

Impact of leadership style on the employees' occupational stress and intention to leave in Vietnamese supply enterprises in the context of COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

This study provides new evidence on the relationship between leadership style, job stress, and the intention to leave of employees in supply enterprises in Vietnam in the context of the COVID-19 epidemic. Unlike most previous studies, the results of this study found that the level of work stress of employees is quite high (4.03 points) and is positively affected by the transactional leadership style, while that of transformational leadership style will reduce stress levels. The study also found that, although the level of work stress was high, the intention to quit was quite low; the older the workers, the lower the intention to quit; and women have a higher intention to quit than men. However, this study has many limitations when it does not consider factors affecting work stress and intention to leave other jobs such as job satisfaction, working environment, etc. Research results provide a theoretical and practical basis for leaders at supply enterprises in adjusting human resource management policies to reduce stress for employees and enhance long-term commitment with the company.

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1. Introduction

COVID disease has had a complex strong impact on Vietnam's economy for 2 years. According to the General Statistics Office of Vietnam, the gross domestic product (GDP) in the second quarter of 2021 has increased by 6.6% compared to the same period in 2020, but in the report released on August 30, 2021, Singapore's DBS Bank has downgraded this growth forecast to 5%, instead of 6.7% as originally forecast. Singapore's Business Times quoted as of August 31, 2021, they still keep the forecast growth for the second quarter at 5.4%, but predict that Vietnam's growth will slow to 3% in the third quarter. According to a report on September 1, 2021, by the British company IHS Markit, which specializes in collecting survey results of the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), a composite index that measures the performance of the manufacturing industry, this index fell to 40.2% in August,

compared with 45.1% in July. In response to the epidemic, the Vietnamese Government has repeatedly had to implement social distancing from the national to local levels and at smaller scales. To maintain living activities, and economic activities in the new situation, the role of supply enterprises becomes more important than ever, it's like the heart does the pumping of blood throughout the body to maintain life. However, in that context, work pressure is being placed on the workers' shoulders working in the supply sector, especially at companies located downstream of the chain. Therefore, this study was conducted to evaluate the impact of leadership style on job stress and intention to leave employees in Vietnamese supply enterprises in the context of COVID to provide a basis for the adjustment of human resource management policies at the supply enterprises, helping to enhance the performance of the supply enterprises and ensure the circulation of goods, not to break the domestic supply chain in front of the pressure epidemics complicated and prolonged.

2. Literature review

In recent years, leadership theory models have been repeatedly proven by the authors to have more influence on organizational performance. In 1978,

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the transformational leadership theory proposed by Burns (1978) described the relationship between leaders and employees, according to which leadership style is often directed towards improving employee motivation and elicitation a sense of ethics in the organization, especially for the organization's operation during the restructuring period in the enterprise. This style helps to assess perceptions and values and helps employees have better vision and goals (Burns, 1978). Transformational leaders are idealized that they are ethical role models and leaders working toward the good of the organization, the organization, and the community (Salem, 2015). Based on the theory of Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) proposed three leadership styles are proposed three leadership styles, transformational and transactional, liberally by acknowledging them as a continuous process, rather than as two separate, independent styles. Accordingly, the transformational leadership style will inspire their employees to perform better. Transformational leadership style can be measured and has a positive impact on the motivation to work and work performance of employees (Bass, 1985). This model represents the full range of leadership characteristics including three styles: Transformational leadership style; transactional leadership style; liberal leadership style. In these models, transactional leadership is also asserted alongside the transformational leadership style. Transactional leadership style is described as a relationship of exchange, in which leaders motivate employees by giving them a reward/penalty which affects their psychological work and makes employees make efforts at work (Hadadian and Zarei, 2016; Oterkiil and Ertesvåg, 2014). Freelance leaders allow employees to make their own decisions. In general, liberal leadership belongs to transactional leadership (Bass, 1998). In the transformational leadership structure, Bass (1998) identified four factors including: Influenced by ideals; Motivating and inspiration; Intellectual stimulation; Personal interest; and three components of transactional leadership style include: Reward extraordinary; Management by exception; Free leadership (situational leadership).

Thus, a lot of research shows 3 leadership styles as transformational, transactional, and liberal, however, the liberal leadership style tends to be transactional. Therefore, this study approaches two leadership styles, transformational and transactional, to study the impact on job stress of Receptionist.

Employee stress can lead to a variety of outcomes related to work, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, etc., here are some case studies.

Research by Dobрева-Martínova et al. (2002) in Canada has shown that there are many aspects of occupational stress such as ambiguity, conflict, overload, ineffectiveness, and responsibility to others; and there exists a strong correlation between the components of occupational stress and one of the aspects of employee well-being, job satisfaction.

Research by Hunter and Thatcher (2007) showed that a stressful job does not simply increase work efficiency when employees towards their tension to focus attention on the job. The effect of job stress on job performance is governed by the commitment to the organization and the employee's experience. Service employees have a high commitment to their organization, the higher they perceive work stress, the higher their performance is reflected in their sales. In contrast, for employees with low organizational commitment, the higher their perceived work stress, the lower their performance. At the same time, the study also noted the moderating influence of employee experience on the influence of work stress on work performance. Specifically: The more experienced the employee, the higher the perception of stress will lead to higher work efficiency, while the lower the employee experience, the higher the job stress will lead to lower job performance (Hunter and Thatcher, 2007).

Research by Mulki et al. (2012) focused on the influence of perceived stress on the intention of bank employees to switch jobs. The authors used structural equation modeling to evaluate the hypothesis that stress negatively affects job-hopping intention. Research results show that work stress has a significant positive effect. In addition, the influence of some control variables analyzed through multi-group analysis shows that women are more susceptible to stress than men, and the education level at the master's level is also more affected by job stress (Mulki et al., 2012).

Studies on the intention to perform the behavior of individuals or organizations are developed on the basis of the theory of planned behavior in the TRA model and later TPB (Ajzen, 1991; Thao and Tu, 2021). Intention to accept will determine an individual or organization performs a certain behavior or not (Rauniar et al., 2014), this is an important factor in determining whether a person or organization performs their behavior (Ong et al., 2015).

There have been many studies on the intention to quit of employees expressed through the studies of Elangovan (2001), Firth et al. (2004), Calisir et al. (2011), and Lee et al. (2012). Accordingly, the intention to quit is the intention that the employee has before officially resigning; this intention includes the willingness, ability and planning to resign. Although the intention to quit is not the actual behavior, through the study of the intention to leave, management can understand and predict the actual resignation behavior to arrange for leaving the organization of employees, or redistribution of personnel (Price and Mueller, 1981).

There are many studies on the relationship between leadership style and psychological states of employees and organizations, including employee job stress. The leaders have a transformation leadership style that has a positive impact on motivation to work and the performance work of employees (Bass, 1985). The working atmosphere of the organization and the culture of the organization

are shaped by the leader's management behavior, the organizational culture, and the values and behaviors of the organization's leaders (Ekvall and Ryhammar, 1998; 1999). Dirks and Ferrin (2002) pointed out that the trust can save the cost of management and supervisory organization, and continue to contribute to the positive attitude of the members of the work, commitment to the organization, reduce stress and increase job satisfaction. The leader's charisma help members reduce job stress and then create a sense of attachment to the organization (Yoon et al., 2016). Cooperation and work within the organization, a sense of collective honor and trust are the factors that lead to the emergence of innovative and creative activities in the work of employees (Kanter, 2000). Personal identity promotes the establishment of consensus among members and the recognition of a climate of innovation. As a result, the organization's work performance is improved, the workplace psychological atmosphere is more friendly and open, reducing stress in the organization. Additionally, it was found that found that "low frequency of interaction with the supervisor coupled with high leader-member exchange produced the highest levels of work tension" (Brouer and Harris, 2007). In other words, when leadership style is geared towards exchange, it will affect the stress in the work of employees. Transactional leadership style uses rewards/penalties to impact the psychological work and make personnel efforts at work (Hadadian and Zarei, 2016), however in the long term, they can cause pressure on employees. From the above arguments, we propose two hypotheses:

H1: Transformational leadership style has a negative impact on the occupational stress of workers in supply enterprises in Vietnam.

H2: Transactional leadership style has a positive effect on the occupational stress of workers in supply enterprises in Vietnam.

Intention to quit has a strong causal relationship between stress mediated by job satisfaction and job engagement (Elangovan, 2001). An employee's intention to leave is the intention to leave the current work environment to move to another work environment. Employees in an organization leave the organization for many reasons which are considered common and the most common is when employees find the leadership style or supervision is not good or suitable, the positions are not challenging, and compensation is not commensurate with the work undertaken (Chew, 2004). Firth et al. (2004) studied 173 business employees about their attachment to the current organization about their manager's support, job pressure, and their intention to leave. The results showed that the majority intends to stay affected by dissatisfaction with the work assigned and feeling stressed (Firth et al., 2004). A more cordial relationship between hotel employees and managers regarding their working environment has a positive effect on organizational commitment and a

negative effect on the intention to leave (Lee et al., 2012). The IT staff's intention to leave Turkey depends on job stress, satisfaction and organizational cohesion (Calisir et al., 2011). From the above arguments, we propose hypothesis 3:

H3: Occupational stress has a positive impact on the intention to quit employees in supply enterprises in Vietnam.

3. Methodology and data

3.1. Research methodology

From the generalization of the above theoretical basis, we propose a model to study the impact of leadership style on occupational stress and intention to leave employees in supply enterprises in Vietnam (Fig. 1). The concepts and scales used in the study are designed from previous studies and are specifically cited in Table 1.

3.2. Research data

From these concepts and scales, a questionnaire was built and surveyed 396 employees working at 30 enterprises operating in the field of supply such as express delivery, equipment transportation, retail businesses, supermarkets, convenience stores, and fast food, in areas considered the epicenter of Vietnam's COVID-19 epidemic such as Ho Chi Minh City, Da Nang, Bac Giang, Bac Ninh, and Hanoi during the period from May to July 2020. The results obtained 396 valid votes to use for the analysis of this study, this sample size meets the sampling conditions of Hair (2011) to ensure the research results are valid and trusted. After being cleaned, the data is processed on SPSS and AMOS software to estimate the model by linear structural equation (SEM).

EFA analysis results with principal axis factoring method with Promax rotation and breakpoint when extracting factors with an eigenvalue equal to 1 used for factor analysis with 16 important variables The results showed that the KMO coefficient reached 0.856 with the Sig value=0.000 and Eigenvalues reached 74,925 at the factor stop of 1,312 and 16 observed variables converged on 04 factors in accordance with the proposed theoretical research model. The results of testing the reliability of the concepts and research scales show that Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the factors all reach values greater than 0.7, so the scales used in the study are appropriate.

The results of factor analysis confirm that CFA for these scales has 98 degrees of freedom (df=98), the model is compatible with the research data set: Chi-square=218,452 (p=000); cmin/df=2.229; CFI=0.970; GFI=0.937; TLI=0.963; Pclose=0.163 (>0.05) and RMSEA=0.056. The normalized weights of the observed variables are all greater than 0.5 and the unnormalized weights of the variables are

statistically significant, so the convergence value of the scales can be confirmed. The correlation coefficients of the concepts are all less than one unit, so the concepts gain discriminant value. The

measurement model is suitable for the research data set, there is no correlation between the measurement errors, so unitarity is achieved (Fig. 2).

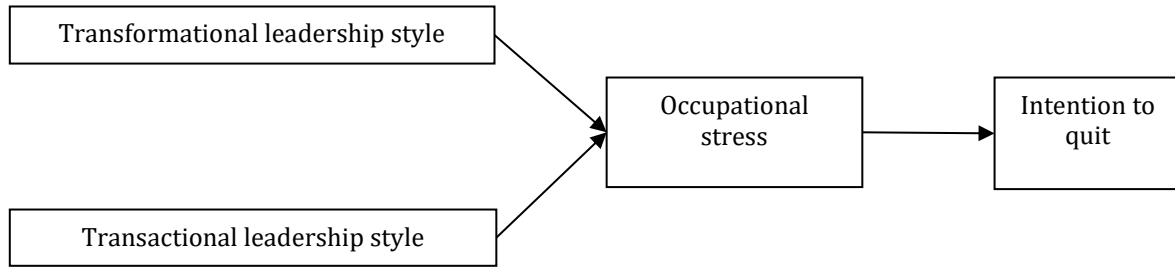


Fig. 1: Research model of the impact of leadership style on job stress and employee's intention to leave

Table 1: Summary of research scales

No.	Factor	Content	Author
1	Transformational leadership style	Leadership supports me by appreciating my contributions to the organization.	(Oterkiil and Ertesvåg, 2014)
2		Leadership does not promote a supportive atmosphere among the employees of the organization.	
3		Leaders arrange so that challenges can be constructively discussed among colleagues.	
4		Leadership engages employees in debates related to the organization's goals and vision	
5		Leadership ensures that individual employees are given clear instructions on their responsibilities for a particular project/task	
6	Transactional leadership style	Leaders make clear written plans for how projects can be carried out.	(Oterkiil and Ertesvåg, 2014)
7		Leadership ensures that our work is progressing.	
8		Leadership ensures that there are sufficient resources to carry out the planned tasks satisfactorily.	
9	Occupational stress	I feel like everything is out of my control at work	(Dobrevna-Martinoval et al., 2002)
10		I feel overwhelmed by my work	
11		I feel like giving tasks to others	
12		I feel like I can't get out of my work	
13		I feel disappointed about the job now my	
14	Intention to quit	I will be ready to leave my organization in the near future	(Price and Mueller, 1981; Ong et al., 2015)
15		I will likely leave my organization in the near future	
16		I plan to leave my organization in the near future	

Thus, the research data satisfies the conditions to perform a linear structural model test on the impact relationship of leadership style on job stress and the intention to quit of employees at Vietnamese supply enterprises in the context of COVID.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. The results of model testing by linear structural equation (SEM)

The results of testing the critical model with 126 degrees of freedom (df=126), the model achieved compatibility with the research data set with Chi-square= 257,341 (p=000); cmin/df=2.042;

CFI=0.971; GFI=0.935; TLI=0.965; Pclose=0.389 (>0.05); and RMSEA=0.051 (<0.05-0.8).

The research model on the impact of leadership style on job stress and the intention to quit of employees in Vietnamese supply enterprises in the context of COVID has a reflective estimate, of 31.9% The change in "Work stress" is explained by leadership style, the remaining 68.1% will be due to factors other than the model or random error (R2=0.319). In addition, the change of "employees' intention to quit in Vietnamese supply enterprises" explained by "work stress" is only 18.6%, the rest is due to other factors than the model and random error (R12=0.186). Table 2 shows theoretical model estimation results.

Table 2: Theoretical model estimation results

No.	Relationships between concepts	Normalized Estimation	Unnormalized estimate	Standard Deviation	Value (t)	Value (p)
R ² of the Job stress of employees in Vietnamese supply enterprises=0.319						
1	Job stress <--- Tranfom	-0.247	-0.149	0.030	-4.927	0.000
2	Job stress <--- Transac	0.492	0.434	0.044	9.777	0.000
R ¹² of Intention to leave employees in Vietnamese supply enterprises=0.186						
3	Intent <--- JobStress	0.370	0.503	0.074	6.754	0.000
4	Intent <--- Sex	0.296	0.368	0.113	3.248	0.001
5	Intent <--- Age	-0.382	-0.504	0.121	-4.162	0.000

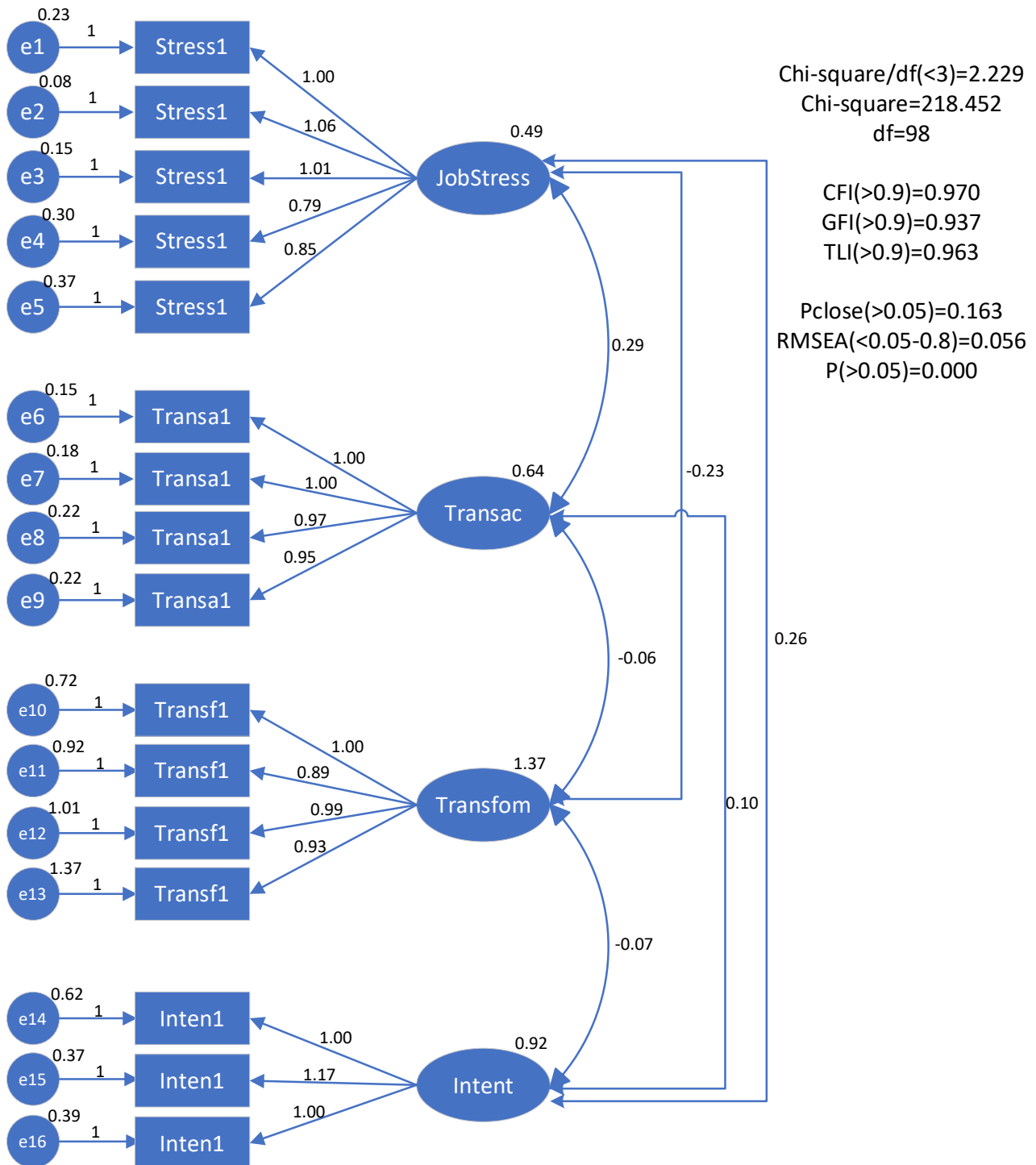


Fig. 2: Result of confirmatory factor analysis CFA

From the model estimation results, we show the impact relationship of leadership style on job stress and the intention to quit of employees in Vietnamese supply enterprises in the context of COVID by Fig. 3 shows Relationship between factors in the model.

4.2. Discuss the results

From the estimated results of the research model, we make the following comments:

- Firstly, the transformational leadership style has a negative impact on the work stress of workers in supply enterprises in Vietnam in the

context of the COVID epidemic. This hypothesis is accepted with a standardized Beta value (-0.247) and at the level of statistical significance above 99% (p=0.000). This result means that the more the leadership style in supply enterprises in Vietnam is more toward transformational style, the lower the level of work stress among employees. This result is consistent with the research results of Brouer and Harris (2007) when confirming that leaders with a high tendency to transform, regularly communicate with employees, and encourage employees will reduce work stress (standardized beta 0.36 and significance above 99%). However, the statistical results show that

396 employees at 30 enterprises in the sample do not perceive the leadership style at their enterprises as transformational (Mean=2.76

points). This partly explains the statistical results of employee stress are quite high (Mean=4.03 points).

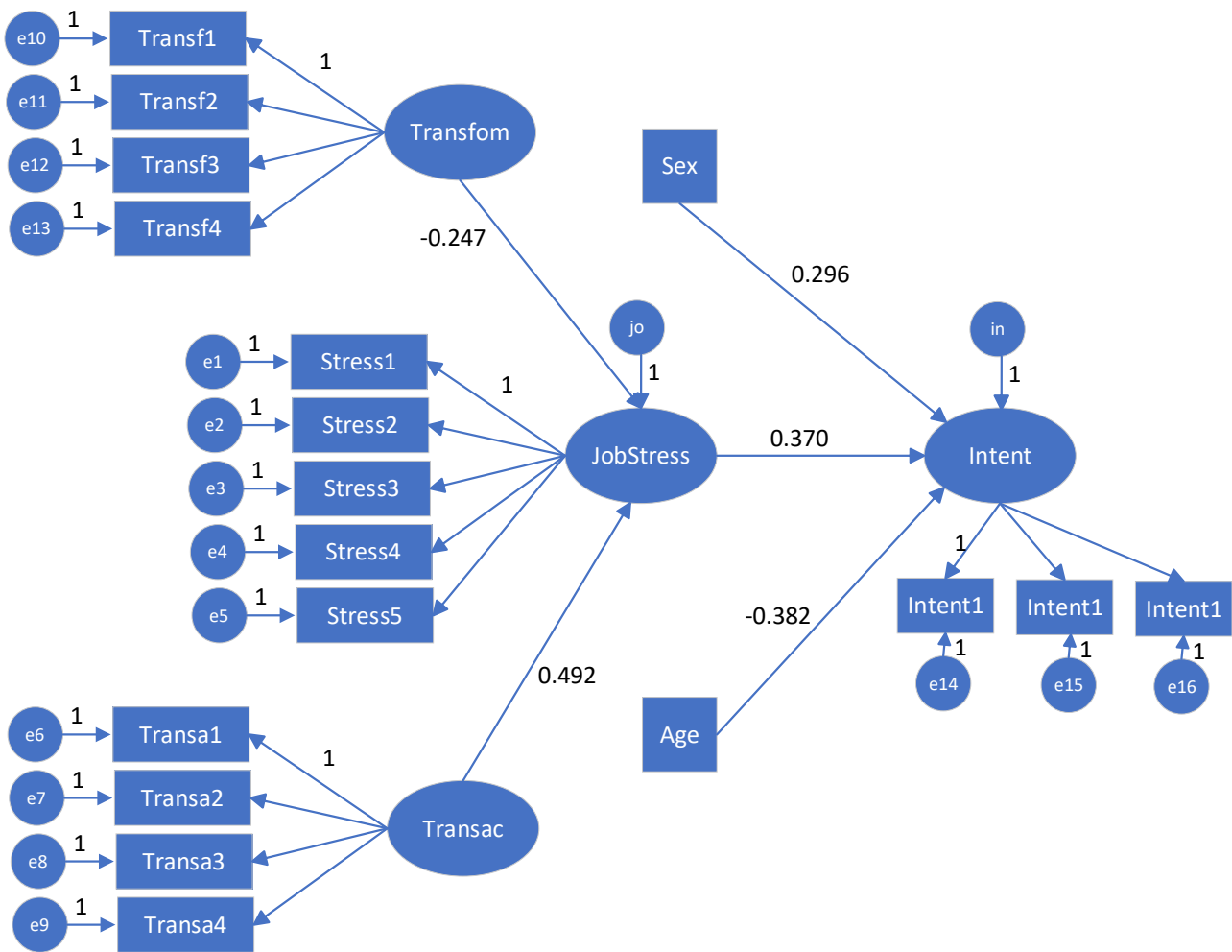


Fig. 3: Relationship between factors in the model

- Second, the transactional leadership style has a positive impact on the work stress of employees in supply enterprises in Vietnam. This hypothesis is accepted at the normalized Beta value of 0.492 and the statistical significance level is above 99% (p=0.000). It is understood that, if the enterprise adopts a transactional leadership style, it will lead to increased employees' work stress. This result is consistent with the research of Arokiasamy and Tat (2019) when it is confirmed that transactional leadership style will increase feelings of stress and affect emotional commitment to the organization. Indeed, the statistical analysis results show that the mean value of the transactional leadership style factor is 3.27 points, while this value for the transformational leadership style is only 2.76 points, thereby leading to the degree of stress of workers in supply enterprises in Vietnam is quite high (4.03 points).
- Third: Work stress has a positive impact on the intention to quit of employees in supply enterprises in Vietnam. This hypothesis is accepted with a standardized Beta value of 0.37 and a statistical significance level of over 99% (p=0.000). This result means that the higher the level of work

stress, the higher the intention to leave the employees in the supply enterprises in Vietnam. The results of this study are similar to those of Chen et al. (2011) who concluded that employees' work stress has a strong influence on their ability to change jobs ($\beta=0.33$, p-value<0.01). According to Chen et al. (2011), when the three factors of work stress including conflict, ambiguity, and overload increase beyond the employee's tolerance, work stress will increase, leading to the intention to leave will increase. However, the study by Chen et al. (2011) only explained 12% of the variation in job-hopping intentions of service workers in Taiwan, which is a relatively low result as acknowledged in the limited section of the authors; This is consistent with the study of Mulki et al. (2012) when it is confirmed that work stress has a significant positive effect on the intention to quit ($\beta=0.21$, t=2.86), but the level of explanation of model of job-hopping intention is still low with R^2 of only 0.12, and the results of this study explain 18.6%. In fact, the supply profession itself is a profession that is under pressure from many sides (suppliers, customers, intermediaries) to meet orders according to extremely strict standards in

terms of time, quality, timeliness, timeliness, no mistakes, now working in the context of an extremely dangerous epidemic, which has led to a higher level of stress (4.03 points). However, the statistic on “intention to quit among employees in supply enterprises in Vietnam” shows average results (3.2 points). This is explained by, (1) the level of job stress explains only a very small percentage of the change in “employee intention to quit in supply enterprises in Vietnam” (18.6% because $R^2=0.186$); (2) In the context of Vietnam's economy with a large workforce of freelance workers, unemployed university students join supply companies to earn income to maintain their living activities, it is difficult for them to get another better job. Therefore, even though this job has a lot of pressure, they still have to stick with the job, regardless of the difficulties and risks in doing job. This is even more evident when the results also show that the older the workers in the supply enterprises in Vietnam, the lower the intention to quit (standardized beta is (-0.382) and at the significant level of over 99% ($p=0.000$)), this result is also consistent with the study of Thao et al. (2021) on the level of commitment of legal counsel in Vietnam (the higher the age and professional age, the greater the intention to stick (Thao et al., 2021) because, with the elderly, the ability to find another job is more difficult in a society where the unemployment rate is quite high and the labor force is modest. In addition, female workers have a higher intention to quit than men (normalized beta (0.296) and significance above 99% ($p=0.001$)), this result is contrary to the study of Thao et al. (2021) on the level of attachment of legal counselors in Vietnam (women tend to be more engaged than men, which is understandable because the work at supply enterprises is quite stressful, often urgent in terms of time, requires good health, is ready to work regardless of the weather, while Vietnamese women still have to take care of their families so they often tend to choose stable jobs with a fixed working time to be able to take care of their family, even if their income is modest.

5. Conclusion

By surveying the opinions of 396 employees at 30 Vietnamese supply enterprises in the context of COVID, we estimated a linear structural model to test the relationship between leadership style and job stress and intention to quit of employees in Vietnamese supply enterprises, the research results have found:

- Transformational leadership style has the opposite effect on the work stress of employees dynamic with normalized Beta value (-0.247) and at the statistical significance level of over 99%.
- Transactional leadership style positively affects the work stress of employees with a standardized Beta

value of 0.492 and statistical significance above 99%.

- Work stress has a positive impact on the intention to quit of employees in supply enterprises in Vietnam with a standardized Beta value of 0.37 and a statistical significance level of over 99%.
- The higher the age of the employee, the lower the intention to quit.
- Women are more likely to quit than men in supply enterprises in Vietnam.

This result helps to provide a theoretical and practical basis for the supply enterprises in Vietnam in making their human resource management policies to reduce work stress among employees, thereby making increasing the level of commitment and commitment to work, helping to increase business performance in the context that time competition is the goal and principle of logistics and supply chain businesses, especially in the context of a long and complicated epidemic.

Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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