

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Self-Leadership and Task, Contextual, and Creative Performance: Investigating The Mediating Role of Job Crafting

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Abstract

Employees' work performance is influenced by a number of factors, including the leadership style of their supervisors. However, in certain situations, despite the fact that managers have dysfunctional leadership styles or they avoid managerial responsibilities, followers perform well. A possible explanation is that employees perform well in such situations because they lead themselves, without needing the influence of direct supervisors. In order to test this hypothesis, we investigated the link between self-leadership and three types of performance: task, contextual, and creative performance. Also, we tested the mediating role of job crafting in the relationships between self-leadership and performance. The study was conducted on a sample of 282 employees. The results indicated that self-leadership is positively associated with the three types of performance. Moreover, job crafting mediates the relationships between self-leadership and all three forms of work performance. From a theoretical perspective, this study suggests that employees can have a high performance despite ineffective or absent leaders when they adopt self-leadership strategies. From a practical point of view, our results indicate that organizations may use self-leadership interventions in order to stimulate employees' job crafting behaviors and performance.

Keywords

self-leadership; job crafting; task performance; contextual performance; creative performance

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Ethical Statement

All procedures performed in the study were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and national research committee.

Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants involved in the study.

Data Availability

The datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Introduction

Work performance is one of the most important variables in industrial and organizational psychology (Carpini, Parker, & Griffin, 2017) due to the impact it has on organizational bottom line, turnover, and organizational performance at large (Pandey, 2019). Considering the importance of work performance, researchers tried to identify the factors associated with it (Pandey, 2019). A broad area of research indicates that certain leadership styles (e.g., transformational, transactional) increase different types of subordinates' performance, such as task, contextual, and creative performance (Chen, Jia, Li, & Zhang, 2021; Wang, Oh, Courtright, & Colbert, 2011). At the same time, destructive management styles (e.g., abusive) negatively influence the work performance of employees (Schyns & Schilling, 2013) and, in certain situations, managers even avoid leadership responsibilities (i.e., laissez-faire leadership). Therefore, the performance of employees can be diminished by inappropriate leadership styles or by the lack of involvement of managers. However, the concept of self-leadership challenges the assumption that the leadership process requires a leader and a follower and proposes a process of influencing oneself, without the need for a leader (Stewart, Courtright, & Manz, 2019). Therefore, even in situations where the leaders are absent or do not have adequate behaviors, employees can reach positive results by leading themselves. Indeed, the existing literature has identified a number of positive outcomes of self-leadership, such as performance, innovation, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and work engagement (Knotts et al., 2022). However, it is not completely known what are the processes through which self-leadership leads to these positive consequences.

In order to address this gap in the literature, the aim of this study is to test the mediating role of job crafting in the relationship between self-leadership and job performance. Based on social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), control theory (Carver & Scheier 1982), and self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000), we expect job crafting to mediate the positive link between

self-leadership and three types of performance: in-role (efficiency in performing the central duties of the position), contextual (individual behaviors that go beyond the formal duties of the position and that improve the working environment), and creative performance (generating new and useful procedures, ideas, and product improvements) (Koopmans et al., 2011). From a theoretical point of view, the current study highlights the importance of self-leadership in predicting different types of performance, indicating a possible explanation for the high performance of some employees in situations where supervisors are absent or have ineffective behaviors. Moreover, it provides an explanatory mechanism (i.e., job crafting) for the positive relationship between self-leadership and several forms of performance. Regarding the practical implications, the study may indicate that self-leadership interventions could be an effective solution for increasing employees' job crafting behaviors and job performance.

Self-Leadership and Job Performance

Self-leadership represents a process through which individuals analyze themselves and regulate their own behavior in order to reach a desired result by using a specific set of cognitive and behavioral strategies (Neck & Houghton, 2006). There are three types of self-leadership strategies that employees can use: behavior-focused strategies, natural reward strategies, and constructive thought strategies (Houghton & Neck, 2002; Houghton, Dawley, & DiLiello, 2012). By using behavior-focused strategies, employees replace the behaviors that do not lead to a desired result with other behaviors that are more adequate in achieving the proposed objective (Neck & Houghton, 2006; Houghton et al., 2012). These strategies are self-observation (monitoring one's own actions in order to identify behaviors that must be changed, improved or eliminated), self-goal setting (the formulation of specific objectives that the person wants to achieve), self-reward (offering rewards to oneself for self-motivation), self-correcting feedback (the negative evaluation of ineffective and

inadequate behaviors with the aim of replacing them), and self-cueing (using certain cues from the environment to stimulate the desired behaviors, such as motivational posters and notes) (Neck & Houghton, 2006).

Natural reward strategies are used by employees in order to make the tasks or work activities more pleasant and rewarding (Neck & Houghton, 2006). The two strategies proposed in the self-leadership literature are (1) making tasks more pleasant by adding certain rewarding or pleasant characteristics and (2) changing the perception of tasks by focusing on their pleasant aspects (Houghton & Neck, 2002; Houghton et al., 2012). Finally, constructive thought strategies refer to ways in which employees can develop a pattern of thinking that facilitates performance and includes evaluating own thoughts and assumptions in order to eliminate the dysfunctional ones, mental imagery (envisioning the successful completion of tasks before starting them), and positive self-talk (an optimistic and encouraging inner dialogue) (Neck & Houghton, 2006; Houghton et al., 2012). The concept of self-leadership is grounded in several classic theories, such as social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), control theory (Carver & Scheier 1982), and SDT (e. g., Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). These theories propose a series of mechanisms (self-efficacy, work engagement) that can explain why employees who use self-leadership strategies perform better (Hauschildt & Konradt, 2012).

Control theory (Carver & Scheier 1982) suggests that individuals make comparisons between a desired state and the current reality and, when there is a discrepancy between the two, they direct their behavior to reduce the discrepancy and reach the desired state. These self-regulatory efforts can be effective or they can fail. After people perform certain actions, they evaluate whether or not they led to the desired result. If the behavioral changes did not lead to the established objective, then the persons direct their efforts to other actions that could lead to the desired state. The strategies within self-leadership are proposed as ways that can lead to self-regulatory effectiveness (Neck & Houghton, 2006). For example, the constructive thought strategies can improve goal setting, orient behavior in a certain

direction, and maintain motivation for desired behaviors (Neck & Manz, 1992). Therefore, it is expected that self-leadership strategies to improve behavioral regulation and increase the chances that individuals will reach the desired state. In general, in the workplace, the desired state is established by the organization's requirements and implies task performance or other forms of performance, such as contextual or creative performance.

Next, social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) suggests that individuals self-regulate their behavior by establishing performance standards that they then try to achieve. This process begins with the analysis of previous experiences so that people can realize how well they have performed in the past in certain activities (Neck & Houghton, 2006). Previous success in these activities builds self-efficacy, representing people's confidence that they can accomplish certain tasks (Bandura, 1986). The more confident people are in their own abilities, the higher the performance standards they impose on themselves will be, which will motivate them to make an effort and change their behavior to meet those standards (Neck & Houghton, 2006). Self-observation and self-goal setting are two behavior-focused strategies specific to self-leadership that can build self-efficacy and regulate work behavior towards performance. In line with social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), self-efficacy mediates the link between self-leadership and performance (Panagopoulos & Ogilvie, 2015; Prussia, Anderson, & Manz, 1998).

Finally, SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000) is a theory that aims to clarify why people do what they do. It acknowledges a spectrum of motivational regulations, ranging from intrinsic motivation to various forms of extrinsic motivation and amotivation. When used in an occupational context, motivation refers to the forces that determine the direction, intensity, and duration of an individual's behavior at work (Pinder, 2008). Six motivational categories are identified by SDT (Manganelli et al., 2018). Amotivation refers to the lacking of intention to act (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Extrinsic motivation can be divided into four categories: (a) external motivation, which occurs when people behave in a certain way to obtain rewards or to avoid

punishments; (b) introjected motivation, which occurs when people act out of shame, guilt, or pride; (c) identified motivation, which occurs when the individual chooses to engage in a behavior because he or she considers it useful in achieving an important and valuable objective, (d) integrated motivation, which occurs when people choose a certain behavior because it is consistent with their deeply held beliefs (Van den Broeck et al., 2016; Deci et al., 2017; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Conversely, intrinsic motivation describes the enjoyment and pleasure that come from the activity itself; the activity serves as both the "reward" and the driving force (Deci et al., 2017). Three fundamental psychological needs must be met for an activity to be considered motivating in and of itself, according to SDT. These needs are the need for autonomy (the desire of employees to decide what behaviors they engage in without being constrained by the work context), the need for relatedness (the desire of employees to develop close relationships in the professional environment and to belong to a group), and the need for competence (the employees' desire to have a sense of mastery over the work tasks and the work environment). According to the theory, when these needs are satisfied, employees are more intrinsically motivated, are more involved in their work, and are willing to put in more effort. Meta-analytical findings (Van den Broeck et al., 2016) support these predictions, indicating that basic psychological needs satisfaction is positively related to engagement, satisfaction, task performance, contextual performance, and creative performance.

The SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000) can explain why employees engage in self-leadership behaviors. In terms of extrinsic motivation, the adoption of self-leadership strategies can be motivated by the desire to obtain certain external organizational rewards (external motivation), by the belief that these strategies will help employees achieve their goals (identified motivation) or because these proactive behaviors are in agreement with their values and beliefs (integrated motivation). In terms of intrinsic motivation, SDT suggests that when

employees use behavioral strategies, they will satisfy their need for autonomy and then the need for competence. The satisfaction of these psychological needs would later lead to greater work engagement and higher performance. In other words, employees who set their own goals, adjust their behavior through their own self-correcting feedback, and reward themselves when they achieve their goals will feel more autonomous at work and more in control of the tasks they have to perform. In the end, satisfying the two needs (for autonomy and competence) will increase engagement and performance. In line with this theoretical assumption, work engagement mediates the link between self-leadership and both job performance (Inam et al., 2021) and individual innovation (Gomes, Curral, & Caetano, 2015). In a diary study (Breevaart et al., 2016), weekly self-leadership was positively associated with weekly performance, the relationship being explained by weekly work engagement.

Also, previous studies support the positive link between self-leadership and behaviors related to contextual performance, such as working together with colleagues to achieve results, sharing information with team members, and coordinating one's behavior to increase synchronization with the team (Hauschildt & Konradt, 2012). Taken together, we expect positive links between self-leadership and all three types of performance.

Hypothesis 1. Self-leadership is positively related to task performance, contextual performance, and creative performance.

The Mediating Role of Job Crafting

Based on SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000), we expect the link between self-leadership and job performance to be explained by job crafting. Job crafting is defined as a set of initiatives through which employees change certain aspects of their jobs (Tims, Twemlow, & Fong, 2022). The resources-based approach of job crafting operationalizes the construct through four factors: (1) increasing structural job resources

(e.g., seeking autonomy and opportunities for development), (2) increasing social job resources (e.g., seeking coaching and advice from colleagues and supervisors), (3) increasing challenging job demands (e.g., looking for more tasks or responsibilities), and (4) decreasing hindering job demands (e.g., reducing cognitive or emotional demands) (Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2012). From the perspective of external motivation from SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000), employees will seek to craft their job in order to increase their chances to perform and, therefore, to receive organizational rewards (external motivation), to achieve their organizational objectives (identified motivation) or because their personal values are in accordance with these job crafting behaviors (integrated motivation).

Regarding intrinsic motivation, according to SDT, when they lead themselves, employees will be motivated to satisfy their three basic psychological needs. They will seek to satisfy their need for autonomy by changing their job so that they can make more decisions on their own (i.e., increasing structural resources). Employees will self-regulate their social behavior to satisfy their need for relatedness by seeking feedback and support and by avoiding difficult colleagues (i.e., increasing social resources and decreasing hindering demands). For example, when the manager is absent or does not get involved in the development of subordinates, employees can take the initiative and ask the leader directly to provide them with opportunities for development, feedback or suggestions for improving performance. In other situations, employees can manage their work among themselves, even if the direct supervisor does not assume the responsibilities of a leader, by seeking mutual support within the team. Therefore, by crafting social resources, employees can perform even when managers have poor leadership styles, because they can proactively ask them to focus on team development or they can actively seek mutual support within the team. Finally, the need for competence can be satisfied by looking for professional development opportunities, new projects or the use of new technologies in the workplace (i.e., increasing structural resources and challenging

demands). These changes in job characteristics can be achieved through self-leadership strategies such as envisioning a workplace that is richer in resources and challenges, establishing objectives to craft the jobs, and by changing the tasks in order to be more rewarding. These strategies can lead to proactive behaviors that change certain aspects of work.

Moreover, self-leadership is associated with proactivity at work (Hauschildt & Konradt, 2012), including innovative behaviors (Carmeli, Meitar, & Weisberg, 2006) and work role innovation (Carral & Marques-Quinteiro, 2009). Given that job crafting also represents a set of proactive behaviors in the workplace, we expect positive associations with self-leadership. Indeed, previous studies have found a positive relationship between self-leadership and job crafting (Costantini & Weintraub, 2022; Liu, Peng, & Wen, 2023). At the same time, the meta-analytical data suggest a positive association between job crafting and both in-role and contextual performance (Rudolph, Katz, Lavigne, & Zacher, 2017) and that job crafting interventions have positive effects on these two types of performance (Oprea, Barzin, Virgă, Iliescu, & Rusu, 2019). In conclusion, we expect employees high in self-leadership to craft their jobs more, which in turn will lead to a higher performance. The expected relationships are presented in Figure 1.

Hypothesis 2. Job crafting mediates the positive relationship between self-leadership and performance.

Methods

Participants and Procedure

A total of 282 employees from a company that provides water and sewerage services (49.29% female) were included in the study, with age between 20 and 68 years ($M = 45.51$ years, $SD = 11.04$ years). 40.07% of the participants had over 10 years of experience in the company, 19.86% between 3 and 5 years, 15.96% between 5 and 10 years, and 12.41% between 1 and 3 years. Just 10.99% had between 0 and one year of experience in the company, and .35% between 1 and 3 years or over 10 years

of experience. A non-experimental, cross-sectional study was conducted on a Romanian company, the employees completed the questionnaires during a periodical assessment.

The participants were briefed and informed that data were confidential and the participation in the study was voluntary.

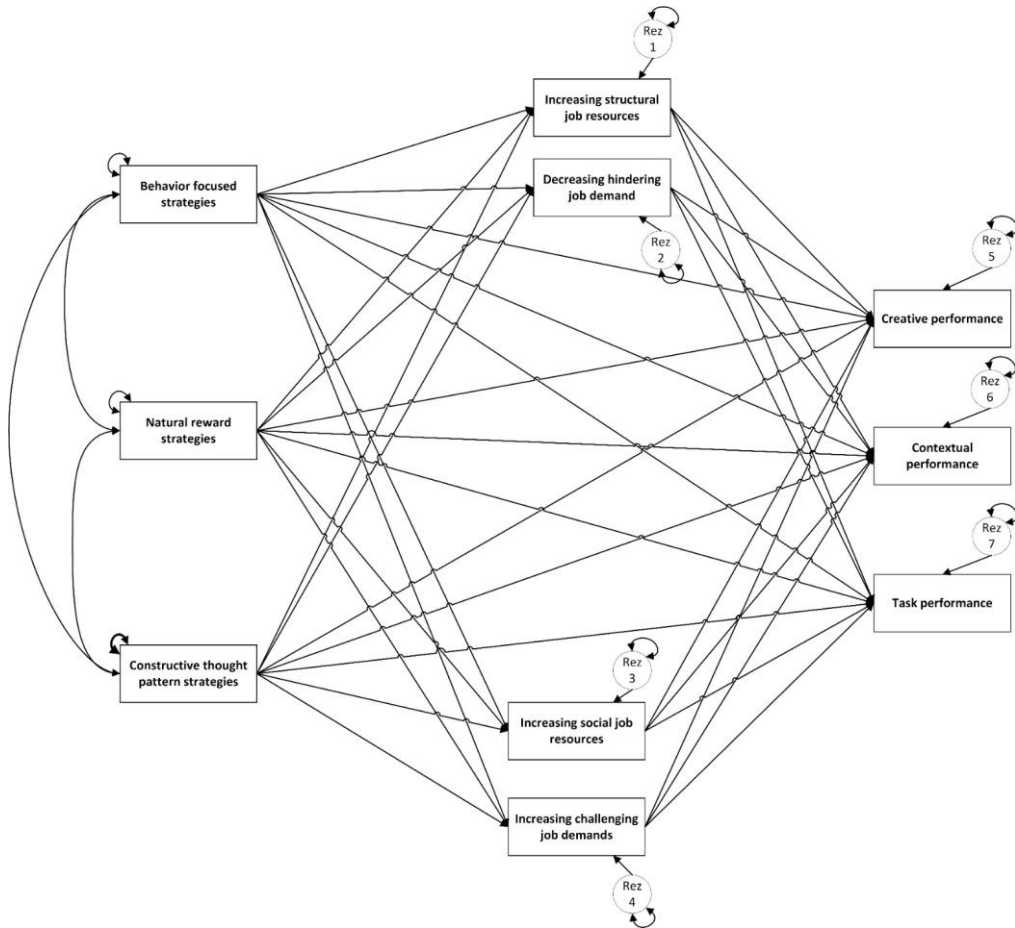


Figure 1. The proposed research model

Measurements

Self-leadership was assessed with the Revised Self-Leadership Questionnaire (Houghton & Neck, 2002), a 35-items (e.g., “I use my imagination to picture myself performing well on important tasks.”) inventory with 3 factors: behavior focused strategies ($\alpha = .92$), natural reward strategies ($\alpha = .78$), and constructive thought pattern strategies ($\alpha = .87$). The internal consistency indicators in parentheses were calculated based on the sample of this study for all the measurements used.

Task performance was measured with nine items (e.g., “You achieve the objectives of your job.”) from Goodman & Svyantek’s Performance Scale (Goodman & Svyantek, 1999), $\alpha = .85$. Contextual performance was measured with seven items (e.g., “You assist your colleagues with their duties.”) from Goodman & Svyantek’s Performance Scale (Goodman & Svyantek, 1999), $\alpha = .81$. Creative performance was measured with three items on a 7-points scale (e.g., “How creative is your work? Creativity refers to the extent to which the employee develops ideas,

methods, or products that are both original and useful to the organization.”) (Oldham & Cummings, 1996), $\alpha = .92$.

Job crafting was measured with Job Crafting Scale (Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2012; Oprea & Ștefan, 2015), a questionnaire with 4 factors: increasing structural job resources (5 items, e.g., “*I try to develop my capabilities.*”, $\alpha = .66$), decreasing hindering job demands (6 items, e.g., “*I make sure that my work is mentally less intense.*”, $\alpha = .86$), increasing social job resources (6 items, e.g., “*I ask my supervisor to coach me.*”, $\alpha = .76$), and increasing challenging job demands (5 items, e.g., “*When an interesting project comes along, I offer myself proactively as project co-worker.*”, $\alpha = .85$).

Statistical Approach

We used R version 4.2.2 (R Core Team, 2022) and the R-packages dplyr version 1.1.0 (Wickham, François, Henry, & Müller, 2022), kableExtra version 1.3.4 (Zhu, 2021), mvtnorm version 1.1.3 (Genz & Bretz, 2009), naniar version 1.0.0 (Tierney, Cook, McBain, & Fay, 2021), papaja version 0.1.1 (Aust & Barth, 2022), psych version 2.2.9 (Revelle, 2022), readxl version 1.4.1 (Wickham & Bryan, 2022), rstatix version 0.7.2 (Kassambara, 2022), sasLM version 0.9.5 (Bae, 2022), and tinylabels version 0.2.3 (Barth, 2022) for all our analyses. The initial assumptions assessment was conducted using a descriptive univariate analysis. Data screening for outliers and missing cases analysis were conducted to verify univariate normality and Mardia indicator was computed to assess multivariate normality. Internal consistency was assessed using α Cronbach indicator and a path model analysis based on MLMVS (Maximum Likelihood with Mean and Variance Scaled) was used to test the mediation hypothesis.

Results

An initial descriptive analysis was performed, showing that the assumption of univariate normality was not met for the study variables.

Results suggested that Natural reward strategies and Creative performance were left skewed, and Task performance, Increasing structural job resources, Decreasing hindering job demands, and Increasing social job resources were right skewed. Leptokurtic distributions were observed for Behavior focused strategies, Task performance, and Increasing structural job resources. Platikurtic distributions were observed for Creative performance and Increasing social job resources. Most of the Spearman's ρ correlations were statistically significant (see Table 1) with values between $-.07$ and $.84$, and the correlation matrix was positively defined ($\det = .01$). Results were in line with Hypothesis 1.

We further analyzed the proposed research model, and convergence was acquired after 85 iterations, estimating 53 parameters, based on 279 data (3 missing cases were removed) and resulting good fit indices ($\chi^2 = 2.06$, $df = 2$, $p = .336$, $CFI = 1$, $SRMR = .01$, $RMSEA = .02$, $p = .53$, 90% $CI [0, .12]$) without relevant modification indices (see Fig. 2). Our data suggested, under the assumption of mediator's residuals correlations, only a direct effect of natural reward strategies on creative performance ($B = .18$, $z = 2.76$, $p = .006$, $\beta = .22$), contextual performance ($B = .15$, $z = 3.34$, $p = .001$, $\beta = .23$), and task performance. Furthermore, on the first mediating path, increasing structural resources was positively influenced by behavior focused strategies ($B = .14$, $z = 5.59$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .63$) and negatively by constructive thought pattern strategies ($B = -.09$, $z = -3.36$, $p = .001$, $\beta = -.30$); decreasing hindering demands was positively influenced by natural reward strategies ($B = .30$, $z = 2.83$, $p = .005$, $\beta = .25$) and constructive thought pattern strategies ($B = .12$, $z = 2.09$, $p = .037$, $\beta = .24$); increasing social resources was positively influenced only by behavior focused strategies ($B = .09$, $z = 1.16$, $p = .247$, $\beta = .10$); increasing challenging demand was positively influenced only by behavior focused strategies ($B = .14$, $z = 4.51$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .44$).

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Among Study Variables

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Behavior focused strategies	60.89	14.71									
2. Natural reward strategies	16.60	4.55	.72***								
3. Constructive thought pattern strategies	36.13	10.31	.84***	.67***							
4. Increasing structural resources	20.71	4.26	.35***	.24***	.21***						
5. Decreasing hindering demands	13.07	5.36	.20***	.25***	.25***	-.07					
6. Increasing social resources	12.36	3.95	.45***	.36***	.37***	.17**	.38***				
7. Increasing challenging demands	14.77	4.64	.51***	.42***	.44***	.42***	.19***	.50***			
8. Task performance	30.01	4.22	.49***	.45***	.37***	.51***	.03	.26***	.52***		
9. Contextual performance	22.44	3.05	.51***	.47***	.38***	.49***	.07	.33***	.62***	.74***	
10. Creative performance	15.27	3.75	.47***	.43***	.42***	.35***	.13*	.25***	.45***	.61***	.52***

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

On the second mediating path, creative performance was positively associated with increasing structural resources ($B = .23$, $z = 2.98$, $p = .003$, $\beta = .19$) and increasing challenging demands ($B = .20$, $z = 4.03$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .25$); contextual performance was positively associated with increasing structural resources ($B = .28$, $z = 4.82$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .29$) and increasing challenging demands ($B = .29$, $z = 8.00$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .43$); task performance was positively associated with increasing structural demands ($B = .49$, $z = 5.65$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .39$) and increasing challenging demands ($B = .22$, $z = 4.62$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .26$).

Creative performance ($R^2 = .36$) was best explained by three direct effects of natural reward strategies ($B = .18$, $z = 2.76$, $p = .006$, $\beta = .22$), increasing structural resources ($B = .23$, $z = 2.98$, $p = 0.003$, $\beta = .19$), and increasing challenging demands ($B = .20$, $z = 4.03$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .25$) and three indirect effects. The effect of behavior focused

strategies on creative performance was completely mediated by increasing structural resources ($B = .03$, $z = 2.65$, $p = .008$, $\beta = .12$) and increasing challenging demands ($B = .03$, $z = 3.15$, $p = .002$, $\beta = .11$) and the effect of constructive thought pattern strategies on creative performance was completely mediated by increasing structural resources ($B = -.02$, $z = -2.18$, $p = .029$, $\beta = -.06$).

Contextual performance ($R^2 = .53$) was best explained by three direct effects of natural reward strategies ($B = .15$, $z = 3.34$, $p = .001$, $\beta = .23$), increasing structural resources ($B = .28$, $z = 4.82$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .29$), and increasing challenging demands ($B = .29$, $z = 8.00$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .43$) and three indirect effects. The effect of behavior focused strategies on contextual performance was completely mediated by increasing structural resources ($B = .04$, $z = 3.76$, $p < .001$, $\beta = 0.18$) and increasing challenging demands ($B = .04$, $z = 3.97$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .19$) and the effect of constructive thought pattern strategies on

contextual performance was completely mediated by increasing structural resources ($B = -.02, z = -2.64, p = .008, \beta = -.08$).

Task performance ($R^2 = .49$) was best explained by two direct effects of increasing structural resources ($B = .49, z = 5.65, p < .001, \beta = .39$) and increasing challenging demands ($B = .22, z = 4.62, p < .001, \beta = .26$) and by three indirect effects. The effect of behavior focused strategies on task

performance was completely mediated by increasing structural resources ($B = .07, z = 3.80, p < .001, \beta = .24$) and increasing challenging demands ($B = .03, z = 3.16, p = .002, \beta = .11$) and the effect of constructive thought pattern strategies on task performance was completely mediated by increasing structural resources ($B = -.04, z = -2.72, p = .006, \beta = -.11$).

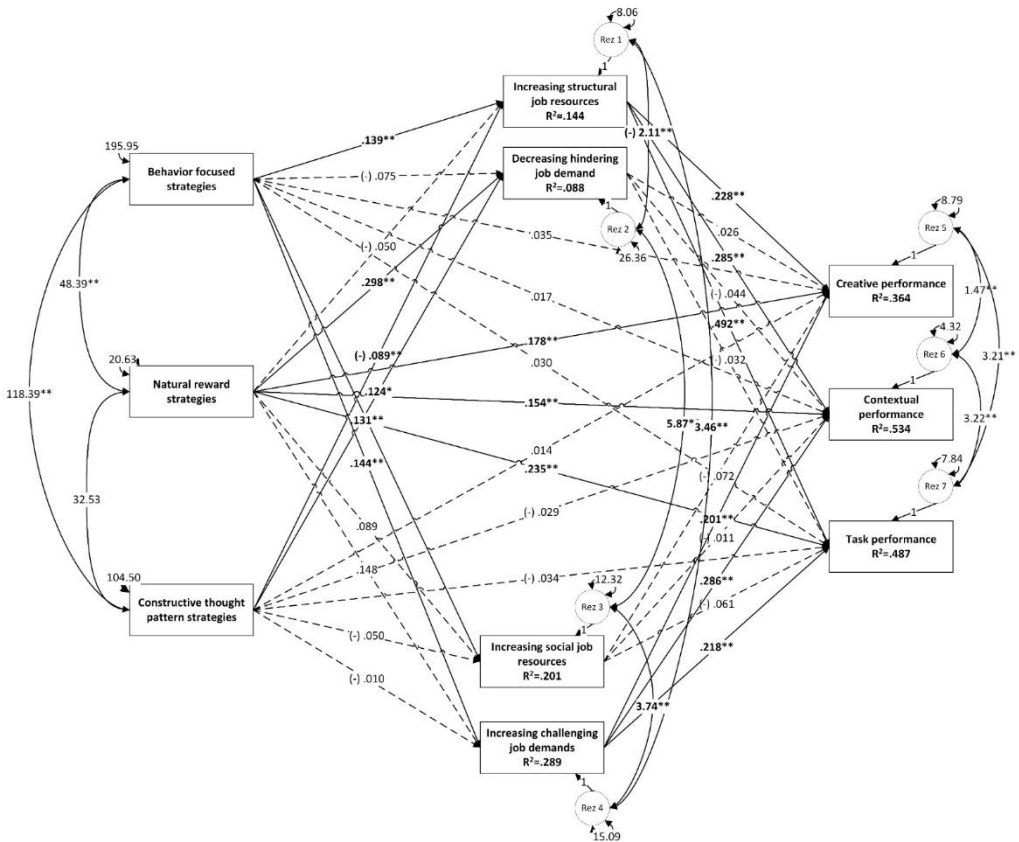


Figure 2. Estimates for the relationships between self-leadership, job crafting, and performance

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to test the mediating role of job crafting in the relationship between self-leadership and three types of performance: task, contextual, and creative performance. As we expected, self-leadership was positively related to task performance. This result is in line with previous findings (Breevaart et al., 2016; Panagopoulos & Ogilvie, 2015; Prussia et al.,

1998). We found positive links between self-leadership components and contextual performance. Although previous studies did not directly analyze the relationship with contextual performance, this finding is in accordance to previous results that indicate a positive association between self-leadership and team member proficiency, representing task-related collaborative behaviors such as information exchange, coordination, and cooperation (Hauschildt & Konradt, 2012).

In line with previous meta-analytical findings (Knotts et al., 2022), our results indicated a positive link between self-leadership and creative performance. All three self-leadership strategies were associated with job crafting. This result is in line with previous findings. Employees who use self-leadership strategies are more proactive, meaning that they initiate more changes at both individual and team level (Hauschildt & Konradt, 2012). Also, self-leadership and job crafting were positively related in recently published papers (Costantini & Weintraub, 2022; Liu, Peng, & Wen, 2023).

Theoretical and Practical Implications

This study has two important theoretical implications. First of all, the results of the study can explain why in certain situations employees can perform even if the organization has ineffective or absent leadership. The scientific literature on performance has brought significant evidence showing that certain leadership styles (e.g., transformational, transactional) are positively associated with performance and certain styles (e.g., abusive) are negatively associated with followers' performance. However, sometimes employees can have a high performance despite ineffective or absent leaders, and the current study suggests that this phenomenon can occur when employees adopt self-leadership strategies. Secondly, the current study offers an additional explanatory mechanism in the relationship between self-leadership and the three types of performance. Until now, based on control theory (Carver & Scheier 1982), social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), and SDT (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000), two mediators have been highlighted in the relationship between self-leadership and performance: self-efficacy (Panagopoulos & Ogilvie, 2015; Prussia et al., 1998) and work engagement (Breevaart et al., 2016; Inam et al., 2021; Gomes et al., 2015). Our study advances the understanding of the mechanisms through which self-leadership leads to performance by identifying job crafting as another mediator. However, the present study was conducted in

a single organization from a specific industry. To be able to generalize this mediation relationship, this explanatory mechanism should be replicated in other studies with heterogeneous samples or in studies with organizations from other fields.

From a practical point of view, our results indicate that organizations can use self-leadership interventions in order to stimulate employees' job crafting behaviors and job performance. Interventions that teach people to be their own leaders have already been tested and have led to positive results. For example, employees trained in thought self-leadership (i.e., ways in which they can use cognitive strategies such as self-talk and mental imagery to manage their own behavior) experience increases in mental performance, enthusiasm, and job satisfaction and decreases in nervousness (Neck & Manz, 1996). For health care professionals, self-leadership training increased both work engagement and performance. Positive results of self-leadership interventions were identified even in military settings; soldiers who participated in a self-leadership training had a higher performance, measured by examination marks and physical tests (e.g., obstacle course), compared to a control group (Lucke & Furtner, 2015). Moreover, studies suggest that self-leadership interventions could have a higher impact on the most problematic employees from organizations (e.g., employees with low conscientiousness). Employees with low conscientiousness tend to engage less in job crafting behaviors (Oprea et al., 2019) and to have a lower performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Previous findings suggest that self-leadership interventions have an effect especially on employees that are low in conscientiousness (Stewart, Carson, & Cardy, 1996). Therefore, self-leadership interventions could be a solution to manage employees who are less likely to be proactive and to perform well. An advantage of self-leadership interventions is that they can be successfully applied online, in the form of self-help exercises (Unsworth & Mason, 2012), which makes such interventions available for a large number of employees cheaply and from anywhere.

Limitations and Future Directions

As with any research, the present study has a number of limitations. First of all, the study is cross-sectional, therefore longitudinal studies are needed in order to draw causal conclusions. The relationships studied in the current research could be analyzed in the future using measurements at several time intervals (e.g., a three-wave design). Thus, the causal effect of self-leadership on performance can be properly investigated. Second, all measurements were made with self-report questionnaires, increasing the risk for common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). In future studies, data should be collected using measurements from multiple sources (e.g., objective measurements of performance, evaluations from supervisors or colleagues for performance and job crafting). Thirdly, the relationships between self-leadership and different outcomes are moderated by a series of variables, such as organizational-based self-esteem (Panagopoulos & Ogilvie, 2015) and collectivism (Hauschildt & Konradt, 2012). Future studies could explore the role of certain moderators in the relationship between self-leadership and both job crafting and performance. Fourthly, the sample consisted of employees from a single organization. Variables specific to this company (e.g., organizational culture & climate, corporate strategy, specific organizational goals, preferred employee profiles, specific skill structure) could influence the results of the study. Therefore, we cannot generalize the results to other types of industries. Future studies could use more heterogeneous samples in terms of participants' occupations. Finally, although we proposed self-leadership interventions as a possible solution for increasing job crafting behaviors and performance, the studies in which such interventions were tested did not include job crafting as an outcome. Future studies could test whether employees trained in self-leadership craft their job more.

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