relevance.

The structural model (Figure 3) assessment confirms the robustness of the proposed conceptual framework, validating its theoretical foundations and practical implications. Among the 16 hypotheses tested, 13 were accepted, as detailed in Tables 5–7, providing strong empirical support for the model. Notably, significant moderation effects were observed in hypothesis H15, underscoring the critical role of power distance in moderating the relationship between transformational leadership and work motivation. These findings offer valuable insights into the direct, mediating, and moderating pathways through which transformational leadership influences job performance, enhancing one's understanding of its multifaceted impact.

This study explores the direct relationships between transformational leadership, work motivation, work engagement, organizational culture, and job performance. The results confirm that transformational leadership significantly and positively impacts job performance, consistent with studies by Al Banin et al. (2020), Jung and Sosik (2002), and Sürücü et al. (2022). Transformational leaders foster a work environment where employees are inspired and supported, ultimately enhancing their performance. Additionally, transformational leadership demonstrates a strong influence on organizational culture, echoing findings by Mahalinga Shiva and Suar (2012) and Xenikou and Simosi (2006). Leaders who exhibit transformational qualities, such as individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and idealized influence, create a culture of trust, collaboration, and shared purpose. This aligns with social cognitive theory (Bandura

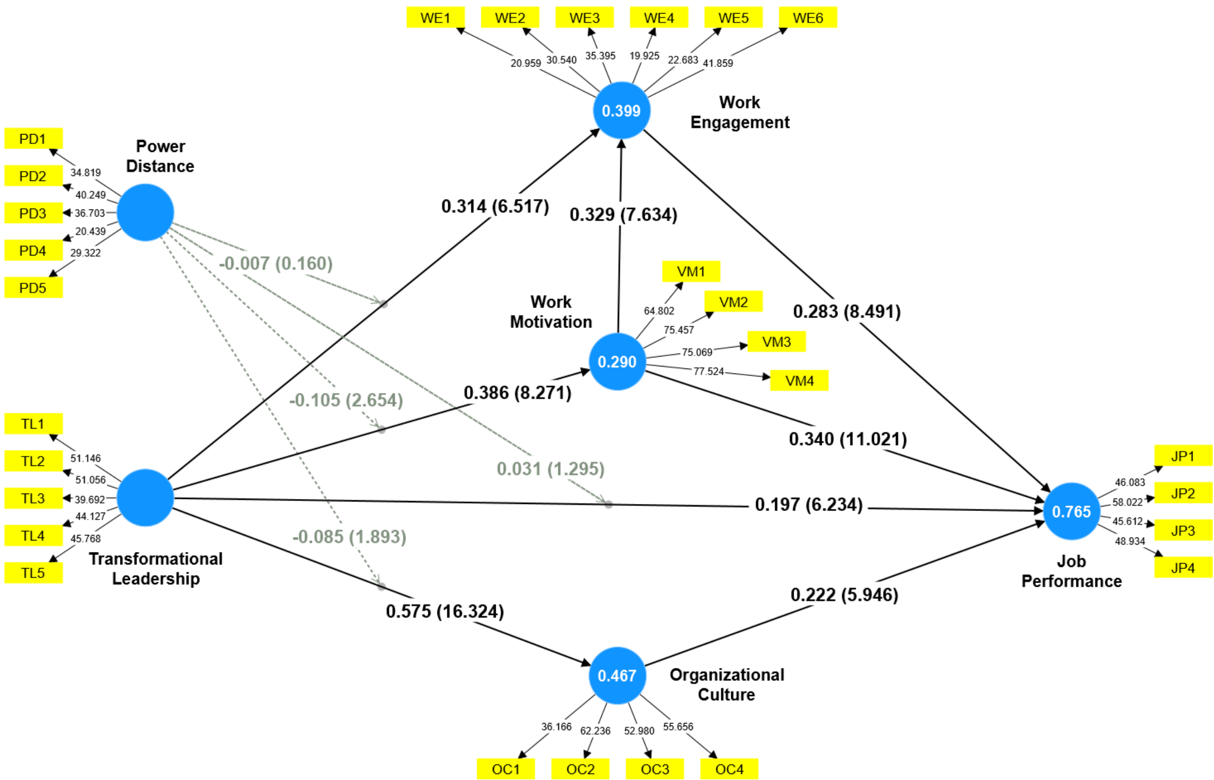

Figure 3. Structural model

& National Institute of Mental Health, 1986), which suggests that positive work environments foster exceptional employee behavior and performance.

This study also highlights the mediating roles of work motivation, work engagement, and organizational culture in the relationship between transformational leadership and job performance. Consistent with social exchange theory (Blau, 2017; Blau, 1964), employees who feel supported by transformational leaders reciprocate with increased commitment, satisfaction, and effort. Transformational leaders inspire employees by aligning personal and organizational goals, encouraging development, and motivating them to actively contribute. These findings reinforce the transformational leadership theory (Bass et al., 1987), emphasizing that both individual actions and organizational context shape work behavior and outcomes.

The study further examines the moderating role of power distance and finds that power distance weakens the relationship between transformational leadership and work motivation. Employees in high power distance settings, where hierarchical structures are emphasized, may perceive transformational leadership's participative style as ambiguous or misaligned with their expectations. This result aligns with the findings of Vuong and Hieu (2023). However, the study finds no evidence that power distance moderates the relationships between transformational leadership and work engagement or job performance. Despite hierarchical cultural norms in Vietnam, transformational leadership effectively fosters work engagement and job performance, particularly in healthcare settings. Intrinsic motivations, such as dedication to patient care, may mitigate discomfort with participative leadership styles. Healthcare leaders successfully bridge cultural divides by using intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration, aligning with employees' intrinsic drive for quality care. These results indicate that transformational leadership can transcend cultural barriers, fostering engagement and performance even in high power distance environments.

While the findings provide valuable insights, they also raise intriguing questions for future research. For instance, the absence of power distance moderation in the transformational leadership–job performance and transformational leadership–work

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engagement relationships suggests that other cultural or organizational factors, such as individual resilience or team cohesion, may play a role. Further studies could explore these variables to provide a more nuanced understanding of leadership dynamics in high power distance settings. Additionally, the sectoral focus on healthcare limits generalizability; future research should examine whether these findings hold across other industries, particularly those with less intrinsic motivation. Exploring longitudinal data could also illuminate the long-term effects of transformational leadership on job performance and identify potential lagged impacts of moderating factors such as power distance.

Lastly, the alignment with theories such as social exchange and transformational leadership underscores the relevance of these frameworks but also suggests opportunities to integrate emerging perspectives, such as cultural intelligence or adaptive leadership models. Investigating the interplay between these modern frameworks and established theories could enrich understanding and inform practical strategies for leadership development.

This study contributes to leadership theory by emphasizing the role of transformational leadership in boosting work motivation, work engagement, and organizational culture, which ultimately enhances job performance in developing country's healthcare sectors. It supports social exchange theory, which highlights the reciprocal relationship between leader support and employee motivation. Furthermore, it underscores organizational culture as a crucial mediator in the transformational leadership–job performance relationship, consistent with social cognitive theory, which links supportive work environments with improved employee outcomes. The findings regarding power distance add a nuanced understanding of leadership dynamics in culturally hierarchical contexts. While power distance weakens the transformational leadership–work motivation relationship, its limited impact on work engagement and job performance suggests that transformational practices can still thrive in high power distance environments, especially when intrinsic motivation aligns with organizational goals.

From a managerial perspective, hospital managers should actively develop transformational leadership capabilities through training programs focused on intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence. Leaders should prioritize employee development, encourage creative thinking, and recognize innovative contributions to inspire higher engagement and productivity. Managers must also understand employees' aspirations, recognize their achievements, and provide opportunities for growth. Regularly celebrating successes and offering constructive feedback strengthens employees' connection to their roles. In healthcare, defining patient-centered objectives and emphasizing employees' contributions to patient welfare can enhance motivation and engagement, directly impacting patient care outcomes. A supportive organizational culture is essential for employee satisfaction and performance. Managers should promote inclusivity, teamwork, and trust-building initiatives, aligning organizational and personal values to create a sense of belonging. Open communication and collaboration further enhance workplace cohesion and commitment. Additionally, leaders in high power distance settings must balance authority with empathy, foster open communication, and involve employees in decision-making. Coaching programs can help employees adapt to organizational values while empowering them to take ownership of their work.

To ensure sustainable success, hospitals should implement regular feedback mechanisms to track employee engagement, satisfaction, and performance. Transparent communication and ongoing assessment of transformational leadership strategies ensure their relevance and effectiveness, driving long-term organizational success. By adopting these strategies, Vietnamese hospitals can leverage transformational leadership to enhance employee outcomes, strengthen organizational culture, and provide superior patient care.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the influence of transformational leadership on job performance, focusing on the mediating roles of work motivation, work engagement, and organizational culture, as well as the moderating effect of power distance. The results confirm that transformational leadership positively impacts job performance both directly and indirectly. By exhibiting individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation, transformational leaders create a work environment where employees feel valued and inspired to align their personal aspirations with organizational objectives. This alignment strengthens work engagement, organizational culture, and work motivation, ultimately driving improved job performance.

The study highlights the importance of adapting leadership strategies to cultural contexts, particularly in hierarchical environments like Vietnam. While power distance moderates the transformational leadership-work motivation relationship, its limited influence on job performance and engagement suggests that transformational leadership can be effective across diverse cultural settings.

These findings underscore the practical importance of embedding transformational leadership principles in organizational development programs. Organizations should prioritize training that enhances leaders' ability to inspire, intellectually stimulate, and align individual and collective goals. By incorporating cultural factors into leadership development strategies, organizations can maximize employee engagement and improve job performance, particularly in the healthcare sector.

Despite its contributions, this study has some limitations. First, the sample is limited to public hospitals in the Mekong Delta, restricting the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study focuses primarily on leadership and cultural factors, excluding other potential influences such as job satisfaction. Future research should explore additional moderating variables and expand the geographical scope to validate these findings further.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization: Lan Huynh Thi Xuan, Duy Dao Huan, My Nguyen Thi Dung, Han Pham Dinh.
Data curation: Lan Huynh Thi Xuan, My Nguyen Thi Dung, Han Pham Dinh.
Formal analysis: Lan Huynh Thi Xuan, Duy Dao Huan, My Nguyen Thi Dung, Han Pham Dinh.
Funding acquisition: Lan Huynh Thi Xuan.
Investigation: Lan Huynh Thi Xuan, Duy Dao Huan, My Nguyen Thi Dung.
Methodology: Lan Huynh Thi Xuan, Duy Dao Huan, My Nguyen Thi Dung, Han Pham Dinh.
Project administration: Lan Huynh Thi Xuan, Duy Dao Huan, My Nguyen Thi Dung, Han Pham Dinh.
Resources: Lan Huynh Thi Xuan, Duy Dao Huan, Han Pham Dinh.
Software: Lan Huynh Thi Xuan, Han Pham Dinh.
Supervision: Duy Dao Huan, My Nguyen Thi Dung, Han Pham Dinh.
Validation: Lan Huynh Thi Xuan, Duy Dao Huan, My Nguyen Thi Dung, Han Pham Dinh.
Visualization: Lan Huynh Thi Xuan, My Nguyen Thi Dung, Han Pham Dinh.
Writing – original draft: Lan Huynh Thi Xuan, Duy Dao Huan, Han Pham Dinh.
Writing – review & editing: My Nguyen Thi Dung, Han Pham Dinh.

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APPENDIX A

Table A1. Constructs, indicators, and questionnaire Items

Constructs	Indicators	Items of the questionnaire
Hospital Employees' Job Performance	JP1	I feel fairly well satisfied with my present job
	JP2	I am satisfied with my job for the time being
	JP3	I like my job better than the average employee does
	JP4	I find real enjoyment in my work
Work Engagement	WE1	At my work, I feel bursting with energy
	WE2	At my job, I feel strong and vigorous
	WE3	I am enthusiastic about my job
	WE4	My job inspires me
	WE5	When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work
	WE6	I am immersed in my work
Work Motivation	VM1	I am responsible for carrying out my duties
	VM2	I perform my duties with clear targets
	VM3	I receive compensation for the results of my work
	VM4	I work with the hope of gaining the attention of colleagues and superiors
Transformational Leadership	TL1	My manager clearly articulates his/her vision of the future
	TL2	My manager leads by setting a good example
	TL3	My manager challenges me to think about old problems in new ways
	TL4	My manager says things that make me proud to be part of the organization
	TL5	My manager has a clear sense of where my organization should be in five years
Power Distance	PD1	In most situations, managers should make decisions without consulting their subordinates
	PD2	In work-related matters, managers have a right to expect obedience from their subordinates
	PD3	Employees who often question authority sometimes keep their managers from being effective
	PD4	Once a top-level leader makes a decision, people working for the organization should not question it
	PD5	Employees should not express disagreements with their managers
Organizational Culture	OC1	I prioritize the hospital's interests over personal interests in my daily work
	OC2	I feel supported and recognized by management for my achievements
	OC3	I consistently adhere to punctuality and discipline in my work
	OC4	Rewards and recognition for good performance motivate me to excel in my role