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Impact of transformational leadership on performance through employee confidence and creativity (case of logistics industry in Ho Chi Minh City)

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Abstract

This study aims to test the impact of transformational leadership on performance through the self-efficacy and creativity of logistics salespersons in Ho Chi Minh City. From there, the author proposes administrative implications to improve the staff's performance of this industry. Qualitative research was conducted by two group discussions with five logistics experts to adjust the model and scale to discuss research results. Quantitative research was conducted by direct survey and online. The methods and tools used for data analysis are descriptive statistics, scale testing, EFA analysis, CFA test, SEM model theoretical examination using SPSS and AMOS software. The research results show that transformational leadership positively impacts salesperson's self-efficacy and creativity; Self-efficacy and creativity positively impact the salesperson's performance of logistics companies in Ho Chi Minh City. The research results as a basis to make administrative implications for improving the performance of logistics' salespersons in Ho Chi Minh City.

Keywords: Transformational leadership, self-efficacy, creativity, performance, salespersons, logistics

1. Introduction

According to Pham (2019) ^[22], the growth rate of the logistics industry industry-about 4,000 domestic enterprises and the world's top 25 freight forwarding groups, with a scale of 40-42 billion USD/year-reached about 14%-16% in recent years. Logistics is a series of stages of many different services. In a specific industry such as logistics, the performance of employees, especially salespersons, plays a vital role in creating competitive advantages for businesses because they help customers understand the benefits and use the product, which directly brings in revenue for the company. In addition to having specialized knowledge in the logistics industry, they must also know about related fields such as economy and culture, work with domestic and international customers, and handle many complicated situations. Ho Chi Minh City is the largest distribution and supply center of goods in the South, located next to the key maritime routes in the East Sea and has a convenient road transport system, which can connect multi-modal goods circulation with many countries. According to the development project of the logistics industry in Ho Chi Minh City by 2025, visioned to 2030, logistics is planned to develop into a spearhead service industry of the city and the region. Several studies worldwide have demonstrated the impact of employees' self-efficacy and creativity on work performance (Gong, Huang, & Farh, 2009; Krishnan, Netemeyer, & Boles, 2002; Wang & Netemeyer, 2004) ^[14, 17, 28]. The reality of the logistics industry also shows that, with fierce competition, to gain new customers and retain old customers, each salesperson must have good qualifications, self-efficacy and creativity to convince customers and have to solve problems flexibly and sensitively. Leadership style strongly influences employees' efforts, helping them overcome their limitations to bring higher results for the organization (Gong *et al.*, 2009) ^[14]. Recently, the transformational leadership style has emerged because of motivating, stimulating creativity and enhancing employee self-efficacy, thereby positively affecting job performance (Avolio, 1999) ^[2]. (Pillai & Williams, 2004) ^[23]. However, according to the authors' research, no works in the world and Vietnam test the relationship between these four factors in the logistics industry.

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The topic "*The impact of transformational leadership to job performance through self-efficacy and creativity of salesperson: Case of logistics industry in Ho Chi Minh City*" was carried out to examine this impact, contributing somewhat to human resource management in logistics enterprises in Ho Chi Minh City. The study was conducted with the following objectives: Determine the impact of transformational leadership style on self-efficacy and creativity; determine the impact of self-efficacy and creativity on the performance of logistics salespersons.

2. Theoretical basis and research model

Logistics is a series of activities for storing, packaging, packing, warehousing, rotation, customs procedures, and exporting and importing to optimally move goods from suppliers to consumers. This is an essential service sector in the economic structure, playing the role of supporting, connecting and promoting socio-economic development and contributing to improving the economy's competitiveness. Logistics salespersons are responsible for finding customers, introducing and providing services for companies wishing to transport domestic and foreign goods by sea or by air. This is a demanding job and not an easy job for salespersons. They must know the products of the partner company to offer services, must improvise to handle incidents flexibly, must regularly improve their professional knowledge, must be confident to convince customers, must new ideas and new ways to meet the diverse needs of customers. According to Herjanto and Franklin (2019) [16], salespeople are becoming increasingly important as they create core value for customers and the organization.

Concepts

Job performance

There are different definitions of job performance. This measurement of results can be based on organizational data, the assessment of superiors or the self-assessment of employees. Self-assessment performance is similar to assessment from the manager or company data (Behrman & Perreault, 1982) [7].

In this study, the authors inherit the definition of Campbell, McCloy, Oppler and Sager (1993) [9] used by Nguyen, Nguyen, Tran and Nguyen (2018) [19] with the scale of Rego and eCunha (2008) [4]. That is "The performance of salespersons is assessed by their self-efficacy and satisfaction with their work efficiency, the evaluation of colleagues and superiors".

Transformational leadership

According to Burns (1978) [8], transformational leadership style is reflected in how leaders understand, discover hidden abilities, motivate and help employees see their goals and responsibilities and find ways to meet their higher needs. Bass (1985) [6] described how to measure this style and explained how it affects employee motivation and performance. In this article, the authors use the definition of transformational leadership style by Avolio and Bass (2004) [3] with five components: Qualifying Influence, Behavioral Influence, Intellectually Stimulating, Inspiring, and Individual interest. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) will measure transformational leadership style with the above five components.

Self-efficacy

This concept of self-efficacy has been proposed by many authors (Bandura, 1997; Fall & Roussel, 2014; Gist & Mitchell, 1992) [4, 12, 13]. Parker (1998) [21] inherited Bandura when building a self-efficacy rating scale consisting of four observable variables. In this study, the author uses that concept and scale by referring to Nguyen *et al.* (2018) [19].

Creativity

Finding potential customers, identifying customer needs, and finding solutions to meet and convince customers of bigger and more attractive benefits all require creative thinking. This study uses the concept and creativity scale of Wang and Netemeyer (2004) [28]. Accordingly, creativity is defined as the number of new ideas generated and new behaviors expressed by salespeople in their work.

Related research works

The authors research six related foreign research works (from 2002 to 2013) and one domestic study (2016). In those works, two studies by Pillai and Williams (2004) [23] and Cavazotte, Moreno and Bernardo (2013) [10] both show that transformational leadership style positively affects self-efficacy, thereby increasing commitment and employee performance. Research by Wang and Netemeyer (2004) [28] and Krishnan *et al.* (2002) [17] have concluded that self-efficacy positively impacts the sales performance of mobile and real estate salespersons. Research results of Gumusluoglu and Ilsev (2009) [15] and Tran (2016) [27] show that transformational leadership style significantly affects the creativity of salespersons in the software development industry. Gong *et al.* (2009) [14] found the impact of employee learning orientation and transformational leadership style on employee creativity through the mediating variable of employee confidence in creativity, and this creativity has an impact on sales and job performance. The above studies (summarized in Table 1) show the authors the impact of transformational leadership styles on job performance through employee self-efficacy and creativity in different industries. Therefore, we want to test this relationship in the logistics industry in Vietnam.

Proposed research model

Transformational leadership style is clearly related to self-efficacy, enhanced self-worth, and subordinates' perception of their ability to complete tasks (Aggarwal & Krishnan, 2013; Tims, Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2011) [17, 26]. A leader who instills optimism and a strong belief in the future instills positive energy and improves self-efficacy. Hence we have the hypothesis:

H1: Transformational leadership style has a positive impact on salespersons's self-efficacy

Salespersons who are confident in their abilities will set high goals, work harder, persevere in the face of failure, and achieve higher results (Bandura & Locke, 2003; Lunenburg, 2011) [5, 18]. So:

H2: Self-efficacy has a positive impact on the performance of salespersons

According to social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997) [4], transformational leaders, with intellectually stimulating

behaviors and high expectations of creativity, are always charismatic, inspirational, and creative role models. Caring for each individual makes transformational leaders empathetic and supportive, helping employees overcome difficulties and work more creatively.

H3: Transformational leadership style has a positive impact on the creativity of salespersons

When creative, salespeople are better able to discover customer needs, develop better customer relationships,

streamline processes and handle problems flexibly and efficiently. Coelho, Augusto, and Lages (2011); Wang and Netemeyer (2004) [28] and Suh and Shin (2005) also show a link between creative sales behavior and job performance. Hence the hypothesis:

H4: Creativity has a positive impact on the performance of salespersons

From the above arguments and hypotheses, a research model is proposed (Figure 1).

Table 1: Summary of relevant studies

Authors	Pillai and William (2004) [23]	Cavazotte et al. (2013) [10]	Wang and Netemeyer (2004) [28]	Krishnan et al. (2002) [17]	Gumusluoglu and Ilsev (2009) [15]	Tran (2016) [27]	Gong et al. (2009) [14]
Topic name	Transformational leadership style, self-efficacy, teamwork, commitment and performance	Transformational leadership and performance: the mediating role of self-efficacy and awareness	The impact of work autonomy, customer needs and competitive personality on the learning, self-efficacy and work performance of salespersons	Self-efficacy, competitive personality and hard work are considered the premise of sales performance.	Transformational leadership, organizational creativity and innovation	Impact of transformational leadership style and job complexity on employee creativity in IT enterprises in Ho Chi Minh City	Employee learning orientation, transformational leadership styles, and employee creativity: the mediating role of self-efficacy in creativity.
Elements in the model							
Transformational leadership style	X	X			X	X	X
Self-efficacy	X	X	X	X			
Creativity					X	X	X
Performance	X	X	X	X			X

Source: Author's compilation from previous

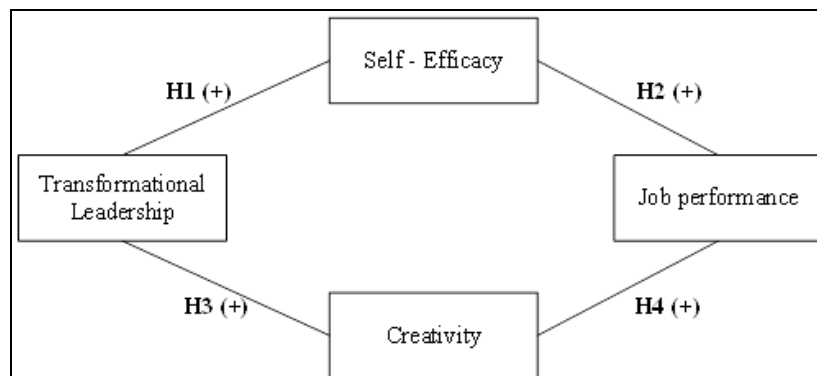


Fig 1: Proposed research model

3. Research results

Qualitative research

The first qualitative study was conducted through focus group discussions with five industry experts. They are general directors and sales directors of logistics companies in Ho Chi Minh City with over 10 years of working experience. The content of the discussion revolves around

the factors in the proposed research model and the observable variables in the four original scales. Experts all agree with the concept of variables, research hypothesis and proposed model, but suggest adding two observable variables to the variable “Creativity” and ask to edit some words to make it easier to understand.

Table 2: Research scale after adjustment

Symbol	Scale after adjustment	Note
IA1	You feel proud to work with your manager	Kept
IA2	Your manager puts the collective interest above individual interests	Kept
IA3	Your manager is respected by employees	Kept
IA4	Your manager is competent and confident	Kept
IB1	Your manager instills in employees important values and beliefs in the company	Kept
IB2	Your manager sets goals and is determined to achieve them	Kept
IB3	Your manager is focused on making rational and ethical decisions	Adjusted

IB4	Your manager always emphasizes the importance of team work	Kept
IM1	Your manager is optimistic about the future	Kept
IM2	Your manager passionately shares what needs to be done	Kept
IM3	Your manager gives a clear direction for the future development of the company	Adjusted
IM4	Your manager believes that the goal will definitely be achieved	Adjusted
IS1	Your manager re-evaluates old approaches to see if they are still relevant in the current context	Adjusted
IS2	Your manager approaches differently when dealing with problems that arise at work	Kept
IS3	Your manager suggests to employees to solve problems that arise at work from different angles	Adjusted
IS4	Your manager suggests new ways to get things done.	Kept
IC1	Your manager takes the time to train and guide employees	Kept
IC2	Your manager treats each employee differently	Adjusted
IC3	Your manager cares about each individual's needs, abilities, and aspirations	Kept
IC4	Your manager helps employees develop their strengths	Kept
SE1	You are very confident in analyzing and finding solutions to problems at work	Kept
SE2	You are very confident when presenting your work to your superiors	Kept
SE3	You are very confident when dealing with the company's partners (customers, agents, suppliers, etc.)	Kept
SE4	You are very confident when discussing work with colleagues	Kept
SC1	You come up with creative sales ideas	Kept
SC2	You give quick and effective ways to solve problems that arise when selling	Adjusted
SC3	You have new ideas to meet the needs of customers	Kept
SC4	You innovate the way to introduce the company's products/services	Adjusted
SC5	You come up with new ways to do your current job.	Adjusted
SC6	You always find many good reasons to meet customers face-to-face and introduce your company's services.	Added
SC7	You always think of ways to save time and work effectively	Added
JP1	You believe that you are an effective employee	Kept
JP2	You are always satisfied with the quality of work you have done	Adjusted
JP3	Your manager always believes that you are an effective worker	Kept
JP4	Your colleagues rate you as an effective worker	Kept

Source: Data processing results of the author's team

Quantitative research

The sample size is determined by Hair's formula, equal to 175; 400 questionnaires are conveniently distributed in person and online. The author advocates using online questionnaire more because it is more convenient and quick to collect data, and data processing will be faster and more accurate. Specifically, based on relationships with colleagues and directors of logistics companies to send 45 paper surveys, 45 copies were collected. Send 355 Google Forms online surveys to email and other social media accounts, ask them to continue forwarding the questionnaires to friends and acquaintances and get 330 copies. Collected data were cleaned and processed using SPSS 20.0 and AMOS 20 software according to the following procedure: Reliability testing of the scale (Cronbach's Alpha), exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and linear structural equation modeling (SEM).

After the results of the quantitative study were available, the authors had a second interview with the experts to discuss the excluded observable variables and the research results.

4. Research results

According to the results of descriptive statistics, the average value of the observed variables in the scale ranges from 3.02 (variable SE1) to 4.16 (variable IM4), the standard deviation is not significant. Six scales IA, IB, IM, IS, IC, SE, JP all

have Cronbach's Alpha coefficient greater than 0.6 with the correlation coefficient of the sum of each scale greater than 0.3. Particularly, the Creativity scale (SC) has Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.853, but the total correlation coefficient of SC6 is $0.224 < 0.3$, so it is rejected and the reliability of the scale must be tested for the second time before switching to EFA analysis to check the discriminant and convergent validity of the scale.

EFA analysis for $KMO = 0.916 > 0.5$; Sig value. Bartlett's Test = $0.000 < 0.5$ has statistical significance, the observable variables in the population are correlated with each other, so EFA analysis is appropriate. Factor analysis extracted eight factor groups with Eigenvalue > 1 and total variance explained $57.35\% > 50\%$. In the Rotated Component Matrix, the observable variable SC1 uploaded to two factors 01 and 02 has a difference of less than 0.3, so it is excluded to ensure discriminant. The remaining 33 observed variables all have factor loading coefficients greater than 0.5. The concentration of observed variables according to eight factors is clearly shown, the scale ensures convergence. The model still has eight components: "Creativity- SC"; "Individual Interest-IC"; Influence by Quality-IA"; "Inspire-IM"; "Self-efficacy-SE"; "Intellectual Stimulation-IS"; "Influence of Behavior-IB" and "Job performance-JP".

CFA analysis was performed to confirm the univariate, convergent and discriminant validity of the scale.

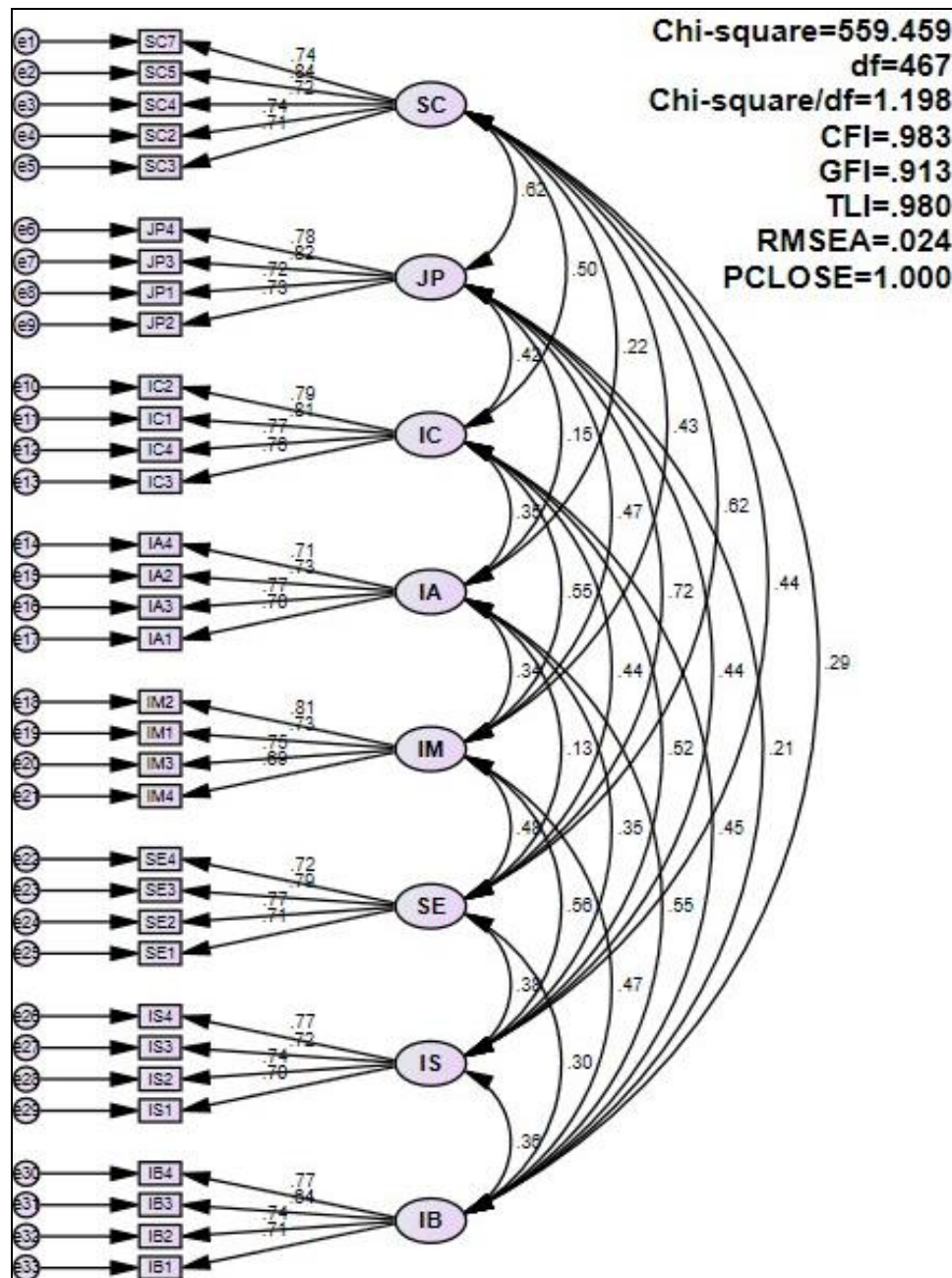


Fig 2: CFA result of the proposed model

The CFA results show that the model achieves the data compatibility. Regression weights of all observable variables are statistically significant at 95% reliability level ($p < 0.05$), all concepts have discriminant validity. Regression weights after normalization are all greater than

0.5: all scales have convergent validity. The composite reliability coefficient and Average Variance Extracted were calculated using Excel software, using the data in the Normalized Regression Weight table and the Correlation coefficient table from the CFA results.

Table 3: The results of the composite reliability coefficient and the average variance extracted

No.	Factors	Composite reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
1.	Qualifying Influence (IA)	0.819	0.53
2.	Behavioral Influence (IB)	0.809	0.516
3.	Inspire (IM)	0.832	0.555
4.	Intellectual stimulation (IS)	0.825	0.541
5.	Individual interests (IC)	0.865	0.616
6.	Self-efficacy (SE)	0.834	0.557
7.	Creativity (SC)	0.867	0.567
8.	Job performance (JP)	0.849	0.585

Source: Data analysis results from AMOS software

The composite reliability coefficients CR are all greater than 0.6, showing that the questionnaire is reliable. The average variance extracted AVE is all greater than 0.5, meeting the requirement of convergence validity. The square root of the AVE is larger than the correlation between the variables, the discriminant is guaranteed (Table 3). SEM linear structural equation modeling was performed to test the proposed hypotheses. These indicators all meet the theoretical requirements, so it can be concluded that this model is suitable for the data collected from the market (Figure 3).

At the 95% reliability level, four hypotheses H1, H2, H3 and H4 are accepted, with an impact level of 0.634, respectively; 0.564; 0.661; 0.312. In the second interview, the experts all said that the two observable variables that were removed had no effect because the remaining variables still measured creativity. The research results are consistent with the current logistics industry practice. From the above results, a formal research model was established (Figure 4).

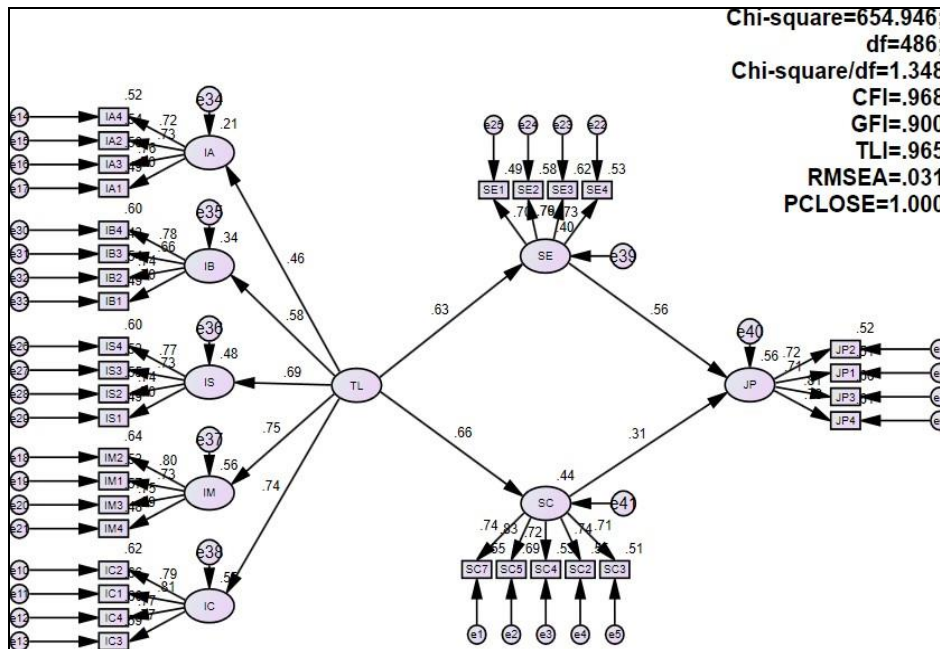


Fig 3: Structural equation modeling SEM

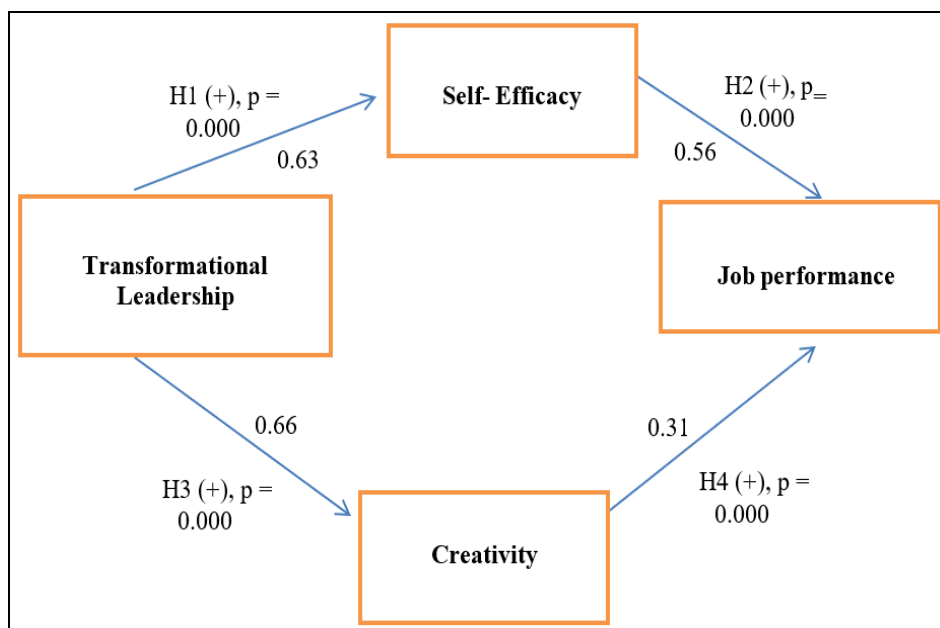


Fig 4: Official research model

5. Results discussion

Transformational leadership style has a positive impact on employee self-efficacy

This result is consistent with the study of Pillai and

Williams (2004) [23], Cavazotte *et al.* (2003) [10]. In the logistics industry, leaders often go to meet customers with salespersons. If the leader creates a sense of pride for employees, shows power and self-efficacy in work,

employees will consider the leader as an example to follow, and they themselves will be more confident in communication. Leaders communicate the company's mission and goals with a strong belief, making reasonable and rational decisions will also increase employees' self-efficacy, in the leader, in the company. By being approachable, friendly, intellectually stimulating, and personal, leaders can assist employees with their development orientation, execution planning, training time, creating conditions for employees to develop their strengths, demonstrate their strengths to help employees be more confident.

Self-efficacy has a positive impact on employee performance

This result is consistent with the research results of Pillai and William (2004) ^[23], Cavazotte *et al.* (2013) ^[10], Wang and Netemeyer (2004) ^[28], Krishnan *et al.* (2002) ^[17]. When an employee believes in their own ability, they will set themselves challenging goals and constantly strive to complete the job in the best way. Confident logistics salespersons will always create work motivation, persevere in the face of difficulties, get up quickly after failure, thereby achieving higher job performance.

Transformational leadership style positively impacts employee creativity

This result is completely consistent with the study Gumusluoglu and Ilsev (2009) ^[15], Tran (2016) ^[27]. In a fiercely competitive industry like logistics, to survive, the leader must be at the forefront, always have an optimistic view of the future, thereby conveying positive emotions to employees, encouraging them to make efforts and think of new ways of doing things. Transformational leaders do not train employee how to do the job but will stimulate their minds and help employees improve their thinking at work. In the logistics industry, handling a consignment often encounters many unforeseen problems, so creative thinking is essential. When caring for everyone, the leader knows each person's strengths, weaknesses, goals and aspirations and will know how to take advantages of each person's strengths and stimulate each person's creativity.

Creativity has a positive impact on employee performance

This result is consistent with the results of Gong *et al.* (2009) ^[14]. Many companies consider the saying "Innovate or die" as the motto of action and creativity for employees and organizations. In the logistics industry, without innovation and creativity, it is difficult for businesses to survive. Creative salespersons will always find new ways to present products/services, come up with unique ideas to meet customer needs and achieve high business results.

6. Conclusion

The study has achieved the research objectives, namely: Transformational leadership style has a positive impact on employee self-efficacy and creativity with regression coefficients of 0.634 and 0.661; Self-efficacy and creativity have a positive effect on employee performance, with regression coefficients of 0.564 and 0.312.

Research results have shown that a leader has a

transformational style - that is, has influence by qualities and behaviors, is capable of inspiring, intellectually stimulating and caring for each individual - will help improve employee performance through their self-efficacy and creativity. Therefore, to improve the job performance of logistics salespersons, businesses need to pay attention to improving the self-efficacy and creativity of salespersons, and one of the best ways is to develop a transformational style for leaders.

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