

The Impact of Stress Management on Job Performance: The Mediating Role of Transformational Leadership

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Abstract

This quantitative study examined the connection between stress management (SM), transformational leadership styles (LS), and job performance (JP) of managers of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The research intends to examine the impact of stress management (SM) on job performance (JP) and the mediating role of transformational leadership style (LS) in this relationship. A survey instrument was designed and administered to a representative sample of SME managers. The data is analysed using appropriate partial least squares (smart pls). The findings of the research demonstrate that stress management has a positive and significant impact on job performance of SME managers. The results indicate that effective stress management practices are associated with improved job performance outcomes. Furthermore, the study reveals that transformational leadership styles mediate the relationship between stress management and job performance of SME managers. This suggests that transformational leaders, who exhibit behaviours such as inspiring and motivating their subordinates, play a crucial role in translating the benefits of stress management into enhanced performance. The study contributes to both theoretical and practical knowledge. The findings highlight the importance of implementing stress management practices in SMEs to support the job performance of managers. Additionally, the study emphasises the significance of transformational leadership in leveraging the positive effects of stress management on job performance. Understanding the mediating role of transformational leadership style provides insights into the mechanisms through which stress management practices influence job performance outcomes. These findings have practical implications for SME owners, managers and practitioners. The results suggest that organisations should invest in stress management programmes and initiatives to support their managers' job performance. Moreover, organisations should cultivate and promote transformational leadership behaviours among managers to maximise the benefits of stress management practices. By implementing effective stress management strategies and fostering transformational leadership, SMEs can enhance the performance and well-being of their managers, ultimately enhancing the overall success of the organisation.

Keywords: Stress Management, transformational leaderships, Job Performance, Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

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1. Introduction

Managers are faced with a variety of expectations in today's dynamic and demanding corporate environment, including ever-growing competition, looming deadlines, and growing workloads. This is common to virtually nearly all managers but more akin to managers in sectors like SMEs and financial institutions, among others, where the quest to stay competitive and profitable is non-negotiable. The value of effective stress management and the capacity for peak performance both increase as tension increases (Lopes Dos Santos, et al., 2020). Despite the fact that tension can enhance performance on the job when it gets extreme, it can equally cause stress, which has detrimental effects on one's job performance (Al-khasawneh & Futa, 2013; Issa, et al., 2009).

Stress is a normal reaction to the expectations and difficulties that one encounters at work. Heavy workloads, rushed deadlines, interpersonal difficulties, and organisational changes are a few examples of causes. While stress in moderation can be inspiring, severe or continuous stress can have a detrimental effect on productivity. Those who are very stressed may have trouble concentrating, have challenges dealing with issues, are not creative, and make more mistakes or errors (Frangieh & Rusu, 2021; Pandey, 2020). Therefore, maintaining enhanced performance on the job requires excellent stress management. However, stress is not the only factor that determines excellent performance. Building good relationships and navigating difficult interpersonal dynamics are equally important life skills. With the existence of TL, the relationship between stress

SM, which may affect how well managers function on the job in an SME environment, can become clear. Exceptional managerial performance can be realised through transformational leadership, which is regarded as a potent force that not only mediates the relationship between SM and JP, but also the research explores the complex link between SM, and JP, with TL serving as the transforming catalyst that catapults managers to new levels of achievement.

Research on the impact of SM on JP of managers of SMEs with the mediating role of TL style is an important area of study. While some research has been conducted in this field (Lehmann, et al., 2021), there are limited empirical studies that need to be addressed. Despite Schreibauer et al., (2020); Jallow, (2020), Lehmann, et al., (2021) having investigated the impact of SM on JP in a variety of organisational situations, there is still a study gap concerning the empirical evidence of TL's mediating role, particularly in SMEs. In the specific SME setting, the leadership styles that are critical in mediating the connection between SM and JP have not been extensively studied in the majority of previous research. In order to bridge this gap, a focused empirical investigation on how stress management affects work performance and the mediating function of transformational leadership in SMEs is needed. Filling in these research gaps will benefit managers in small and medium-sized businesses by offering insightful information personalised to their unique situation, in addition to advancing the academic understanding of SM and JP. It will equally offer practical implications for organisations to design robust stress management strategies and enhance the leadership capabilities of managers of SMEs.

The current study depended on primary data collected from a survey of small and medium-scale enterprises in Ghana using copies of a questionnaire. The partial least squares in structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) method was relied on to examine the information gathered from the field. The research is expected to add new perspectives on the mediating role of TL and add to the extant body of knowledge on SM and JP. The findings of the study could offer direction to both researchers and policymakers on the planning of suitable ways to increase job performance and manage stress in SMEs.

The rest of the study is arranged this way: Section 2 reviews the related and relevant prior studies on SM; Section 3 provides explanations of the methods and data for the research. Section 4 submits and deliberates on the findings of the research, while the last Section wraps up the research with some limitations and recommendations for more research. Workforce disturbance is often ascribed to absenteeism and turnover, which may result in considerable loss of productivity for any labour-intensive division (Easton & Goodale 2002). Buffering with redundant skilled workers (Molleman & Slomp 1999) or relief workers (Redding 2004) might be a direct solution to absenteeism; however, the rising labour cost must be justifiable due to the fact that underutilisation of labour during low demand seasons is considered a waste of resources. Absenteeism is the measure of unplanned absences from workplace due to some reasons like personal emergency, accident, illness, etc. Turnover occurs when an active worker resigns from the company of his own accord, thus leaving a vacant post until a replacement is found. If such disturbance has caused a large number of tasks become unattended and overdue, the company is then vulnerable to overtime cost, shrunk capacity and productivity, extra queuing time, lost business income, etc. In order to prevent these deteriorative effects, optimising the number of workers can be helpful. As a fundamental branch of knowledge in manufacturing business, workforce management will never fall behind the times. Therefore, it is worth an attempt to incorporate a novel methodology, such as HMS, into the state of the art of workforce sizing.

2. Review of Literature and Hypotheses Development

2.1 . Strategies for Effective Stress Management

Since stress is unavoidable, its management is what managers should focus on so as to excel on the job (Bar-On,2006). Stress on the job can effectively be managed through the deployment of a number of strategies and approaches (Demerouti & Bakker, 2023). For instance, a firm can educate its workforce on the proper allocation of time to their activities on the job. This will lead to the setting of realistic timelines and dealing with tasks promptly, as well as constantly prioritising their activities. This has to do with time management.

The techniques that managers and the workforce can rely on to de-stress include taking time off work, engaging friends, listening to music, deep breathing, meditation, and mindfulness, among others (Harris & Gilbert, 2023). Employing these can help managers and their workforce manage their stress and foster a sense of cooperation with others. It is okay for a manager to focus on rolling out measures that make the firm profitable and competitive, but this will be a mirage if an equilibrium is not created between work and leisure.

Work-life balance is another SM strategy that managers can utilise on the job to enhance their performance. The practice of continuing assigned tasks beyond working hours distorts the relationship that needs to exist between one's work life and private life (Como, et al.,2021). This can be counter-productive as continuous work without breaks can have adverse effects on one's performance. It is important that individuals, especially managers who carry a lot of responsibilities in leading the firm, still strike a balance between their work and private life. They can do this through listening to favourite music, engaging friends and loved ones in conversation, and watching movies, among others. Conscious efforts should be made to live a healthy lifestyle

devoid of excessive drinking and smoking, absence of physical exercise, lack of enough sleep, and non-consumption of junk diets.

No single individual is complete without others; hence, we need the systems and people in most cases. Having an adequate social support system will provide individuals within the work environment the opportunity to offload some stress (Leow, & Leow, 2022) through talking to mentors, coworkers, peers and friends to provide some insights into whatever may be stressing them on and off the job.

2.2 Stress Management and Job Performance

Enhanced job performance has repeatedly been associated with effective SM. Managers who usually possess the capacity to manage stress experience appreciable levels of motivation, on-the-job satisfaction and engagement (Mitchell, 2020). Organisational members, including managers, can improve their cognitive functioning, decision-making skills and problem-solving abilities through the reduction of their stress levels, which will result in better JP (Khairuddin, 2019). Furthermore, effective SM can generate a favourable work atmosphere that further improves job performance by favouring interpersonal interactions and teamwork (Dhaneesh, & Iswarya 2023). Findings from studies on the subject differ, while some (Basit et al., 2017; Skakon et al., 2011, Saxena et al., 2020) opined stress impact negatively impacts job performance (Ali et al., 2014) indicated it does enhance job performance with the deployment of the appropriate stress management techniques.

2.3 Definition and Characteristics of Transformational Leadership

For its beneficial effects on a variety of organisational outcomes, like employee engagement, satisfaction, and performance, TL has received extensive research and recognition. Academics have thoroughly investigated the definition and traits of TL to provide us with a thorough grasp of this leadership style. A typical description of TL is a leadership approach where the leader inspires and encourages their followers to set aside their interests in order to achieve exceptional performance outcomes (Bass & Riggio, 2006). This leadership approach goes beyond transactional interactions and emphasises forging a united front, fostering intellectual advancement, and exhibiting genuine care for the growth and welfare of followers (Bass, 1985; Avolio & Bass, 1988). Transformational leadership differs from other leadership philosophies in several significant ways, including:

Inspirational and Visionary: Transformational leaders create a powerful vision that motivates and inspires followers. They convey a clear and motivating vision of the impending, igniting interest and fostering loyalty among their followers (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Intellectual Stimulation: Transformational leaders push subordinates to challenge the current quo, challenge assumptions, and consider novel ideas. They also promote critical thinking among followers. They encourage invention and creativity by providing an environment that prioritises intellectual development and lifelong learning (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Individualised Attention: Transformational leaders show their followers that they are given individualised consideration and assistance. They provide mentorship, coaching, and development opportunities that are specifically catered to the talents and needs of each individual in order to acknowledge and value those differences (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Idealised Influence: Also referred to as charisma, idealised influence is the ability of a transformative leader to uplift others and gain their trust, respect, and appreciation. They exemplify the attitudes and behaviours they want from their followers, setting high ethical standards and acting as role models for others (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Emotional Intelligence: Transformational leaders with the ability to spot, appreciate, and control their emotions alongside those of others are deemed to have high emotional intelligence. They are able to connect with and effectively influence their followers because they have empathy, social awareness, and relationship-building skills (Goleman, 1998; Wong & Law, 2002).

Positive organisational outcomes have been repeatedly linked to transformational leadership traits. According to research, transformational leaders significantly affect employee satisfaction, engagement, and performance (Park, et al., 2022; Deng, et al., (2023). In order to encourage dedication, loyalty, and intrinsic drive among their followers, they cultivate a helpful and empowering work environment. As a whole, transformational leadership is defined by inspirational and visionary leadership, intellectual stimulation, and tailored

2.4 Transformational Leadership and Stress Management

In today's fast-paced workplaces, stress is a common problem, and effective stress management is essential to preserving employee well-being and organisational performance. Researchers have recently looked into how TL and SM are related, and they have found that TL has the potential to reduce workplace stress (Tayal et al., 2022). It has been discovered that transformational leadership, which places a strong emphasis on inspiring and motivating followers, significantly lowers employee stress levels. According to studies (Arnold et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2019), transformational leaders cultivate a culture of respect, appreciation, and empowerment in the

workplace. Employees are given the tools, social support, and psychological safety they need to deal with job stressors effectively in this supportive environment.

Open communication and building trust are two things those transformational leaders encourage. These leaders make it easier for people to discuss worries, difficulties, and work-related problems by promoting a culture of transparency (Rafique et al., 2022). Employee stress levels are decreased as a result of open communication that lowers ambiguity and uncertainty. Transformational leaders also offer their followers support and guidance. According to Arnold et al., (2007) and Walumbwa et al. (2008), they actively listen to their worries, provide coaching and mentorship, and encourage work-life balance. Transformational leaders contribute to the development of a workplace that prioritises stress management and fosters employee resilience by displaying concern and care for the well-being of their workforce (Trenerry et al., 2021).

Additionally, according to research, TL improves employees' coping skills and sense of self-efficacy, both of which are essential for stress management (Myaskovetsky & Shmueli, 2023). A sense of self-assurance and belief in one's ability to cope with stress are traits of transformational leaders, according to Breevaart et al., (2014). These traits inspire followers to have faith in their skills. These leaders also support a growth attitude, problem-solving abilities, constructive criticism, and the ability of staff to adapt to and deal with challenging circumstances. Furthermore, transformational leaders are renowned for their capacity to enthuse and encourage workers. These leaders foster a sense of purpose and meaning in the job that people do by outlining a compelling vision and pressing followers to meet high-performance standards (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Employees who possess a sense of purpose at work are more exposed to happiness and motivation on the job, which lessens the negative effects of stress on their health

2.5 Transformational Leadership and Stress Management

It is commonly acknowledged that TL positively affects the way that work is done, among other organisational outcomes. This literature review explores the methods by which transformational leaders improve employee performance and investigates the connection between JP and TL. A multitude of research studies have demonstrated a substantial association between TL and JP. Bass and Riggio (2006) opined that transformational leader inspire and motivate their followers to look beyond their interests and produce outstanding performance results. These leaders inspire their followers with a compelling goal, foster intellectual development, give them individual attention, and act as examples (Bass, 1985). According to Bass & Riggio (2006) and Podsakoff et al. (2018), the behaviours mentioned earlier have a positive impact on job performance by elevating employee engagement, devotion, and job satisfaction.

Through a number of techniques, transformational leaders have been found to improve employee job performance. First of all, they create a common vision and actively engage their supporters in it (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Transformational leaders inspire motivation and attention in their followers by giving them a clear sense of purpose and direction (Bojovic, & Jovanovic, 2020). This shared vision improves job performance by assisting employees in appreciating the value of their work and offering a context for decision-making (Wang et al., 2011). Secondly, according to Bass and Riggio (2006), transformational leaders support intellectual stimulation and inspire creativity and innovation among their followers. They promote learning and continual improvement, encourage individuals to think independently, and question the status quo (Wang et al., 2011).

Additionally, transformational leaders give their followers individualised care and assistance (Bass & Riggio, 2006). They recognise each employee's individual abilities and needs and coach, mentor, and develop them (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Podsakoff et al., 2018). According to Wang et al. (2011), this individualised care and support results in improved self-efficacy, motivation, and skill development.

Moreover, idealised influence is exhibited by transformative leaders, who serve as role models for their subordinates (Bass & Riggio, 2006). According to Podsakoff et al. (2018), they exhibit high moral and ethical ideals, integrity, and a robust work principle. Transformational leaders inspire trust and followership by modelling the ideals they want their followers to uphold, which improves work performance (Lee, et al., 2023). In conclusion, the body of research demonstrates the beneficial connection between transformative leadership and job performance. Enhancing employee engagement, dedication, and job happiness is a result of transformational leaders' ability to forge a compelling vision, foster intellectual development, give each employee their due consideration, and function as role models. These aspects also have a favourable effect on job performance results. Businesses can benefit from developing and supporting transformational leaders to boost employee performance and achieve organisational success.

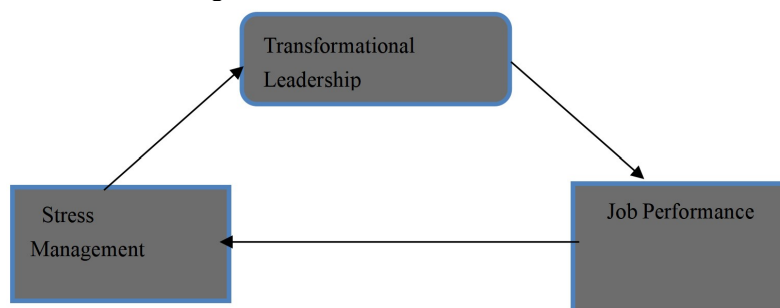
2.6. Mediating Role of Transformational Leadership between Stress Management and Job Performance

Employer well-being and organisational success are greatly impacted by two crucial factors: stress management and job performance. The relationship between these characteristics can be mediated by TL, which has been acknowledged as a leadership approach (Park, et al., 2022). In this review of the previous works, we focused on the impact of TL on worker outcomes and analysed its function as a mediator between SM and JP. For workers'

well-being and productivity, SM is essential. According to Schaufeli and Taris (2014) and Spector & Jex (1998), excessive work-related stress can result in greater burnout and poor job performance. Employees' stress levels are observed to decrease, and their ability to handle it is improved by transformational leadership.

Effective stress management is facilitated by transformational leaders who foster a supportive and empowered work environment (Arnold et al., 2007; Zhang et al., 2019). (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Podsakoff et al., 2018) Transformational leaders provide direction and resources for stress management through their actions, such as offering support, encouragement, and mentorship. They promote work-life balance, open lines of communication, and a culture that emphasises employee well-being (Wang et al., 2010). The development of employees' self-efficacy and resilience, which are important components of stress management, is another important task for transformational leaders. According to Bass and Riggio (2006) and Podsakoff et al. (2018), transformational leaders enable their teams to deal with stressors productively by instilling belief in their followers' skills and fostering a supportive work environment. As stated by Wang et al. (2010), they support a growth attitude, boost problem-solving abilities, offer feedback and acknowledgement, and help employees to build adaptive coping mechanisms.

TL also mediates the link between SM and JP. A manager who can successfully control their stress is better able to concentrate, make decisions, and engage in productive work behaviours (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014; Spector & Jex, 1998). As a result, effective stress management is connected to higher job performance. Transformational leaders improve employee well-being and job satisfaction through the promotion of methods for reducing stress and the creation of a supportive job environment, which in turn improves job performance (Arnold et al., 2007; Podsakoff et al., 2018). Additionally, transformational leaders encourage better levels of dedication and involvement within their workforce (Bass & Riggio, 2006). According to research by Bakker and Demerouti (2017) and Podsakoff et al. (2018), engaged workers are more likely to put up extra effort, exhibit organisational citizenship behaviours, and deliver better work. The conceptualisation derived from the literature research suggests that transformational leadership functions as a mediator in the relationship between SM and the JP of SME managers.



Source: authors

Figure 1.: Conceptual Framework

Considering the theoretical and empirical reviews of the literature, the study sought to test the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Transformational leadership mediates the relationship between stress management and job performance of managers of SMEs

3. Research Methodology

This research employed a cross-sectional approach, and a quantitative study was employed to analyse the mediating role of transformational leadership in the connection between stress management and job performance of managers of SMEs. Copies of a survey questionnaire were used to gather data from managers and owner-managers whose firms were registered with the Registrar-General's Department in Ghana. The study relied on the sample size frame of Krejcie and Morgan, which proposed a representative sample size of three hundred and eighty-three out of a population of five thousand. The stratified random sampling techniques were employed to determine the managers who participated willingly in the study. Five hundred survey questionnaires were sent online and face-to-face to respondents who were made to refer to the anonymity and confidentiality statement on the survey questionnaire. They were also made aware that they were not under any compulsion to participate in the study; however, they were encouraged to provide candidate responses. Survey questionnaires were employed to gather data from the respondents. Four hundred eighty-two completed survey questionnaires were returned, but four hundred and fifty -three were considered suitable and, hence, were used for the final analysis. Job performance, the dependent variable in this study, was measured with a scale adopted from Tsui et al., (2013). The independent variable was stress management, which was measured with a scale adopted from Bar-On (2006) and modified. The dependent variable was adopted from Muthembwa (2019). The mediating variable

transformational leadership style was adopted by Avolio and Bass (2001). They were all measured on a 1-5 Likert scale, with “1” indicating strongly disagree and “5” representing strongly agree. The data were analysed by deploying PLS-SEM, and the PLS-SEM 4 software expedited the computations. The analysis of the descriptive features of the participants is captured in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Features of Participants

Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Age		
Below 20	24	5.3
20-29	205	45.3
30-39	140	30.9
40-49	61	13.5
50-59	16	3.5
Above 60	7	1.5
Total	453	100
Education Level		
Diploma	129	28.5
University Degree	117	25.8
Master’s Degree	162	35.8
PhD	21	4.6
PhD	24	5.3
Total	453	100
Gender		
Male	235	51.9
Female	218	48.1
Total	453	100

3.1 Validity and Reliability Tests

As previously explained in this paper, PLS-SEM was used for the analysis of data in this research. Specifically, a reflective model was used. Reflective measurement models are evaluated based on indicator reliability, convergent validity, discriminant validity, and internal consistency reliability (Hair et al., 2017a).

3.1.1 Indicator Reliability

In the valuation of the reflecting measurement model, the indicator loadings are analysed first. Loading data over 0.708 is acceptable as it shows that the construct explains more than 50% of the indicator's volatility, showing adequate item dependability (Hair et al., 2017a). As captured in Table 2 below, the outer loadings of indicators indicate that all of the indicators, with the exception of SMG5 and SMG6, were within the required threshold.

Table 2: Outer Loadings of Indicators.

	Stress Management	Transformational Leadership	Job Performance
SMG1	0.795		
SMG2	0.819		
SMG3	0.825		
SMG4	0.744		
SMG6	0.605		
TF1		0.797	
TF2		0.811	
TF3		0.846	
TF4		0.719	
TF5		0.775	
TF6		0.700	
TF7		0.708	
TF8		0.703	
JP1			0.793
JP2			0.821
JP3			0.844
JP4			0.837
JP5			0.780
JP6			0.794

3.1.2 Internal Consistency Reliability

Consistency levels are typically higher when composite reliability ratings are higher. Reliability levels, for instance, span from "satisfactory to good" between 0.70 and 0.90, and are considered "acceptable in exploratory research" between 0.60 and 0.70." Values of 0.95 and higher are challenging, as they indicate that the items are functionless, thus, reducing construct validity (Drolet and Morrison, 2001; Diamantopoulos et al., 2012). For the current study, both composite reliability values and Cronbach's Alpha values were all within the range of 0.800 to 0.93, indicating that they were satisfactory to good. The PLS-SEM results of the validity and construct reliability are captured in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Validity Construct and Reliability Results

Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
SMG	0.818	0.839	0.580
TF	0.894	0.899	0.576
JP	0.896	0.898	0.659

3.1.3 Convergent Validity

The measure of a construct's convergent validity is how well it explains the variance among its items. An evaluation of a concept's convergent validity is based on the average variance extracted (AVE) for each item in the construct. Squaring each indicator's loading on a construct and calculating the mean value yields the AVE. A construct is considered to be acceptable if its AVE is 0.50 or greater, meaning that it accounts for at least 50% of the disparity among its elements. All of the AVE values for the current study were over 0.50, indicating that they were acceptable, as indicated in Table 3.

3.1.4 Discriminant validity

This study evaluated discriminant validity (HTMT ratio of the links)—the degree to which a construct is empirically different from other constructs in the structural model. Measured against the (geometric) mean of the average correlations for the items measuring the same construct, the HTMT is defined as the mean value of the item linkages across constructs. With high HTMT readings, discriminant validity issues arise. Researchers looked at whether the upper bound of the HTMT 95% confidence interval is less than 0.90 or 0.85 for this study. As shown in Table 4 below, for the current study, all the HTMT values were lesser than 0.85 (between 0.613 and 0.703), indicating that they were acceptable.

Table 4: Discriminant Validity (HTMT) Results

	Job Performance	Stress Management	Transformational Leadership
JP	0.812		
SMG	0.549	0.762	
TF	0.582	0.689	0.759

4. Results and Discussion

Examining collinearity was done to make sure the results of the regression were not distorted before the structural links were assessed. Consequently, the latent variable scores of the predictor constructs were used in a partial regression to calculate the VIF values.

4.1 Assessment of Collinearity

Chan, et al., (2022) and Becker et al. (2015) both state that collinearity issues can also occur at lower VIF values of 3-5. Nonetheless, VIF values greater than 5 suggest that there may be problems with collinearity amongst the predictor components. Ideally, the VIF values should be close to three or lower. A common solution when collinearity is an issue is to develop higher-order models with theoretical justification (Hair et al., 2017a). As revealed in Table 5 below, for the current study, all the VIF values were all lower than 3, indicating that they were acceptable.

Table 5: Collinearity Statistics (VIF)

	VIF
SMG1	1.797
SMG2	1.863
SMG3	1.875
SMG4	1.628
SMG5	1.332
SMG6	1.489
TL1	2.063
TL2	2.624
TL3	2.647
JP1	2.088
JP2	2.435
JP3	2.565
JP4	2.309
JP5	2.084
JP6	2.145

4.2 Assessment of R^2

As a measure of the model's ability to explain, the variance is defined by the, measured by the R^2 , and explained by individual endogenous constructs (Shmueli and Koppius, 2011). It is also known as in-sample predictive power, according to Rigdon (2012). Greater numbers indicate a higher explanatory power. The R^2 values range from 0 to 1. Heseler et al. (2019), opined that R^2 values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 are categorized as weak, moderate, and significant. When predicting stock returns, values as low as 0.10 may be deemed appropriate, depending on the research environment (Chicco et al., 2021). When measuring something that is fundamentally predicted, like physical progressions, R^2 values of 0.90 might be conceivable. As revealed in Table 6 below, for the current research, the R^2 values of 0.378 and 0.475 for job performance and transformational leadership, respectively, were deemed satisfactory.

Table 6: Model Fit

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
JP	0.381	0.378
TF	0.475	0.474

4.3 Assessment of Statistical Significance and Relevance of Path Coefficients

Bootstrapping was employed to determine the relevance and values of the path coefficients. As shown in Table 7 below, for the current study, all the path coefficients were statistically significant.

Figure 2: Structural model

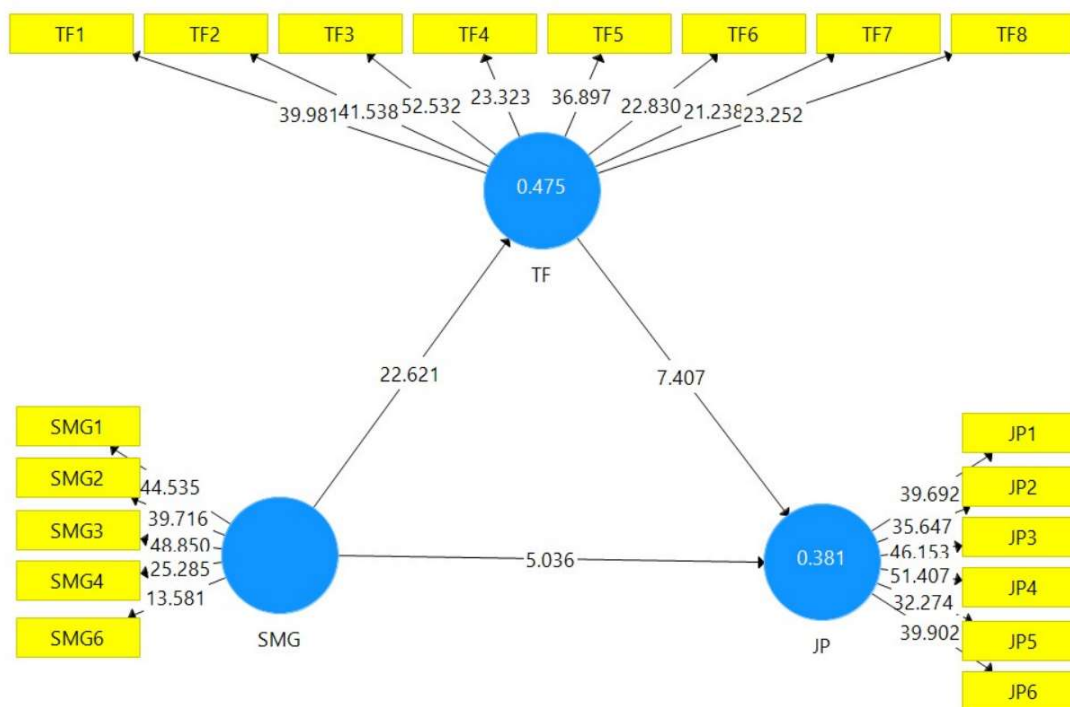


Table 7: Path Coefficients

	Original Sample (O)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
SMG -> JP	0.282	0.055	5.152	0.000
SMG -> TF	0.689	0.031	22.519	0.000
TF -> JP	0.388	0.052	7.493	0.000

4.4 Mediation of Transformational Leadership

Bootstrapping was used in this study to ascertain how transformational leadership mediated the link between SM and JP. As displayed in Table 8, the outcomes of the bootstrapping run indicated a positive indirect effect ($f = 0.207$), which was statistically significant ($p = 0.000$). Again, the total effects results (see Table 9) revealed direct, positive, and statistically significant effects of SM on JP, SM on TL, and TL on JP. These findings imply that there was a complementary partial mediation of TL between SM and JP. The hypothesis of the study, H1, stated that TL mediates the connection between SM and the JP of managers of SMEs. Henceforward the hypothesis was supported. This finding lends support to Schaufeli and Taris's (2014) and Spector & Jex's (1998) findings regarding how the influence of transformational leadership may handle stress levels. The finding also corroborates that of Arnold et al. (2017) and Zhang et al. (2019) on how effective transformational leaders facilitate stress management.

Table 8: Bootstrapping Results of Mediation Analysis

Total Effects (SMG-> JP)			Direct Effects (SMG-> JP)			Hypothesis	Indirect Effects of SMG on JP				BI [5.0%;95.0%]
Coefficient	T-value	p-value	Coefficient	T-value	p-value		Coefficient	SD	T-value	p-value	
0.549	14.736	0.000	0.282	5.152	0.000	H3: SMG -> TF -> JP	0.267	0.038	6.964	0.000	.207-.331

5. Conclusion

The essence of this research was to examine the mediation role of TL on SM and JP. The study was underpinned by Goleman's mixed model of emotional intelligence and relied on primary data collected from a survey using copies of a questionnaire. The findings of the study revealed that SM has a positive and significant effect on managers' JP. Also, the relationship between SM and JP is partially mediated by TL. This finding of the study is

consistent with extant research with regard to SM and its effects on the leadership styles of managers of SMEs, as well as job performance. It is estimated that the findings of the study would contribute to the general body of knowledge and research work on stress management and job performance, as it has brought fresh theoretical acumens into the mediating effect of TL. It is envisaged that the findings of the study could offer direction to both researchers and policymakers on the planning of appropriate ways to increase job performance and manage stress in SMEs. The study faced some limitations, as there may have been bias during the primary data collection process. Future research may wish to examine these relationships by using data garnered from a different geographical context. Also, future studies should consider how contextual features like, industry type, organisational culture and national culture can influence the effectiveness of stress management practices and the mediating role of transformational leadership.

The research examined the mediation role of TL on SM and JP, underpinned by Goleman's mixed model of emotional intelligence. The study found that SM has a positive and significant effect on managers' JP, and the relationship between SM and JP is partially mediated by TL. The study contributes to the general body of knowledge and research work on stress management and job performance, as it has brought fresh theoretical acumens into the mediating effect of TL. The findings could offer direction to both researchers and policymakers on the planning of appropriate ways to increase job performance and manage stress in SMEs. Future research may wish to examine these relationships by using data garnered from a different geographical context.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE STATEMENTS

We are disclosing that we have no financial or business interests and have not received funding from any company that would be impacted by the study described in the enclosed article. This complies with Taylor & Francis policy and our ethical duties as researchers. As a result, we would like to declare that there are no pertinent competing interests, either financial or non-financial. I'm grateful.

AVAILABILITY STATEMENT OF DATA

When submitting the manuscript, the authors have attached and sent the data supporting the study's conclusions to the editor.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

Daniel Nii Okajiah Welbeck selected the topic and participated in the paper's preparation. He also created a literature study to strengthen the topic.

Dr. Kofi Amponsah-Bediako, who was involved in the article's conceptualisation and design, concluded that the study required the application of a quantitative research approach.

Samuel Narh Dorhetso was involved in the analysis and interpretation of the data.

Paul Aazagreyir participated in the critical revision of the study's intellectual substance. He also made the ultimate decision on publication approval.

John Nana Osei Yeboah contributed to the data analysis and interpretation as well.

Therefore, it is explicitly mentioned here that all authors consent to take full responsibility for the work.

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