

# Role of Transformational Leadership in Creating a Healthy Work Environment in Business Setting

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## Abstract

The main objective of the existing study was to extend the work environmental research to the domain of transformational leadership style from a sweeping review of relevant literature. In this line, creating a healthy work environment is crucial to make optimal contribution of satisfied employees, positive outcomes for individuals and organizations, improve lifestyle and employees wellbeing and create a great place to work. According to the path goal theory leader's style or behavior should be compatible with the work environment, to the successfully goals achievement. Although the literature on the healthy work environment is growing, the existence of research, particularly in relation to the appropriate leadership style has not been established. In doing this and to clarify the role of the prominent leadership style, we aim to demonstrate the important role of transformational leadership in creating the healthy work environment and its influences on quality of employees work conditions in business setting. Implementation of transformational leadership can affect not only the employees but also the organizations, business and society as a whole. The result of this literature review sheds light on the psychological processes by which showed whether and how transformational leadership is related to the healthy work places, from the perspective of the interaction between leaders and employees work environment. Since few guidelines are available for creating and sustaining the critical elements of a healthy work environment by leaders, we contribute to the literature by elaborating on the implications of our research findings for the development of leadership and its attributes in shaping the healthy work environment.

**Keywords:** Healthy Work Environment, Transformational Leadership, Business setting

## 1. Introduction

In the current business environment and development in the global market which is characterized by increased competition and unpredictable changes, considering and development of working conditions is vital for organizational effectiveness. Moreover, this turbulent environment causes several major changes in the workforce such as lack of job security, outsourcing and downsizing; these changes certainly have negative effects on employees' motivation, moral, trustworthiness and commitment (Cooper, 1999). Furthermore, despite of wide-ranging literatures on the outlines of positive running of work environments, creating and sustaining appropriate workplaces with specific characteristic has little theoretical grounding. Specifically, in order to compete successfully in a global market, creating a work environment where promotes employees' well-being and their performance is compulsory (Karlsson et al., 2012). In such a work place, leaders must improve existing policies and procedures to align employees with their work environment and become effective and productive.

Precisely and considering with the effect of the harmonious environment and psychological work environment on both individual and organizational outcomes (Wreder, 2008, Shirey, 2006, Lowe et al., 2003), recently scholars call for more study of work environment with particular characteristics which in nursing studies has conceptualized as healthy work environment (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2002). Actually, in the nursing literature there is increasing evidence to proof the positive influence of the healthy work environments on employees' satisfaction, commitment, outcomes, and improved business result (Sherman and Pross, 2010, Shirey, 2006). Consequently, the healthy work environment has mainly been researched in nursing context and without doubt should be grounded in other settings.

On other hand, one of the most instantaneous and effective matters that impact on employees work environment in organizations is leadership. As Grant (2012) has mentioned prominent contemporary researches have brought up that leaders play a critical role in how followers recognize their work. Leaders arrange and evaluate their work, facilitate their access to resources and information, and more importantly they encourage their engagement with tasks and with other people (Amabile et al., 2004). Moreover, recently leadership researchers have emphasized on consideration of context factors for exploring the leadership influences (Tyssen et al., 2014). Previous research displays some captivating evidences that leader behaviors, both from direct supervisors and top managers, contribute to the subordinate perceptions on the work environment in both theoretical and managerial reasons (Amabile et al., 2004, Barden and Distrito, 2005, Sherman and Pross, 2010). Consequently, leadership literature have been explored various types of leadership styles with different approaches as a process of managing and giving the right directions to behavior of employees in the work environment.

The purpose of the existing study was to extend this line of work environmental research to the domain

of a conspicuous leadership style, namely transformational leadership. According to the situational theories, precisely, path goal theory that has been developed by House (1971), in order to the successfully goals achievement, leader's style or behavior should be compatible with the work environment. In compliance with path goal theory, there is considerable emphasis in the previous literature that a healthy work environment shapes by leaders and managing workplaces is of great importance (Sherman and Pross, 2010, Shirey, 2006, Burchell and Robin, 2010, Wreder, 2008, Lowe, 2004, Lowe, 2003). However, currently, for today's organizations there is a challenge to expect what abilities or knowledge is needed and what leadership style is more appropriate to shape and create these kinds of workplaces; in similar vein, Shirey (2006) has identified that the behaviors and attributes of leaders as the "soft skills" which are difficult to develop for leaders in creating a healthy work environments. However, since organizations can take significant steps to change their work environments to a healthy workplace through the psychological mechanisms, the transformational leaders who will strongly contributes to construct these kinds of places have received more limited attention from academics. Thus we proposed that the establishment of a healthy work environment requires strong transformational leaders who support employees to be more and more practical, flexible, and innovative in doing their tasks (Choi, 2007). In this vein, Sherman and Pross (2010) have argued that leaders who treat their subordinate by transformational leadership (TFL) style, make an intensely satisfying organizational culture, improve their engagements and enhance their motivation, morale, and performance by development of shared values in their work. This accomplishment needs a pattern shift from traditional command-and-control style of supervision in the direction of TFL.

In particular, we aim to investigate the influence processes of TFL in creating the healthy workplaces. In fact, Barden and Distrito (2005) argued that the creation of a HWE needs the commitment from all involved, from the top to bottom line of organization. However, in the few studies that have been focused on the healthy workplaces, role of appropriate leaders' behavior has emphasized whereas determination of leadership style remains unexplored and additionally, the interactions between leaders and shaping work environment with respect to possible influences of leaders has not been supported. It means a limitation of previous studies in this area of research is that they fail to take into consideration the right approach of leadership to create and sustain a healthy work environment. Accordingly, this paper present a review of the literature regarding the importance of the healthy work environments in business setting and also discusses the significant role of TFL that can serve as an appropriate and useful style of leadership in creating and development of these healthy workplaces. By doing this and since there is no clear pattern presenting that definite the healthy work environment dimensions are comprehensively related to the leadership style, the TFL dimensions would be replicated in all aspects and dimensions of a healthy work environment. Since there are rather few investigations in this issue, the current research aims to address this gap in the current literature.

The current study contributes to this line of research that is, to our knowledge, the underlying role of TFL has not been explored from the healthy work environment perspective. Previous research examining the effect of others leadership styles such as authentic leadership (Shirey, 2006) and coaching leadership (Wreder, 2008). Respectively, as noted above, the central argument of the present research is to answer a fundamental research question and to show theoretically how, and under which contingencies, TFL is so crucial to holding a healthy work environment. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to take the conceptual and theoretical frameworks of healthy work environments and TFL and transform this understanding into practice. It should be mentioned that, at this time, we are mainly interested in investigating the psychological work environment as the non-physical aspects of a workplace which is the result of an interaction between the work environment and the employees and leaders; in this respect, work environment refers to those factors that are determined by work content, its organizations and the social relationships at the workplace (Karlsson et al., 2012).

## 2. Theoretical Background

One of the overwhelming emphases of organizational studies has been focused on leadership. Consequently several theories have been developed by scholars such as trait theory; behavioral and style theories; leader-member exchange theory and the situational theories (Szilagyi and Sims, 1974).

Path goal theory as one of the current situational theories was initially developed by House (1971) to explain workplace leadership who specified a leader's style or behavior that best fits the work environment with employee to achieve goals (House, 1996). The Path-Goal model is a theory that offers an explanation of the effects of leader's behavior on subordinates' motivation, and performance (House, 1971) which identification of some dimensions of leader's behavior such as leader consideration, leader initiating structure, hierarchical influence and some situational moderators with concern of the effects of provisional leader's behaviors. Consequently House (1996) noted two general propositions for this theory: (A) leader behavior is acceptable and satisfying to subordinates to the extent that the subordinates see such behavior as either an immediate source of satisfaction or instrumental to future satisfaction; (B) Leader behavior is motivational, i.e., increase effort, to the extent that (1) such behavior makes satisfaction of subordinate's needs contingent on effective performance and

(2) such behavior complements the environment of subordinates by providing coaching, guidance, support and rewards which are necessary for effective performance. Moreover the essence of path-goal theory is a meta-proposition that leaders, to be effective, engage in behaviors that complement subordinates' environments and abilities in a way that is instrumental to subordinate satisfaction and individual & work group unit performance (House, 1971, House, 1996). Above mentioned behaviors is demonstrated in TFL which is psychological in nature (Breevaart et al., 2014a). A basic proposition of this theory is that one of the major functions of the leader is to enhance the psychological states of subordinates, which results in increased motivation to perform and increased subordinate satisfaction with the job.

This theory has a great deal of instinctive appeal which underlines understanding of followers' needs and working conditions and using the appropriate style of leadership in their context to support them to achieve intended goals effectively (Szilagyi and Sims, 1974). Indeed, the scope of path-goal theory reflects that a leader's behavior is vital for high performance as a function of its influence on subordinates' perceptions of paths to achieve goals. It means leaders help their subordinates to achieve their goals through identification of the most effective paths which have been clear by leaders (Szilagyi and Sims, 1974). Significantly, once leader behavior makes goals clear and also attractive the leader acceptance and consequently performance, is expected to increase. It should be noted that the specific relationship between leader and these conditions depend upon the current task environment and subordinate's personality. For instance leader consideration describes the degree to which the leader creates a supportive environment of psychological support, warmth, friendliness, and helpfulness (House and Mitchell, 1975).

According to the above mentioned, this theory can be applied to the workplace definitely (Szilagyi and Sims, 1974); in specific, application of path-goal theory with respect to the role of leaders in creating a healthy work place (path) in business setting is particularly focused in this study. (See figure 1)

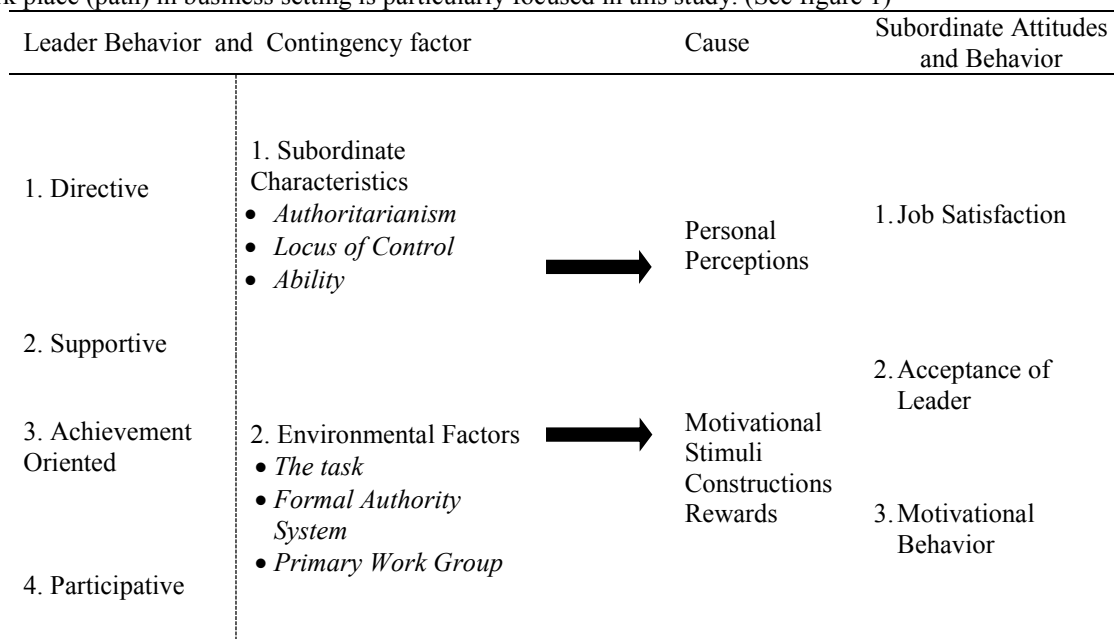


Figure 1: Summary of Path Goal Theory; adapted from House and Mitchell (1975)

### 3. Transformational Leadership

In the new global economy with constant technological, economic, political and social changes, organizations must perform in dynamic context through unceasing adaptation. In such environment identification an effective leadership as one of the most effective and vital components for overwhelming restrictive socioeconomic and changing business matters is essential (Hoon Song et al., 2012, Birasnav, 2014) to guide organizations and work groups through changes. In the other hand, organizations need a vital transformation in which they can transform their strategies and practices in order to sustain their successes. Indeed, leadership style refers to the relationship between leaders and their subordinates within a group or an organization.

Likewise, a review of research suggested that different leadership styles have varying ways for leading (Birasnav, 2014) while among all existing leadership styles which have been conceptualize in literatures, more recently, leadership studies have revealed that there are three new theories including TFL; charismatic leadership and visionary leadership which have some share characteristics such as: focus on prominent performance and change; use of symbolic and spiritual fascination, and requisition for high motivation and commitment (Takahashi et al., 2012). Among of leadership theories, TFL which was developed by Bass (1985), based on the

primitive work of Burns (1978) has been the most widely explored and profoundly considered for over 30 years (Rafferty and Griffin, 2004, Zhu et al., 2013, Takahashi et al., 2012) and is one of the most influential leadership approach in this period of uncertainty that associated with a large number of anticipated and desired outcomes (Tyssen et al., 2014, Bass, 1990) and has attracted more research attention.

TFL is defined as a form of leadership in which relationships are based on a mutual purpose and leaders motivate, transform and boost followers' activities and ethical ambitions (Burns, 1978). According to the Bass (1985) this leadership style is based on the impact that leaders has on followers who is garner trust, respect, and admiration from their followers. In this realm, TFL transmutes the vision and culture of organizations (Simola et al., 2012) and is about the exchange of rewards and goals between leaders and subordinates (Ghafoor et al., 2011). TFL transforms the norms and values of the employees to encourage them to achieve further than own expectations and change perceptions and motivations to work towards common goals (Bass, 1985, Tims et al., 2011). In addition, such leader motivates followers to come up with new and unique ways to challenge the current situation and to alter the environment to support being successful. This leadership style focuses on the refinement of the followers' involvement (Bass, 1985, Tims et al., 2011), the reinforcement of subordinates and increase their motivational level and moralities through development of employees' skills and inspires followers to be expressive and adaptive to the environment (Ghafoor et al., 2011). Moreover, these leaders express high expectations; provide individualized development, articulate a convincing shared vision, and accomplish extraordinary results (Wang and Howell, 2012). TFL reveals the significance of having a common mission and pervading a sense of purpose, direction and meaning into the employees work (Bass, 1999).

Actually, TFL acts as a bridge between leaders and followers to develop clear understanding of follower's interests, values and motivational level (Bass, 1999, Ghafoor et al., 2011) and create emotional links with its followers and inspires higher values (Bass, 1999). Transformational leaders empower followers to understand their work as more meaningful and restructure responsibilities to alter the meaning of the work (Grant, 2012) to perform beyond expectations (Bass, 1985, Grant, 2012, Rafferty and Griffin, 2004) or motivate employees to achieve goals by higher-level self-reinforcement, instead of mutual exchange relationships (Wang et al., 2014). This leadership style facilitates employees to become conscious of their expectations and helps employees be aware of their task requirements and activities (Zhu et al., 2009), fostering the acceptance of common goals and setting high performance expectations (Menges et al., 2011). Transformational leaders inspire their employees with the idea that they may be able to accomplish eminent things with extra effort (Bakker et al., 2012, Bass, 1985). Moreover, such leaders transmit interpersonal trust, loyalty and strong identification, whereby subordinates can effective in engaging with their supervisors (Tse et al., 2013)

In TFL theory, leaders solicit inestimable endeavors from employees trough extension of traditional behavioral approach by considering emotional aspects of leaders (Takahashi et al., 2012) and stimulate subordinates for positive behavior and superior thought (Burns, 1978, Ghafoor et al., 2011). TFL has been embraced in single paradigm which leadership improves not only organizational or context-specific performance and outcomes, but also affects employees' well-being that is linked to employees' health (Kelloway et al., 2012). In particular, the theory of TFL considers that a leader is able to bring about positive changes in subordinate's values, attitudes, perceptions, behaviors and expectations to provides them with visions to satisfy their needs and desires (Tyssen et al., 2014, Bass, 1990). We will discuss these behaviors more in depth hereafter.

In view of that, a central purpose of this leadership style is the inspiring vision of the supervisor (Grant, 2012, Tims et al., 2011) that emphases employees' attention on their contributions to others, whereby can improve subordinates to achieve great goals by engaging them in inspirational behaviors (Grant, 2012) referencing core values and ideals, collective identities and articulating confidence (Bass, 1985, Burns, 1978, Grant, 2012). These leaders often try to focus on social aspects of the vision and on linking the vision to core values which has significant consequence for other people (Grant, 2012). Introducing vision will improve intrinsic motivation and will cause recognition of high performance expectation. Thus, by identification of leaders' value and vision, followers behave and understand their roles as more meaningful and impactful (Wang and Howell, 2012).

### 3.1. Transformational Leadership Dimensions

According to the Bass (1985), Bass (1990), TFL is identified and conceptualized by several patterns of behavior. Explicitly, in the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) (Avolio and Bass, 1995), which is the most widely used tool for measuring TFL, four types of leaders' behavior were measured as components of TFL; these behaviors have been speculated to have individual and organizational consequences, and this has received considerable empirical support (Shuck and Reio, 2014, Breevaart et al., 2014a, Tse and Chiu, 2014, Tyssen et al., 2014, Tse et al., 2013, Zhu et al., 2013, Hoon Song et al., 2012, Simola et al., 2012).

First, TFL uses the *Idealized influence (charisma)* which refers to behaviors that presenting interests and benefits of the group are more important than interests and benefits of the individual, and pay attention to the organizational interest beyond self-interest (Tims et al., 2011). Idealized influence contains engaging in

charismatic actions in order to gain the respect, trust and cultivate pride (Grant, 2012) and underlines the provision of a common vision for organizations and to follow ethical principles. This component of TFL behavior encourages employees to involve in risk-taking activities, and supports them to perform effectively under uncertain environment (Birasnav, 2014). In addition, Leaders who manifest idealized influence concern the important values and beliefs, communicating a sense of purpose, and encouraging on collective interests (Grant, 2012). Idealized influence occurs when leaders do ethical rather than convenient or guide subordinates by their moral commitment. Moreover, idealized influence behavior of leaders, focuses on the long-term health and well-being of employees and can sacrifice organizational pressures for short-term financial outcomes (Kelloway et al., 2012). Briefly, charisma highlights a sense of necessary mission for the transformation and refers to the role modeling of the leaders in the workplace for their employees, who are displaying desirable behaviors to be assumed by group members (Hoon Song et al., 2012, Tims et al., 2011, Zhu et al., 2013). With idealized influence, followers identify their leaders (Bass, 1999, Breevaart et al., 2014a, Strom et al., 2014) and they would be more proud of their leaders and organization; finally these leaders encourage followers to work harder to achieve its goals (Zhu et al., 2013, Bass and Avolio, 1994) and indicating high ethical norms (Tims et al., 2011).

The second characteristic of TFL components is *inspirational motivation* through which leaders use symbols to articulate an appealing and compelling vision of future and to redirect followers' efforts (Bass, 1999, Breevaart et al., 2014a, Grant, 2012, Shuck and Reio, 2014, Strom et al., 2014, Tims et al., 2011, Tyssen et al., 2014, Bass and Avolio, 1994). Specifically, it refers to the leader supports to employ specific strategies due to motivate and inspire subordinates to succeed in expectation goals (Birasnav, 2014). Inspirational motivation is based on the communication that leaders are optimistic and enthusiastic about the future (Tims et al., 2011); so is assumed that leaders express the fundamental purpose of the transformation process in a simplistic manner (Simola et al., 2012) and is a statement that pursue subordinates' motivation and confidence (Rafferty and Griffin, 2004). This behavior provides followers with a sense of purpose in their job by creating a new vision, setting clear and plausible strategies for achieving and commitment to that vision and generating optimism amongst followers which finally will develop additional goal-directed energy (Avolio et al., 1999, Bass, 1985, Zhu et al., 2013). In other words, idealized influence (or charisma) and inspirational motivation are displayed when a leader envisions a desirable future and articulates how it can be reached (Shuck and Reio, 2014). By inspirational motivation, leaders encourage employees to achieve more than what seems possible and inspire them to overcome psychological setbacks and upcoming obstacles (Kelloway et al., 2012). Charismatic leaders use inspirational appeals and emotional talks to arouse follower motivations to transcend self-interest for the good of the group. However, theoretical distinctions between charisma and inspirational motivation have become blurred over time (Rafferty and Griffin, 2004).

The third characteristic is *intellectual stimulation*; leaders stimulate employees intellectually as the underdeveloped component of TFL (Rafferty and Griffin, 2004). Intellectual stimulation emphasizes rationality of problem-solving situations in which leaders challenge their followers to concern their problems and assumptions from a different perspective and think differently (Grant, 2012, Kelloway et al., 2012, Tims et al., 2011). Through this viewpoint supervisor makes the workers active thinkers and accordingly they become more engaged in their job (Tims et al., 2011). Thus through given the opportunity to handle psychological and work-related impediments, employees become more confident in improving and developing their well-being and even enables employees to think about challenges in new ways (Kelloway et al., 2012). Leaders who manifest intellectual stimulation discourages use of traditional methods to unravel problems (Birasnav, 2014) and stimulate group creativity and innovative efforts (Hoon Song et al., 2012); in contrary encourage followers to ask questions, think deeply about their jobs, and discover better ways of executing their intended tasks. In this context all employees are considering as sources of solutions and new ideas (Zhu et al., 2013). In this way, leaders can enhance the individual's ability to be logical, rational and able to intelligently adopt from certain situations and think his own related work tasks. Logical thinking, intelligent evaluation of environment, organizational support and encouragement helps employees to create new ideas and improve their performance (Bass and Avolio, 1994, Ghafoor et al., 2011).

Finally, *individualized consideration* refers to transforms a leader into mentor or coach for employees and supports them differently by providing equal opportunity (Birasnav, 2014). Leaders can support two-way communication effectively and providing well-rounded support for followers and concerning the needs of them to complete given tasks effectively, also by creating a supportive atmosphere, help employees to overcome the personal challenges (Hoon Song et al., 2012, Strom et al., 2014, Bass, 1999, Kelloway et al., 2012). Literature defines individualized consideration as coaching, supporting, understanding and stimulating subordinates (Avolio and Bass, 1995, Tims et al., 2011, Grant, 2012). In this condition, leaders treat their subordinate individually with personal attention and employees are seen as unique individuals who need specific, individual attention (Tims et al., 2011, Tyssen et al., 2014). Moreover, by engaging in these behaviors, leaders seek to motivate employees to look beyond their immediate self-interest to contribute to a broader vision (Grant, 2012).

Bass (1985) initially stated that individualized consideration occurs when a leader display a developmental orientation towards subordinates and shows individualized attention to followers and responds appropriately to their personal needs. Individual consideration would also nurture group climates, supportive of members' well-being and provide needed empathy, compassion, support, and guidance. In doing so, leaders create the basis for their relationships with followers (Kelloway et al., 2012) .

In addition to the above mentioned TFL characteristics which were developed by Bass (1985), Bass (1990), some other scholars have theorized this leadership style in different approaches. For instance recent theory and research have proposed the consideration of different levels in regard to the analysis issues in TFL studies. Wang and Howell (2010) have presented dual-level TFL scale to distinguish the distinct effects of TFL on individual and group level processes. In this conformation of TFL, in the individual level, leaders aim to develop individual potential, improve their skills and abilities and enhance their self-efficacy. The influence of the leaders is followers as individuals and recognizes distinctive characteristics and abilities of all followers. In this regard, leaders provide coaching and mentoring for different followers according to their skills and experiences. In the second case, leaders concentrate on group concerns and treat all members equally who have a common perception about the leader's behavior. At the group level, TFL behavior communicates the importance of group goals, develops common values and beliefs and inspires unity in order to achieve group goals. In this regard, leaders display similar behavior to all followers. According to the study of Wang and Howell (2010) TFL consists of two distinguished levels with distinct dimensions as:

Individual-focused TFL behaviors:

- Communicating high expectations;
- Follower development;
- Intellectual stimulation;
- Personal recognition

Group-focused TFL behaviors:

- Emphasizing group identity;
- Communicating a group vision;
- Team-building.

#### **4. Healthy Work Environment**

Recently, because of the great changes in labor market and workplace transformations, organizational scholars and practitioners have stimulated their traditional research scope which has focused on the physical environments' effects towards psychological work environments effects on both employee wellbeing and organizational performance (Lowe et al., 2003). In terms of definition, additionally, numerous research studies over the past few decades have provided different definitions with broad range of meaning for employee work environment. In this regard, previous studies have mentioned that there is a distinction between the internal and external environments of organizations which employees may encounter. The internal work environment includes all those internal factors operating within the organization itself, such as the mission and the vision of organization, the company's objectives, the educational background of the employees, working processes and relationships between people and networks. In turn the external environment includes all those factors outside the company, such as governments, industry, suppliers, customers and competitors which are harder to predict and control than internal environmental factors (Tung, 1979, Duncan, 1972). Moreover a workplace contains several factors that employees come across in their work such as physical characteristics, psychosocial aspects or social and technical issues. Nonetheless, there is substantial evidence that more research on work environments has predominantly focused on physical work environments while psychosocial work environment factors are progressively more important in predicting and supporting quality of work life (Park and Wilson, 2003). However, scholars and practitioners have argued that psychosocial work environment which displays the strictly biological view of people, refers to peoples' perception of their work environment and shapes the working conditions of employees and rather has most emotional effect on employees' behavior and feelings (Wreder, 2008, Katz and Kahn, 1978). Psychological characteristics refer to delegation, leaders' support, diversity and personal development (Amabile, 1988). Stouten et al. (2010) have emphasized the working conditions of workplace as a qualitative characteristics of the work environment. Choi (2009) has noted that work environment characteristics are employees' perception about their work conditions and practices which provide support or make constrain for employees to do their job.

Furthermore, as people in workplaces collaborate and interact with other people (i.e. their colleagues and leaders) and do not work in isolation; in the previous literature, there is significant emphasis to display pure and strong relationships between environmental factors and human (quality) performance and the extensiveness of workplace effects on peoples behaviors and attitudes (Eklund, 1999); this relationship in the end cause the organizational success and outcomes such as professional growth, conflict management and work motivation

(Papastavrou et al., 2014, Sherman and Pross, 2010), shaping competitiveness (Tang, 1998, Zain and Kassim, 2012) and creativity (Amabile and Conti, 1999). In this regard, in similar study, Edwards (1998) has argued and confirmed the notion of person-environment fit which refers to the numerous significant consequences of positive relationship between employees and their work environment. Moreover he claimed that work environment as a source of difficulties and assistances shapes individuals' behavior and characteristics. Thus, people behavior and their attitudes can be determined by person-environment fit toward their psychological health and wellness. Consequently and consistence with the influence of the psychological work environment on employees' health, satisfaction, organizational effectiveness, lower absenteeism and intent to quit (Wreder, 2008, Shirey, 2006, Lowe et al., 2003), recently academics call for more study and identification of work environment with specific features.

However, we have found that mostly in nursing studies has conceptualized a kind of workplace with particular faces as healthy work environment. World Health Organization (1948) (WHO) has defined health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." In essence of this definition and from humanistic perspective, health is a concept further than the lack of illness or diseases and people could get healthier lives when they achieve their needs and aims with sufficient recourse, required intrapersonal properties and effectively meet social well-being (World Health Organization, 1986). In this view, the determination for positive development of health in the work environment improves employees' performance and output. However, researchers have studied health subject in different angle. For instance Wreder (2008) has discussed about health as a capacity which refers to peoples' ability to undertake their goals or Wilson et al. (2004) distinguished the healthy work systems with operational value in organizational contexts from unhealthy work systems. In current research, health accentuated as a human resource in the work environment and people's perception about their work conditions to a resilient well-being. In this regard, Murphy and Cooper (2000) and Sherman and Pross (2010) have identified contextual factors of the healthy organizations and have quoted that several psychosocial factors (i.e. social support, communication) which are associated with interpersonal relations are necessary for a healthy workplace.

In our knowledge, most investigations of psychological work environment in view of health have been conceptualized in nursing and clinical workplaces. According to the Shirey (2006) the concept of healthy work environment grounded from Florence Nightingale as an environmental psychology that holds a strong sense of warmth and wellbeing. According to the Disch (2002) study, the healthy work environment is a kind of workplace where all procedures and policies are designed with the purpose of getting personal satisfaction and achieving organizational goals are accessible to all employees in their work. In these work environment there are common characteristics of a joyfulness integrating with supportive and effective work environments (Shirey, 2006). Based on the study of employees' perception about the healthy work environment (Lowe et al., 2003), employees feel they are working in a healthy workplace where positive relationship with colleagues and leaders, friendly and helpful colleagues, respectful and good communication, recognition of their works are provided. Moreover, this work environment reveals the social relations between employees that associate with their job effectiveness.

Moreover, job satisfaction as first feeling or perception of employees about their work environments (Park and Wilson, 2003), commitment and employee work performance have been recognized as critical outcomes of positive psychological functioning of work environment and specifically the healthy work environment in several practical studies (Sherman and Pross, 2010, Lowe et al., 2003, Shirey, 2006). Park and Wilson (2003) have cited that employees' satisfaction about their work is both directly and indirectly associated with psychological strain in work environments. Shaping, readjustment and maintaining working conditions towards a healthy workplace which is precondition of the healthy work environment, benefit all beneficiaries of organizations, employees, managers, customers, shareholders and even society (Lowe, 2004).

#### **4.1. Healthy Work Environment Dimensions**

An indispensable discussion in organizational research has focused on how a concept should be conceptualized and measured. Additionally, in this case, appropriate dimensions and suitable measurement can help practitioners and decision makers to view the health initiatives of workplaces which contribute to improve performance for long time (Lowe, 2004). However, as noted earlier about conceptualization of the healthy work environment in nursing studies, several organizations have characterized a healthy work environment with specific criteria such as American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (2005), Nurses Organization Alliance (2004), and American Association of Colleges of Nursing (2002). Among all these studies, the prominent one is American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (2005) standards which directed to establish sustainable healthy work environments. Therefore a series of specific standards were released as follow:

- Skilled communication refers to the skill of employees in communication;
- True collaboration refers to the appropriate collaboration among employees;
- Effective decision making refers to the opportunity that all employees can participate in decision

making;

- Appropriate staffing refers to the Identifying and maintaining the accurate number and mix of employees;
- Meaningful recognition refers to the recognizing all employees and their works;
- Authentic leadership refers to the style of leaders in workplace;

Moreover in similar vein, the Nurses Organization Alliance (2004) released the nine essentials factors regarded as healthy practices of work environments which include: Collaborative culture; True communication culture; Culture of accountability; Adequate numbers of qualified staff; The existence of credible, competent and visible leadership; Opportunity at all levels for decision making; The inspiration of professional practice & constant development; Recognition of the value of employees' contribution; Recognition of their meaningful contributions to practice.

In regard to the useful application of the healthy work environment in all contexts, as noted, most of the healthy work environment studies have been done in nursing context; thus, its utility in business setting is tentative. As a result, there is still very little theory or empirical research with specific guidelines to create and sustain a healthy work environment with critical elements (Lowe et al., 2003) in other setting. Nevertheless, to the best of our knowledge, just a few studies in this area have been conducted to present a number of common characteristics of the healthy work environment in business literature while according to the Amabile et al. (1996) study, identification of appropriate dimensions for studying work environment is significant. For instance Lowe (2004) has provided a guiding principles for the healthy workplaces based on an analysis and synthesis of several prominent relevant sources:

- Supportive culture and values: Clearly values employees and strengthen trust;
- Leadership: Commitment and visible leadership on health issues;
- Use a broad definition of health: Not only good mental and physical health but also comprehends leading a balanced life, developing employees' potential, meaningful contribution and having a say in decision making;
- Participative team approach: Employees involvement in all activities and employing an integrated approach throughout organizations and guided by teams;
- Customized plan: All policies and plans of organizations are in direction of clear goals which have been designed to the business context;
- Link to strategic goals: Integrate all health issues, wellbeing and outcomes to the organizational strategies;
- Ongoing support: Provide enough support and resource to sustain the healthy workplace;
- Evaluate and communicate: Clear and open communication and evaluation of the healthy work environment is linked to the business result.

Since work environment encompasses the aggregate of circumstances and conditions, Lowe (2004) has cited that each of the above mentioned characteristics is necessary and all of them are intercorrelated and interdependent to a healthy work environment, thus, no one can be considered optional.

In another exploration study and in an effort to introduce confident theoretical ideas to the empirical literature, Pourbarkhordari et al. (2015) generated and constructed dimensions of the healthy work environment from the integration of the previously discussed literature and based on grounded theory through semi structured interview as below:

- Trust & Interpersonal relationships;
- Justice;
- Support and caring;
- Friendly and joyful;
- Well-being Recognition.

These dimensions have been received acceptable preliminary psychometric properties and appropriate validation

## 5. Discussion

### Role of Transformational Leadership in Creating a Healthy Work Environment

In respect to the above mentioned argument about a healthy work environment and its dimensions and according to the main propose of this study, we were considering for aligning the TFL characteristic to the relative healthy work places characteristic. Specifically, we aimed to support this kind of work environment through the manifestation of transformational leaders. In line with related and applicable literature which has been reviewed, we found that, TFL can play an important role in creating and sustaining a healthy work environment as following discussion:

Studying this underlying process may provide answers as to why some TFL behaviors are more effective than others in maintaining the resourcefulness and healthy work environment. The results of previous



studies indicated that TFL is an important part of immediate social environment of followers (Breevaart et al., 2014a); consequently we argue that leaders influence and shape their followers' work places through their influence on the way in which followers perceive their work environment. In line with this perceptive and in this circumstance, employees' perceptions about their work environment rely on their judgments about corresponding leaders who has transformational behaviors and provide meaningful work for the followers.

Former research presents some overwhelming evidences that people's perceptions of the work environment (instrumental and socio emotional support) generated by their leaders (Amabile et al., 2004). For instance Kelloway et al. (2012) have cited that the four components of TFL which are presented by Bass and Avolio (1994) provide a framework for understanding what makes leaders and their style of leadership relevant to followers' psychological well-being. As ACCN (2005) have been demonstrated for professional and personal development, the value and meaningfulness recognition of employees' contribution to an organization's work is a fundamental need and imperative. This recognition in work environment can be take place by emerging leaders who can be nurtured and grown this art of leadership (Sherman and Pross, 2010). Various practices of leaders help to create and sustain HWEs for practice (Shirey, 2006) in which an organization can foster more novelty and be more productive and innovative (Burchell and Robin, 2010). Moreover, several researchers have mentioned that leaders can integrate the combination of people and task with situations and environmental characteristic for expecting of outcomes (Tyssen et al., 2014) and safety behavior of employees (Hofmann et al., 2003); specifically, creation of a healthy workplace (Shirey, 2006, Hartung and Miller, 2013, Malloy and Penprase, 2010) may be considered as an exposed factor that can influence employees' health and competitive advantage (Wreder, 2007). In this vein, Cleavenger and Munyon (2013) have investigated the role of TFL on redefining the nature and quality of work to shape the meaning of work and develop its significance.

In addition, Tims et al. (2011) have argued that employees need to enthusiastically change their work environment to their benefit; so they try to control over their work. In these conditions the particular TFL behaviors can affect the actual availability of employees' job resources. In other words, transformational leaders by stimulating their followers to think on their own work for making their own decisions, encourage them to actively increase their own resources (Breevaart et al., 2014a). In this respect, this study confirms that TFL plays an important role in the introduction of the healthy workplaces by positive psychological states and behaviors in employees.

Moreover, leaders who increase the trust between followers enhance a common identity and elevate the probability in which the employees see their participation within groups as cooperative instead of competitive. In such work environment all employees have opportunity to express divergent ideas (Boerner et al., 2007). Furthermore, recent developments in the field of leadership have led to a renewed interest in exploring and unraveling the psychological mechanisms which underlie the relationships between leaders and followers' trust (as the most important dimension of a HWE). Trust has been typically used to measure the quality of social exchange between follower and leader (Zhu et al., 2013) and has been constantly found to be an prominent mediator on the relationship between TFL and follower outcomes. Zhu et al. (2013) have quoted that a transformational leader should elicit higher levels of trust in their followers by providing the idealized influence and act as a role model. To this end, the roles of leaders provide visionary direction, a communication channel and leading change based on mutual trust with members (Hoon Song et al., 2012). Actually, transformational leaders generate higher levels of trust in followers by demonstration of support, encouragement and respect for their followers (Zhu et al., 2013). As a result, TFL plays a crucial role in creating a cooperative group environment based on mutual respect among group members with sense of identity and self-efficacy grounded on employee confidence (Hoon Song et al., 2012).

Similarly, TFL is a critical factor for quality of work environment and these leaders act as keeping communication lines open, mentoring individual, listening thoughtfully to their concerns and needs (Amabile and Conti, 1999, Zhu et al., 2013); while tremendous communication is an essential skill to effectively lead others (Sherman and Pross, 2010). Communication is a shared dialogue between people and creates opportunities for all employees to exchange information and even speak up by continuing a clear internal relationship. By doing this, authors in consideration of quality communication in organizations have concluded that effective communication is a vital factor of health and HWE (Shirey, 2006, Wreder, 2008).

Actually, leadership is an attribution and depends on the followers' perception; thus TFL boots the motivation, ethical standards, transparency and integrity through intellectual stimulation and charisma. These implemented leadership behaviors have been grounded in developing and maintaining competitive advantage and employees' satisfactions (Yozgat and Meşekıran, 2016); through these behavior transformational leaders are expected to provide diversity approaches to solve the job problems and difficulties by transforming individuals or teams to beyond present situations in all facets (Ling et al., 2008, Birasnav, 2014, Breevaart et al., 2014b), developing independent and innovative thought (Bass and Avolio, 1994) and stimulate them to foster the creativity and innovation (Tyssen et al., 2014, Shuck and Reio, 2014).

Additionally, according to the body of research we have found that there is a strong link between

individualized considerations and supportive leadership. It means that in individualized considerations of TFL, support is the core factor. Rafferty and Griffin (2004) defined supportive leadership as: expressing concern for followers and taking account of their individual needs. This behavior directed toward the satisfaction of subordinates' needs and preferences, by creating a friendly and psychologically supportive work environment. Transformational leaders help nurture the improvement and care of high-quality relationships by providing individualized consideration to their followers (Tse et al., 2013). Leaders recognize individual differences and try to develop individuals on their own terms (individual consideration); likewise, they transform the reasons for interacting with others from self-interest to having interest for others (Bass, 1999, Shuck and Reio, 2014). Furthermore a strong and managed relationship between employees and managers and coworkers in the workplace can support a higher level of employees' involvement and wellness (Wreder and Klefsjö, 2007, Vogelgesang et al., 2013).

In respect to the social processes, Ling et al. (2008) have argued that transformational leaders increase followers' social identification which stimulates them to feel self-concepts, self-esteem and relatively belonging to the group by articulating and transmitting a strong sense of vision and mission. Definitely, this social identification arise employees' pride, respect, loyalty and they experience more social integration and are encouraged to collaborate with their colleagues enthusiastically. TFL behaviors pursue employees' engagement to contribute as a team by highlighting the accomplishment of collective tasks, the importance of teamwork; and enhancing individual team members' willingness to take responsibility (Ling et al., 2008).

Another practice of TFL is positively related to follower autonomy (Breevaart et al., 2014a) which refer to the extent that followers are allowed to solve their problems and perform their task from different angles, even if these viewpoints are different from their leader's ideas. Ling et al. (2008) have highlighted that a major goal of transformational leaders is to develop followers' self-management and self-development skills by allowing them to make and implement actions without direct supervision or intervention.

People who work with transformational leaders as a democratic management style implement more workplace health promotion programs and employees tend to be happier and take pride in their job which provide higher job pleasure for them; accordingly more job pleasure expose the existence of balance between employees and organizations (Bäckström, 2009). On days that leaders use more transformational leadership, employees are allowed to control their work environment and they see advanced meaning in their work (Bäckström, 2009) because they receive more social support from their leaders (Breevaart et al., 2014a).

In sum, the central argument of this research was that these prior interpretations of the healthy workplaces neglect the using appropriate leadership style; however, according to the contemporary literature on leadership, in respect to the TFL dimensions, we proposed that transformational leaders are be able to create a supportive work environment where contains psychological support, friendliness, and helpfulness by changing in organizational culture, systems and practices. Although the main purpose of current study was to stimulate interest in considering TFL in creating a healthy workplace and this research goes one step further, still, more analytical questions that would account the role of leaders in shaping a healthy work environment are essential to expansion of knowledge in this area of research. Thus, there is a need for enhanced theoretical direction in attempts to recognize the critical influences of TFL and to articulate the related mechanisms in experimental studies. From a practical point of view, we could apply these results to strengthen employees by empowering, coaching and engaging the leaders in improving work environment health and making it their concern and interest. Hence, our proposition for future research depicts in following conceptual framework (Figure 2) in which, we proposed that the all dimensions of TFL will have effect on the healthy work environment dimensions.

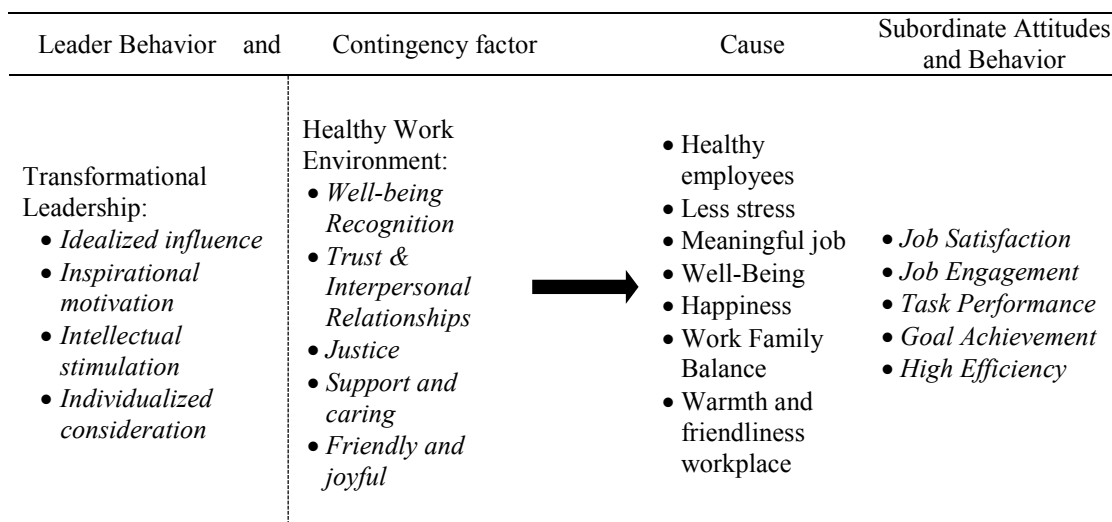


Figure 2: Conceptual framework of this study based on the path goal theory

## 6. Conclusion

The point of this paper which was performed based on literature review is to bring attention to the fact that the literature on the healthy work environment was not strongly conducted practically and theoretically. Nevertheless, it acceptable to conclude that transformational leadership may be increasingly needed in today's work environment where there are more knowledge worker and talented people; thus supplementary empirical work is necessary. Moreover, we should mentioned that not only transformational leaders are essential to creating and sustaining the healthy work environments for practice but also they have ability in creating lasting organizational and professional value. The wave effects of TFL emphasized that business owners and organizations need to be cultivating transformational leaders in both formal leadership positions and at the front lines. Consequently, practitioners and organizations require a better scientific understanding about how to perform as transformational leader and specifically finding how this kind of leadership style contributes to the creation of the healthy work environments. This understanding would be helpful to foster leadership development at all levels and advances the current understanding of the empirical link with a healthy work environment in the business.

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