

# THE MEDIATING ROLE OF CONTEXTUAL PERFORMANCE IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-LEADERSHIP AND JOB SATISFACTION

Íris Leão, & António Caetano

*Department of Psychology, APPsyCI – Applied Psychology Research Center Capabilities and Inclusion (FCT/UIDB/05299/2020) (Portugal)*

## Abstract

The pressure associated with the daily pace of changes and unpredictable problems at work directly disturbs the well-being of employees. Job satisfaction is a critical indicator of well-being and can have repercussions on individual performance. On a personal level, these effects can contribute to situations such as burnout and demotivation. As an attitude, job satisfaction results from both the external environment and the individual's intrinsic qualities, of which self-leadership has been highlighted as a relevant competence for most of today's work contexts. Self-leadership is a process of self-influence by which individuals regulate their thoughts, behaviours, and emotions. It can function as an internal source of leadership and is associated with more effective performance and lower levels of anxiety at work. Through self-leadership strategies, individuals may engage in contextual performance, defined as voluntary behaviour that supports the psychological, social, and organisational environment. As they develop these strategies, they make more positive evaluations of their work. Therefore, this study aims to investigate how employee's self-leadership skills are related to contextual performance and job satisfaction. For that, we analysed the mediating role of contextual performance in the relationship between self-leadership and job satisfaction. Utilizing a cross-sectional study design, we gathered data from 250 participants who volunteered from several organizations. To test the hypothesized mediation effect, we used bootstrapping techniques from Hayes' PROCESS macro program. Results supported the tested model. Firstly, it showed that self-leadership significantly and positively influences job satisfaction. Secondly, it revealed a partial mediating role of contextual performance in the relationship between self-leadership and job satisfaction. Summarily, the results suggest that employees with higher self-leadership skills tend to demonstrate more contextual performance behaviours and higher levels of job satisfaction. Given the inherent constraints of a cross-sectional design, these results suggest a need to adopt a longitudinal design in subsequent studies to elucidate the temporal dynamics among those relationships. This study adds a contribution to existing knowledge on self-leadership by empirically testing its relationships with contextual performance and job satisfaction. Also, the insights provide intervention clues and actions for organizations seeking to enhance the performance effectiveness of employees as well as their well-being at work. Therefore, fostering the development of self-leadership skills can benefit organizations and, at the same time, contribute to employee well-being.

**Keywords:** *Job satisfaction, self-leadership, contextual performance.*

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## 1. Introduction

Job satisfaction is a crucial factor in how employees perceive their work in an organization. Job satisfaction is a mental state that reflects emotional well-being and can potentially influence employee behavior, which can impact the organization's functioning. Job satisfaction or dissatisfaction can be linked to employee turnover, absenteeism, burnout, physical and mental health, depression, and overall life satisfaction (Spector, 1997). Locke (1969) defined job satisfaction as a positive emotional state that arises from a person's evaluation of their job. Simply liking one's job does not explain the reasons behind that liking, since the feeling of satisfaction may be due to a variety of factors, such as achievable goals or friendly colleagues (Locke, 1970). When individuals set goals for themselves and can achieve them, they experience a sense of satisfaction (Locke, 1969).

Numerous studies have demonstrated the crucial role of self-leadership in establishing and accomplishing personal and professional objectives (Neck and Houghton, 2006; Stewart et al., 2011). By having the ability to self-regulate, self-motivate, and self-direct, individuals can set ambitious goals and

sustain the attention necessary to attain them (Manz & Neck, 2004). Research has shown that there is a connection between self-leadership and job satisfaction (Roberts & Foti, 1998; Neck & Manz, 1996; Harari et al., 2021).

Self-leadership is defined as an individual's ability to influence themselves through self-directed and self-regulated behaviour to attain personal and professional goals. It involves setting goals, monitoring progress, and adjusting behaviour to achieve the desired outcomes. Self-leadership has been identified as a crucial skill for professional success (Manz & Neck, 2004). On the other hand, job satisfaction is a significant indicator of employee well-being and is related to the level of contentment and fulfilment individuals feel in relation to their work tasks and environment (Judge et al., 2001).

Previous studies have indicated that self-leadership and job satisfaction are positively correlated. This suggests that individuals with high levels of self-leadership are more likely to experience job satisfaction, which contributes to a positive work environment (Roberts & Foti, 1998; Neck & Manz, 1996; Harari et al., 2021). However, the mechanisms underlying this relationship are still poorly understood (Neck & Houghton, 2006; Harari et al., 2021). Recent research by Shen (2023) suggests that self-leadership may be associated with contextual performance.

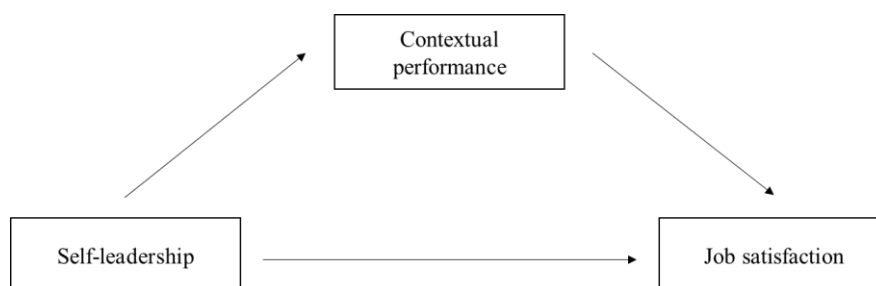
This is where contextual performance emerges as a possible mediator in the relationship with job satisfaction. Contextual performance refers to behaviours that go beyond the formal expectations of the job, such as helping co-workers, sharing knowledge, and contributing to improving the work environment (Sonnentag et al., 2008; Koopmans et al., 2011). Therefore, this study aims to investigate how employee's self-leadership skills are related to contextual performance and job satisfaction. Based on the theoretical and empirical bases reviewed above, we advance the following research hypotheses:

H1: Self-leadership is positively associated with job satisfaction.

H2: The relationship between self-leadership and job satisfaction is partially mediated by contextual performance.

A summary of the conceptual mediation model of the relationships between self-leadership, job satisfaction and contextual performance is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Conceptual mediation model.



## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants and procedure

This cross-sectional study was conducted on a sample of 250 workers from various organizations, aged between 18 to 66, with a mean age of 32.12 (SD=12.97), 153 female (61.2%) and 97 male (38.8%). The study was carried out by distributing the form link on social media and the knowledge about anonymity was given in the informed consent form. Participants filled in questionnaires anonymously and voluntarily.

### 2.2. Instruments

To test the study's hypotheses based on literature review and validated instruments, a questionnaire with 16 items and sociodemographic questions was created. Self-leadership was considered a predictor variable of job satisfaction, and contextual performance was regarded as a mediating variable. These variables were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree).

The job satisfaction was measured through three items (Brayfield & Rothe, 1951); an example item was: "I feel fairly well satisfied with my present job". To measure self-leadership, we used the Abbreviated Self-Leadership Scale, with 9 items (Houghton et al., 2012); an example item was: "I work toward specific goals I have set for myself". The contextual performance was measured through four items (Koopmans et al., 2011); an example item was: "I took on challenging work tasks, when available".

### 3. Results

After collecting the data, preliminary statistical analyses were carried out using the SPSS and Macro PROCESS statistical programmes. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics, correlations among the study variables and Cronbach's alphas.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics, correlations and Cronbach's alphas (N = 250).

|                          | Mean | SD  | 1      | 2      | 3     |
|--------------------------|------|-----|--------|--------|-------|
| 1 Job satisfaction       | 3.66 | .83 | (.82)  |        |       |
| 2 Self-leadership        | 3.55 | .62 | .30*** | (.80)  |       |
| 3 Contextual performance | 4.07 | .54 | .28*** | .52*** | (.67) |

Note. \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Both hypotheses have been supported (Table 2). To analyse hypothesis 1, which predicted that self-leadership was positively associated with job satisfaction, a regression was carried out. The non-standardised coefficient ( $B = .40$ ,  $p < .001$ ) was significant, supporting the hypothesis 1. Hypothesis 2 predicted that the relationship between self-leadership and job satisfaction is mediated by contextual performance. The relationship between self-leadership and contextual performance ( $B = .45$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and the relationship between contextual performance and job satisfaction ( $B = .26$ ,  $p < .05$ ) were significant (Table 2).

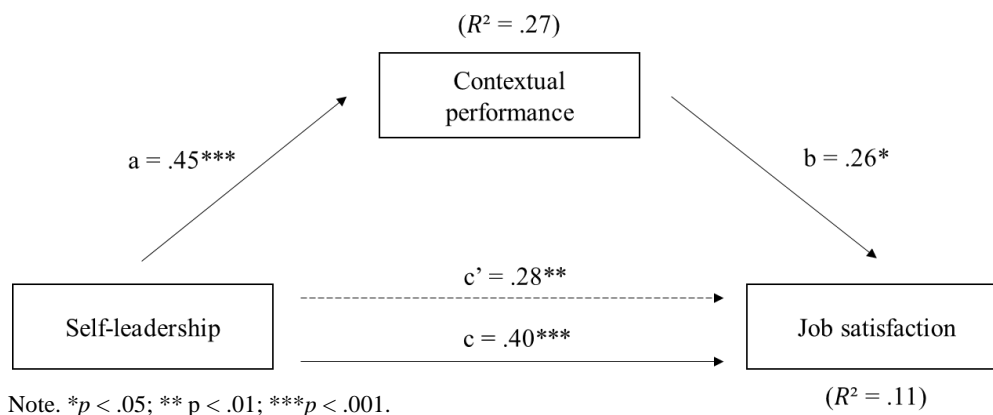
Table 2. Results of the mediation of contextual performance in the relationship between self-leadership and job satisfaction (N = 250).

| Predictor Variables    | Contextual performance |           | Job satisfaction  |     |
|------------------------|------------------------|-----------|-------------------|-----|
|                        | B                      | se        | B                 | se  |
| <b>Total Effect</b>    |                        |           |                   |     |
| Constant               |                        |           | 2.24***           | .29 |
| Self-leadership        |                        |           | .40***            | .08 |
| <b>Direct Effect</b>   |                        |           |                   |     |
| Constant               | 2.46***                | .17       | 1.60***           | .39 |
| Self-leadership        | .45***                 | .05       | .28**             | .09 |
| Contextual performance |                        |           | .26*              | .11 |
| <b>Indirect Effect</b> | <i>Coeff.</i>          | <i>se</i> | <i>95% BootCI</i> |     |
|                        | .12                    | .06       | .01               | .24 |

Note. B: non-standardised coefficient; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

The tested model explains 27% ( $R^2 = .27$ ) of the variance in employees' contextual performance [ $F(1,248) = 90.67$ ,  $p < .001$ ] and 11% ( $R^2 = .11$ ) of the variance in employees' job satisfaction [ $F(2,247) = 15.41$ ,  $p < .001$ ]. The indirect effect of self-leadership on job satisfaction through contextual performance was .12, with 95% CI [.01, .24], which reveals a mediating effect. The total effect ( $B = .40$ ,  $p < .001$ ) between self-leadership and job satisfaction was also significant. Finally, the direct effect ( $B = .28$ ,  $p < .01$ ) was significant, indicating partial mediation and supporting hypothesis 2. Figure 2 summarises the mediation results with unstandardised regression coefficients and explained variances.

Figure 2. Summarises the mediation results with unstandardised regression coefficients and explained variances.



#### 4. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to understand the extent to which self-leadership contributes to job satisfaction and how this relationship is affected by contextual performance. Based on the literature review, we formulated two hypotheses which suggested that self-leadership was positively associated with job satisfaction (hypothesis 1) and that this relationship was mediated by contextual performance (hypothesis 2).

The results supported hypothesis 1, indicating that employees who display self-leadership skills have higher levels of job satisfaction. This means that the greater the individual's self-leadership skills, the greater their job satisfaction. Therefore, the ability of employees to take responsibility for their own performance and motivation is essential for promoting greater job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2 was also supported, showing that the relationship between self-leadership and job satisfaction can, in part, be explained by contextual performance. This suggests that behaviors that go beyond the formal requirements of the job play an important role in explaining this relationship. Employees with high self-leadership skills tend to have more contextual performance behaviours (e.g. taking initiative, supporting colleagues and demonstrating organisational civic behaviours) and are more likely to have higher levels of job satisfaction.

Thus, self-leadership can be a key element in the development of positive attitudes and well-being among employees. These results are consistent with studies showing that self-leadership is positively related to job satisfaction by promoting a sense of control, self-regulation and intrinsic motivation in employees (Manz & Neck, 2004; Neck & Houghton, 2006).

#### 5. Conclusion

The study's findings suggest that possessing self-leadership skills can enhance an employee's contextual performance, leading to a positive work environment and greater job satisfaction. As a result, employees with high levels of self-leadership tend to exhibit more behaviours that go beyond their job description and, consequently, are more likely to have higher levels of job satisfaction.

Therefore, it is crucial for organizations to promote self-leadership development initiatives to cultivate proactive individuals and impact positive attitudes and employee well-being.

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