The dual processes of transformational leadership: The mediation effect of identification
轉換型領導的雙路徑影響歷程－認同的中介效果

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Abstract: Based on social identity theory in the context of transformational leadership as a sense-making process, this study examined how transformational leadership influences on work outcomes through followers' leader identification and social identification. The hypotheses under identification mechanisms were examined on a sample of 285 employees working under 31 team supervisions, the direct and indirect relationships between transformational leadership and, respectively, collective efficacy and affective commitment were tested. Results indicated that transformational leadership predicted affective commitment and collective efficacy, respectively. Affective commitment is partially accounted for by the impact of transformational leadership on followers' leader identification. Moreover, collective efficacy is partially accounted for by the impact of transformational leadership on followers' social identification.

Keywords: Transformational leadership, leader identification, social identification, affective commitment, collective efficacy.

摘要：基於社會認同理論，在轉換型領導下作為一種意識制定的歷程，本研究檢視了轉換型領導如何透過追隨者的領導認同和社會性認同來影響工作成果。樣本收集來自 31 個團隊 285 名員工，本研究驗證了認同機制下轉換型領導與集體效能和情感性承諾之間的直接與間接關係的假設。結果表示，轉換型領導分別預測情感性承諾和集體效能。情感性承諾的部分歸因於，轉換型領導對追隨者領導者認同的影響。此外，集體效能則部分歸因於轉換型

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領導對追隨者社會性認同的影響。

關鍵詞：轉換型領導、領導認同、社會性認同、情感性承諾、集體效能

1. Introduction

In the process of social influence in the organization, the leader is a key role responsible for how other individuals shall be treated, because it affects not only the employee's work performance, but also work goal achievement and organizational effectiveness (Durham, Knight, and Locke, 1997). There is growing evidence to a large extent of which transformational leadership (TFL) has the impact on employee motivation and work outcomes (Judge and Piccolo, 2004; Kovjanic *et al.*, 2012; Piccolo and Colquitt, 2006; To, Herman, and Ashkanasy, 2015). Consequently, it is overall one significant issue in organizational behavior research for the processes through which transformational leadership has the positive effect on followers' attitudes, behaviors, and performances (Bono and Judge, 2003). Transformational leadership transforms employees into a valuable asset for today's organizations, and also motivates them to perform beyond leader's expectations as defined by Yukl (1998) on the basis of its effects. According to his conclusion: "A variety of different influence processes may be involved in transformational leadership", two interesting questions about transformational leadership processes are raised: (1) what are the processes for transformational leaders to bring to bear their impacts on followers? and (2) how are the probable impacts of those distinct psychological processes?

Transformational leadership focuses on the process of changing employees' attitudes and behaviors from self-interest roles to common organizational goals (Li, Mitchell, and Boyle, 2016) and is suggested to be likely to lead to growth, independence, and empowerment of employees (Dvir *et al.*, 2002). Based on the connotation of independence and autonomy, employees with empowerment are self-motivated and they make full considerations in their coping and executing capabilities. Consistent with the concept of empowerment, collective efficacy is

used to explain that greater motivation in a collaboration can be encouraged by strong shared belief about a group or an organization in its conjoint capabilities and in the belief of achieving greater goals together (Bandura, 1997; Feltz and Lirgg, 1998). On the other hand, affective commitment means the emotional connection of individuals with dedication to their current organization (Meyer and Allen, 1991).

Kark, Shamir, and Chen (2003) indicated personal identification significantly mediates the relationships of transformational leadership with followers' dependence on the leader; while social identification significantly mediates the links of transformational leadership with followers' empowerment. The two mediation effects were used to indicate that personal identification with the leader recognizably is different in nature from social identification with the work unit. Zhu *et al.* (2012) investigated that personal identification with the leader has the mediating effects of transformational leadership on followers' innovativeness, affective organizational commitment, and turnover intention. Horstmeier *et al.* (2017) presented a comprehensive model of differential effects of transformational leadership on identification with the organization, the team, and the leader. It also demonstrated that leader identification has the mediation effect of transformational leadership with collective identifications (i.e. organizational or team identification). It illustrated that relational identification plays a significant role thereafter in forming collective identifications. This research attempts to explore the processes of transformational leadership influences on employees' work outcomes by using social identity theory (SIT) (Ashforth and Meal, 1989). According to SIT, one has series of identities open to him/her consisting of both personal and social identities. The former encompasses idiosyncratic characteristics with composition of the self-concept, and the latter comprises of salient group classifications. Therefore, social and leader identifications are argued to be intermediate roles which help demonstrate why transformational leadership can lead to two corresponding outcomes: collective efficacy and affective commitment.

Based on this, this study believes that identification caused by

transformational leadership which may be important for employees to increase the feeling of self-worth and internalize the favorable behaviors and attitudes to do more than they originally anticipated, in order to produce better work outcome. Therefore, this study uses the SIT perspective and attempts to integrate the two utility mechanisms of SIT, namely social identification mechanism (i.e., social identification mediates the linkage of transformational leadership on collective efficacy) and utility mechanism of leader identification (i.e., leader identification mediates the linkage transformational leadership on affective commitment). It will explain how transformational leadership is "how" and "why" to improve employee affective commitment and collective efficacy, and to make these two psychological processes clearer. And in the managerial practice of the organization, this study also provides a possible direction for managers how to maximize the effectiveness of the commitment and efficacy of employees.

2. Literature review and hypotheses development

2.1 Transformational leadership on collective efficacy and on affective commitment

Transformational leader assists followers progress and develop by encouraging them to perform beyond expectations, and achieves this by satisfying to each employee's needs and by combining their needs with the objectives of each employer and leader, and collective values and needs (Bass, 1985). Transformational leaders help their followers to achieve better for the goal of the organization. Rewards and praise are used to enlighten a stronger focal point on performing high outcomes (Rafferty and Griffin, 2004). Transformational leadership is inclined to be effective in defining interdependence and interpersonal activities (Avolio *et al.*, 2004). Various dimensions of leader behaviors are discussed in transformational leadership theory. For example, Bass (1985) contains inspirational motivation, idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Personal recognition was hereafter added to these dimensions (Rafferty and Griffin, 2004).

Four elements of Wang and Howell (2010) are enlightened with empowering and developing individual followers: (a) communicating high expectations (showing leader's expectations for followers); (b) follower development (enhancing followers' skills and abilities); (c) intellectual stimulation (encouraging followers to think outside of the box); (d) personal recognition (recognizing the performance of followers).

Collective efficacy is based on social cognition theory (Bandura, 1986). The core concept in social cognitive theory of which the scope is much wider and more all-around than social learning approach to self-efficacy. Collective efficacy is mentioned as a shared belief of group in its abilities with combing all involved to arrange and perform the action policy required to create specific levels of achievement (Bandura, 1997) and is based on a combined conception of self-efficacy from individual to the group level (Katz-Navon and Erez, 2005; Tyran and Gibson, 2008). Concerning the integrative and coordinative concepts of collective efficacy, which was defined as "a sense of collective competence shared among members when allocating, coordinating, and integrating their resources as a successful, concerted response to specific situational demands" by Zaccaro *et al.* (1995), their above definition was more explicit than Bandura. Gardner and Pierce (1998) has indicated that members in teams have strong perceived collective efficacy are more highly motivated, more resilient, and likely to be higher initiators in the face of difficulties. Agreement with Bandura's theory, Tasa, Taggar, and Seitjts (2007) points out that vast about collective efficacy switches on individual agent. A team member has to be adjustable to involve in teamwork behaviors and make attitudes or behaviors as part of his/her nature. Personal efficacy for carrying out in teams relies on assessment by self of his limitations and capability. Collective efficacy has the impact on each self-evaluation of the capability and the degree to which one engages in team behaviors.

A transformational leader usually initiates structure for followers to show appropriative of their behaviors, engendering higher levels of collective efficacy. His behavior can contribute to efficacy beliefs of employees through working

together in a collaborative situation. The impact of transformational leadership behavior of supervisors' perceptions and team outcomes is supported (Braun *et al.*, 2013). According to van Knippenberg and Hogg's (2003) SIT theory of leadership, employees become more noticeable in their self-concepts when they identify with their group, then leadership effectiveness is contingent on perceiving by employees as a member of the group. Employees who are more helpful and cooperative are more likely to become effective employees (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2004), and a transformational leader can bring up mutual trust, promote collaboration, and enlarge their collective efficacy (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2004). In a brief summary, the argument stated above leads to proposing the following:

Hypothesis 1. Transformational leadership will be positively related to collective efficacy.

Based on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), employees are likely to increase emotional attachment to the organization while reciprocating the agreeable dealings they receive from their leader. When the leader puts focus on individuals, good relationship will be raised. Employees might regard leader's helping and coaching behaviors as carrying out responsibilities distributed by the organization and then ascribe to the organization with supervisor's favorite treatment. Transformational leaders tend to affect individuals who emotionally connected to their organization (Barling, Slater, and Kelloway, 2000). Affective commitment refers to one's emotional connection to his/her current organization and is viewed as an essential identifier of dedication and devotion (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Basically, affectively committed employees, who seem to be able to identify with the leader, may create their contribution to a particular workplace, and also have a desire to achieve the organization's goal and stand enjoying with their organization. Committed employees with high emotional ties with their supervisor to the organization have more willingness to do their work, to get more satisfaction from their job and happy with their work (Van Scotter, 2000). Moreover, they are also more likely to receive positive feedback from

their leader and more likely to be aroused to remain within the organization. Such transformational leaders promote employees' faith and motivation to engage themselves with their needs and desires. Transformational leadership behaviors should stand in leaders to build inseparable emotional bond with their employees in order to produce higher level of affective commitment. That is, employees are able to be conscious of their leaders' actions to be authentic, expand skill and experience in their workplace, and display positive attitudes for their job. In agreement with this view, employees having good relationship with their transformational leader would be directly encouraged to increase higher affective commitment. According to the above argument, the current study hypothesizes:

Hypothesis 2. Transformational leadership will be positively related to affective commitment.

2.2 Social identification as a mediator

Based on Hogg and Terry's (2000) SIT theory, as people have the perception of possessions to their social groups, there will be pride and self-esteem as an important source. Individuals identifying with a group about its expectations as essentially motivating act themselves in the name of organizational unit and display group-oriented self-sacrificial or self-dedication behaviors (Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail, 1994). Individuals seek to catch sight of themselves positively and develop this motivation to involve social identities or group memberships (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). Social identification is considered as an employee's identity that derives from individual's bond with a social group (Kreiner, Hollensbe, and Sheep, 2006; Kreiner *et al.*, 2015). Social identity includes two compositions of (1) the feeling of possessions to a collective and (2) the valuable concept and emotional importance through group membership (Tajfel, 1978). Individuals identifying with a group incline to accredit to open characteristics to their group since the appraise nature of social identity, hence, optimistically assess collective ability to reach group tasks (Tajfel, 1978).

When transformational leaders are innovative, enterprising, change-oriented, and encouraging for their employees, this kind of leader would be anticipated to build excellent identification with group-members, as a result would be received extra effort from them (Kark, Shamir, and Chen, 2003). Shamir, House, and Arthur (1993) indicated that one is likely to treat one's individual strengths as an appearance of a collective identity when transformational leaders emphasize the shared significant beliefs and values. Leaders communicating a shared vision to support followers explain how their own roles or tasks promote to reaching the shared group goal, hence group identification is evoked (Mumford and Strange, 2002). Due to transformational leaders being proactive and encouraging, they would be anticipated to produce greater social identification with members of other work unit (Hogg, 2001). Conger and Kanungo (1988) indicated that employees are likely to build a cohesive and trustful group context and offer each other with support and emotional assistance if the group membership is internalized into their self-concept, which in turn the adverse consequent influence of negative emotional emerging on collective efficacy will be reduced. According to the above argument, it is reasonable to propose the following:

Hypothesis 3. Social identification will mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and collective efficacy.

2.3 Leader identification as a mediator

Personal identification is relying on a subordinate's conviction about a person who becomes self-determination or self-referential and is shown as one or both of the following two modes developed by Pratt (1998): (a) recalling employees' own opinions that they share the same belief; (b) strengthening to employees' wishes with shifting their self-concept for their values and faith like a leader. Accordingly, leader identification can be seen as a central mechanism to affect subordinates (Conger and Kanungo, 1988). As the same viewpoint, role modeling is a main process by which a charismatic leader influences individuals (Shamir, House, and Arthur, 1993) and is also a process by which subordinates create their faith, feelings, and character relevance to their leader.

The argument about follower's leader identification being a central affecting mechanism, there are several theories to support. First, according to self-concept leadership theory (Duan, Xu, and Wu, 2017; Shamir *et al.*, 1993), self-concept is articulated as a knowledge which one owns about himself (Wang and Zhu, 2011). From the viewpoint of this theory, a transformational leader can motivate employees to define themselves by demonstrating transformational leadership character which recognizes the abilities of employees and disparity of their skills. Then employees are more tend to create close relationships with his/her supervisor, which means leaders and members are mutually trusting, supportive, and satisfied each other. The influence of a leader's ability on various opinions of subordinates' self-concept will probably be one utility mechanism through which transformational leadership creates its influence on employees' emotional relationships with their leaders and makes each other the same significance and conviction (Kark and Shamir, 2002). Therefore, a critical issue for the organization is to mark the importance of the relationship between leaders and employee's psychological needs (Kovjanic, Schuh, and Jonas, 2013). Second, according to attachment theory (Bowlby, 1980), employees can recognize their full potential abilities when they feel more confident. One creating close emotional connection with his/her leader is tend to assess recognition from the supervisor, especially for his/her contributions and work results (Wang and Howell, 2012). Third, associated with social exchange theory, followers are likely to have a high feeling about the current organization when employees are awarded by their supervisor with a high emotional attachment (Emerson, 1976). In fact, an affectively committed employee is having a strong feeling of belonging and identification. Particularly, it means employees pride themselves being part of that organization. From the viewpoint of supervisors as being agents of the organization, employees are expected to have a close emotional linkage with the leader and also toward the entire organization, which in turn, leaders may build a strong value about particular employees.

Transformational leaders may have close relationship with every individual, which may in turn make a positive leader identification (Graen and Uhl-Bien,

1995; Kark and Shamir, 2002). Consistent with this concept, an individual who is highly characterized with his/her leader may have affective commitment's higher degree. Zhu *et al.* (2012) argued that identification may improve corporate support and commitment. When supervisors are frequently regarded as organizational representatives rather than independent agents, employees who gain high on leader identification might tend to extend their positive feelings, spill their emotional bond with their direct supervisor, and connect with favorable treatment by the supervisor to the organization (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2010). Employees' perception of a relationship with a transformational leader is generalized to fulfillment of socioemotional needs and to increase employees' leader identification. The more identification with the leader, the higher levels of affective commitment employees run out. Related to this, transformational leadership might be expected to influence followers' affective commitment by growing employees' leader identification (James, Mulaik, and Brett, 2006). Therefore, the hypothesis is proposed as follows:

Hypothesis 4: Leader identification will mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and affective commitment.

Based on the above discussion, the conceptual framework of this study is organized as shown in Figure 1.

3. Methods

3.1 Sample and procedures

Purposive sampling was used to collect data from full-time employees in a life insurance group of one industry association. The reason for choosing a life insurance group as the research object was that an insurance company sells all types of life insurance policies and aims to value employees not only as business partners but also as an important asset. The concept of sincerity offers a clear guideline to equip group leaders with employee expectations and with the relationships between employees at the same time. A sample of 300 questionnaires were distributed to 32 teams, with 8-10 questionnaires to each
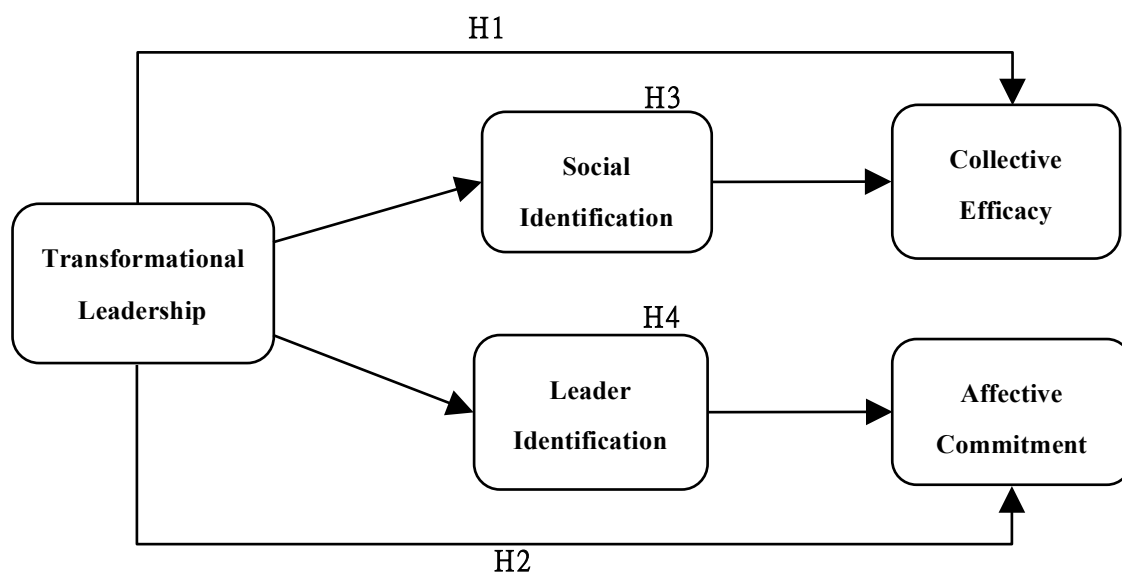
Figure 1
Research framework

team. Two waves of data were collected to reduce potential common method variance (CMV) (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, and Podsakoff, 2012). The employee form of Wave 1 survey (T1) contained the predictor variable (i.e., perceived supervisor transformational leadership), the first stage mediator (i.e., their social identification) and control variables (i.e., their demographics). Two weeks later, the employee form of Wave 2 survey (T2) contained the second stage mediator (i.e., their perceived leader identification) and the outcomes (collective efficacy and individual affective commitment).

To address the potential common method bias, a two-stage time-lag design was adopted to collect data. All participants were fully informed about the voluntary nature of participation and the procedures involved. In each period, a cover letter explained the purpose of the study and let participants know to return the completed questionnaires within three days. Meanwhile, participants were assured of their anonymity in completing the questionnaires and the

confidentiality of their responses. All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale. In the first wave, completed responses from 285 employees of the 31 teams were received, representing response rates of 95%. Approximately 14 days later, the second wave surveys were delivered to the same 285 employees from the same teams. Finally, a number of 248 employees (i.e., a response rate of 87.02%) returned the completed responses.

Participants were mainly female (66.5%), 87.1% married, average age 35.74 years old (SD = 13.46 years), and current work tenure 10.79 years (SD = 6.34 years); while total organizational tenure in this company was 13.95 years (SD = 8.43 years).

3.2 Measurement

Transformational leadership. Focal employees rated for behaviors of their supervisors. A scale for transformational leadership by Wang and Howell (2010), consisting of 18 items with dimensions of individual-focus, was used to measure transformational leadership. A composite score of these 18 items was used to measure transformational leadership. After examining the items loaded on each factor, the following dimensions of transformational leadership were identified: (1) communicating high expectations (5 items). A sample item is: "shows confidence in my ability to meet performance expectations"; (2) follower development (5 items). A sample item is: "provides me with developmental experiences"; (3) intellectual stimulation (4 items). A sample item is: "challenges me to think about old problems in new ways"; (4) personal recognition (4 items). A sample item is: "gives me positive feedback when I perform well". These dimensions are distinct and fall under a second-order transformational leadership construct, $\chi^2[2] = 2.502$, CFI = 0.987, TLI = 0.989, IFI = 0.935, RMR = .002 and (RMSEA = .000. Therefore, overall transformational leadership was used as a latent factor (α = .905).

Social identification. Direct reports with four-item scale developed by Shamir *et al.* (1998) were delivered to the focal employees to assess social identification. A sample item is "I feel loyal toward members of the company".

Ratings for these items were based on 5-point Likert-scales. The overall scale result showed reliability ($\alpha = .787$).

Leader identification. Follower's belief about the leader turns into self-referential or self-defining. A 7-item scale by Shamir *et al.* (1998) was adapted to measure leader identification. An example item is "I have complete faith in him (i.e., the leader)" and "He is a model for me to follow." The overall scale result showed reliability ($\alpha = .813$).

Collective efficacy. A six-item scale adapted by Salanova *et al.* (2003) was adopted to measure collective efficacy. An example item is "my group is effective in getting things done''. The overall scale result showed reliability ($\alpha = .825$).

Affective commitment. A six-item scale by Meyer, Allen, and Smith (1993) was revised to measure affective commitment. An example item is ''I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization''. The overall scale result showed reliability ($\alpha = .866$).

Control variables. Previous leadership research has identified that age, gender, and tenure may be related to employees' attitudes and work-related outcomes (Riordan, Griffith, and Weatherly, 2003). The specific effects of leadership on performance investigated have suggested that tenure with the organization may influence performance (Schaubroeck, Lam, and Cha, 2007). Gender, which has been found to have impact on affective commitment (Becker, 2005) was included in this study, due to the results that women's empathy is higher than men's and women are easier to help people (Davis, 1983; Lovell *et al.*, 1999). Age differences of individuals are with different positions on themselves, others and work, and young workers pay more attention to economic exchange and fair treatment (Wagner and Rush, 2000). Consequently, current tenure as well as tenure with organization, gender, and age are chosen within the analyses.

3.3 Data analysis procedures

The research design and analyses employed in this study are as follows:

First, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), using statistical procedures by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), was conducted to evaluate the adequacy of the measure model. Second, a discriminant validity of the research constructs, based on Fornell and Larcker's (1981), was tested. Third, the hypothesized mediation effects based on Baron and Kenny's (1986) three conditions to infer mediation were tested. Finally, bootstrap analysis, based on Monte Carlo Method for Assessing Mediation (MCMM) (MacKinnon, Lockwood, and Williams, 2004), was used to check the internal confidence of these paths to estimate the 95% confidence interval (CI) of the mediation effects.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive analysis

Table 1 presented the mean, standard deviation and zero-order correlation values for the constructs. The Pearson correlation analysis results showed that all constructs used in the study are interrelated.

4.2 Measure model validity

To confirm the model validity and discriminant validity, this study adopted confirmatory factor analysis to confirm the model fit of research constructs. Transformational leadership entailed a two-order factor with four subdimensions of 18 items ($\chi^2[2]$ =2.502, $p < .05$; RMR =.002, GFI = .997, IFI = .935, RMSEA = .000). Social identification comprised a one-order factor with four indicators ($\chi^2[2]$= 6.406, $p < .05$; RMR = .026, GFI = .939, IFI = .915, RMSEA = .10); while leader identification entailed a one-order factor with seven items ($\chi^2[14]$= 17.066, $p < .05$; RMR = .024, GFI = .989, IFI = .934, RMSEA = .064). Additionally, collective efficacy was found to be a one-order factor with six indicators ($\chi^2[9]$= 12.919, $p < .05$; RMR = .015, GFI = .983, IFI = .945, RMSEA = .042); while affective commitment was also found to be a one-order factor with six items ($\chi^2[9]$ = 8.351, $p < .05$; RMR = .034, GFI = .983, IFI = .954, RMSEA = .042). These results meet Fornell and Larcker's (1981)

Table 1

Means, standard deviations, and correlations

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Gender	---	---	1								
2. Current Tenure	10.786	6.342	.044	1							
3. Age	35.735	13.460	.045	.742**	1						
4. Org. Tenure	13.948	8.431	.026	.841**	.884**	1					
5. TFL	3.509	.670	-.042	-.014	.002	.035	1				
6. SI	3.815	.522	-.063	.031	-.051	-.043	.610**	1			
7. LI	4.135	.493	-.045	.061	-.125*	-.093	.594**	.584**	1		
8. CE	3.841	.548	-.031	-.102	-.043	-.006	.657**	.534**	.437**	1	
9. AC	3.653	.833	.012	.122	-.093	-.041	.688**	.453**	.696**	.517**	1

Note. * *p*<0.05, ** *p*<0.01

TFL: Transformational Leadership; SI: Social Identification; LI: Leader Identification; CE: Collective Efficacy; AC: Affective Commitment

requirements and reveal the adequate convergent validity of the study.

Because several of the constructs in the study were related conceptually, this study performed a series of CFAs before testing hypotheses to verify the constructs' discriminant validity of the measures: transformational leadership, social identification, identification with leader, collective efficacy, and affective commitment. The first group in the tests focused on the four subdimensions of transformational leadership, which were derived from employees' ratings. A CFA of this five-factor base model yielded a good fit to the data (χ^2[314] = 757.998, CFI = .886, IFI = .890, RMSEA=0.071, SMR = .043). Considering their conceptual overlap, this study compared three alternative models with the baseline five-factor model: model 1 was a four-factor model with social and

leader identification to form a single factor; model 2 was a three-factor model with collective efficacy and affective commitment to form a single factor; and model 3 was a one-factor model combining all five measures to form a single factor. In addition, the statistically significant factor loadings of each item were observed to indicate convergent validity. Then, this five-factor model was compared with three alternative models to demonstrate good discriminant validity among the measures. As shown in the Table 2, all these alternative models have a significantly poorer fit than the baseline model, as can be seen from the significant chi-square difference tests and model fit indexes. These results in tandem provided clear evidence of the distinctiveness of the main variables in the study.

4.3 Assessing common source bias

For examining the existence of common source bias (Chen and Lin, 2019), this study adopted the suggestion of Podsakoff and Organ (1986) and used Harman's one-factor test for CMV. As a diagnostic technique, Harman one-factor test requires loading all the measures in this study into an exploratory factor analysis, with the assumption that the presence of CMV is demonstrated by the emergence of either a single factor or a general factor accounting for the majority of covariance between the measure (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). As expected, the first factor accounted for 23.744% of variance and the variance of the five factors was 69.535%. In addition, in this study, the analysis of control variables is needed. Harman's one-factor test was run again to check whether the items adding control variables loaded on a general single factor or not. Based on the initial eigen values, nine factors were extracted. The first factor explained variation was 17.573%, and the cumulative explained variance was 65.187%. The Harman's test results revealed that same source bias might not a serious problem in this study.

4.4 Hypotheses testing

This study adopted hierarchical regression models to examine the

Table 2

Comparison of measurement models

TFL, Social identification, Leader identification, Collective efficacy and Affective commitment

Model	Factors	χ^2	df	$\Delta\chi^2$	RMR	RMSEA	GFI	CFI	IFI
Null model	All the indicators are independent	810.324	324		---	---	---	---	---
Baseline model	Five factors	757.998	314		.043	.071	.905	.886	.890
Model 1	Four factors: Social and Leader identification were combined into one factor	820.419	324	62.421	.108	.104	.715	.683	.818
Model 2	Three factors: collective efficacy and affective commitment were combined into one factor	904.284	324	83.865	.133	.117	.645	.619	.725
Model 3	One factor: All five factors were combined into one factor	1062.266	324	157.982	.142	.130	.597	.554	.636

hypothesized relationships. Table 3 presents the results of analyses. According to Model 3, it showed that transformational leadership significantly predicts collective efficacy ($\beta = .597$, $p < .001$), and therefore, H1 is supported. Model 1 showed that transformational leadership significantly predicts social identification ($\beta = .616$, $p < .001$). H3 stated that social identification mediates for its main effect of transformational leadership on collective efficacy. Model 5 showed that, when social identification was included as mediator, the direct impact of transformational leadership on collective efficacy reduced from 0.597 to 0.453 ($p < .001$), social identification has a significant positive effect on collective efficacy ($\beta = .234$, $p < .001$), which satisfies the requirement of the Baron and Kenny's (1986) analysis principle, thereby supporting H3 (partial mediation).

Model 6 showed that transformational leadership has a highly significant positive effect on affective commitment ($\beta = .641$, $p < .001$), and hence, H2 is supported. Model 2 revealed that transformational leadership has positive effect on leader identification ($\beta = .587$, $p < .001$). The hypothesis of H4 predicted that leader identification mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and affective commitment. Model 8 showed that, when leader identification is included as mediator, the direct impact of transformational leadership on affective commitment reduces from 0.641 to 0.369 ($p < .001$), leader identification has a significant positive effect on affective commitment ($\beta = .463$, $p < .001$), which also satisfies the requirement of the Baron and Kenny's (1986) analysis principle, thereby supporting H4 (partial mediation).

Table 4 showed the results of bootstrapping method analysis in which 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals (CI) were estimated using 5,000 bootstrapped samples. The indirect effect of social identification on the relationship between transformational leadership and collective efficacy was equal to .1468, showing that the 95% CI [.0531; .2544] by Mackinnon, Lockwood, and Williams's (2004) MCMM did not include zero. Accordingly, Hypothesis 3 was supported. The indirect effect of leader identification on the relationship between transformational leadership and affective commitment was equal to .3259,

Table 3
Hierarchical regression analysis

	Social Ident.	Leader Ident.	Collective Efficacy			Affective Commitment		
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8
Gender	-.033	-.074	-.074	-.055	-.067	-.041	.013	-.006
Current Tenure	-.001	-.081	-.018	-.035	-.018	-.006	.035	.032
Age	-.017	-.123	-.117	-.125	-.113	-.207	-.136	-.150
Org. Tenure	-.086	.051	.087	.183	.108	.087	.096	.063
TFL	.616***	.587***	.597***		.453***	.641***		.369***
Social Ident.				.512***	.234***			
Leader Ident.							.686***	.463***
F	24.668***	24.257***	25.177***	16.623***	24.755***	29.680***	35.815***	40.403***
R^2	.380	.377	.385	.293	.419	.425	.471	.559

Note. * $p<0.05$, ***$p<0.001$. TFL: Transformational Leadership

showing that the 95% CI [.2299; .4324] did not include zero. These results indicated that leader identification has mediating effect of transformational leadership on affective commitment, but social identification has no mediating effect of transformational leadership on collective efficacy. According to bootstrapping method, it was found that leader identification mediates the effect of transformational leadership on affective commitment. Based on these findings, H4 is further supported.

Finally, the Sobel test results showed that social identification has a mediating effect on the relationship between transformational leadership and collective efficacy ($z = 3.43$, $p < .000$). Similarly, the Sobel test results also

showed that leader identification has mediating effect on the relationship between transformational leadership and affective commitment ($z = 7.03$, $p < .000$). Both these results satisfy the requirement and standard that z value should be above 1.96 (MacKinnon *et al.*, 2002; Preacher and Hayes, 2004), showing that social identification has mediating effect on the relationship between transformational leadership and collective efficacy, and leader identification has mediating effect on the relationship between transformational leadership and affective commitment.

5. Discussion

The objective of the study was to understand the motivational process that shapes collective efficacy and the relational process that leads to affective commitment with integrating transformational leadership, leader identification, and social identification. In summarizing the main findings, I discovered that transformational leadership is positively related to collective efficacy and affective commitment, respectively. Social identification has the partial mediating effect in the relationship between transformational leadership on collective efficacy; whereas leader identification plays mediator between transformational leadership on affective commitment. The implications of these findings to the existing research of transformational leadership on affective commitment and on collective efficacy are described below.

5.1 Theoretical implication

The aim of this research was to examine the mediator of follower's social and leader identification on the associations with transformational leader behaviors, respectively, on followers' collective efficacy and on affective commitment. The results extend several remarkable findings. First, transformational leadership is positively related to affective commitment and social identification. Thus, result stated that employees who are managed by transformational leaders contributed more encouraged, satisfied, strengthened, and committed to their organizations (Bono and Judge, 2003; Walumbwa *et al.*,

Table 4

Mediation of the effect of transformational leadership on follower outcomes through social and leader identification

	Estimate	S.E.	t	p	Lower 5%	Upper 5%	Significant or not	Hypothesis Supported or not
Through social identification								
First stage TFL→SI	.7573	.0627	12.0768	.0000	.6338	.8808	yes	
Second stage SI→CE	.1938	.0541	3.5861	.0004	.0874	.3003	yes	
Effect								
Direct effect	.5962	.0671	8.8857	.0000	.4640	.7283	yes	
Indirect effect Mediator of SI	.1468	.0512	---	---	.0531	.2544	yes	H3 supported
Total effect	.7430	.0544	13.6501	.0000	.6357	.8502	yes	H1 supported
Through leader identification								
First stage TFL→LI	.7942	.0685	11.5911	.0000	.6592	.9291	yes	
Second stage LI→AC	.4104	.0464	8.8379	.0000	.3189	.5018	yes	
Effect								
Direct effect	.5255	.0620	8.4689	.0000	.4032	.6477	yes	
Indirect effect Mediator of LI	.3259	.0519	---	---	.2299	.4324	yes	H4 supported
Total effect	.8514	.0572	14.8875	.0000	.7387	.9640	yes	H2 supported

Note. TFL: Transformational Leadership; SI: Social Identification;

LI: Leader Identification; CE: Collective Efficacy; AC: Affective Commitment

2004). Transformational leadership was examined to be positively related to leader identification, but also significant to social identification, it is remarkable that transformational leadership is strongly involved in both leader identification and social identification. Effective leaders are considered to behave by empowering followers' identification through working team (social identification), and enhancing stronger identification with leader (leader identification). Consistent with previous findings (e.g., Hobman *et al.*, 2011; Horstmeier *et al.*, 2017; Kark *et al.*, 2003; Walumbwa and Hartnell, 2011; Zhu *et al.*, 2012), transformational leadership was found significantly related to employees' social and leader identification based on the information explained by the nature of the sample of service participators in insurance industry. In comparison, Rafferty and Griffin (2004; 2006) were conducted in public-sector companies and Hobman *et al.* (2011) was conducted in a healthcare organization. The mean value of supportive leadership in Rafferty and Griffin (2004; 2006) was 2.90 and 3.27, respectively. The mean in Hobman *et al.* (2011) study was 3.84, whereas in my study the mean was 3.51. Thus, the reason for the mean differences may be that the impact of supportive leadership varies according to the nature of the industry/organization due to a different value placed on that style of leadership for work completing.

Second, the results assert that leader identification might strengthen employees' affective commitment. It might be noted that when employees are awarded by their supervisor with a high emotional attachment, employees are likely to have a high feeling about their organization (Emerson, 1976). The results support the hypotheses in relation to the mediating role of leader identification. When employees identify with their leader and where the relational aspects of leadership are more important, the individualized, interpersonal aspects of leadership may become more powerful. The results also support the hypotheses in relation to the mediating role of social identification on the transformational leadership—employee collective efficacy relationship. It is recommending that individual social identification is adequate to improve collective efficacy in the team case. It is perhaps to explain that transformational

leadership behavior can individually contribute to efficacy beliefs through working together in a collaborative workplace. Certainly, as followers define themselves more in social terms, then the more group-related, interpersonal aspects of leadership become influential (Hogg, 2001; van Knippenberg and Hogg, 2003). However, Kark *et al.* (2003) demonstrated that "leaders can influence members' identification with the group, their impact on this identification is more limited than their impact on followers' personal identification." Their finding that transformational leadership was more strongly related to leader identification compared to group identification as correlations showed that personal identification and social identification were significantly associated with transformational leadership, rs = .73 and .43, whereas my corresponding correlation, rs = .594 and .610. The results of this study seem to be consistent with Tyler and Blader's (2003) group-engagement model, which posits that the extent to which group members strongly identify with their working group may influence the attitudes and behaviors of group member, but somehow little included in some Kark *et al.*'s (2003) above broad conceptions. My findings suggest that leaders may have a stronger influence on social identification compared to leader identification.

Third, this study contributes to identification research. It attaches to recent research (Horstmeier *et al.*, 2017; Walumbwa and Hartnell, 2011; Zhu *et al.*, 2012) on leader identification by demonstrating that this identification could have direct effect on followers' affective commitment. To have a clear understanding of leader identification, it is important for this construct to be treated as it integrated into leadership behavior. As an example of this study, the mediator of leader identification is focused on the effect of transformational leadership on the employees' affective commitment, I would have reported a significant consistent mediation effect on the transformational leadership— followers' affective commitment relationship. I would also have given an account that there exists a significant consistent mediation effect of social identification on the relationship between transformational leadership between followers' collective efficacy. Although transformational leaders are highly

supposed to affect followers by carrying out their senses of identification, it is not surprising that social identification are influenced by several other factors of the constitution of the group and its cohesion. This finding puts forward for consideration that transformational leaders are probably as socialized leaders all the time, their influence hence relies on the motivational process of social identification rather than on relational process of social identification.

Moreover, this study contributes to the leadership theory literature by investigating and confirming leader identification as the mediating mechanism through which transformational leadership ultimately transforms employee affective commitment, and by examining social identification as the mediating mechanism through which transformational leadership ultimately improves employee collective efficacy. Drawing on Kark and Shamir's (2002) self-concept theory, this study demonstrates the transformational leadership—work outcomes relationships and recommends that transformational leadership can play a role in facilitating collective efficacy and affective commitment. The advancement of self-concept leadership theory was shown by leadership correlated with dissimilar self-identities in subordinates (e.g. leader identification and social identification). This study also indicates that transformational leaders may have the impact of employees' attitude and behavior by encouraging social and leader identification among followers. Social identification significantly mediated the effect of transformational leadership on followers' collective efficacy, it indicates that transformational leaders may indirectly enhance employees' collective efficacy by fostering their social identification. Strong identification with a social group encourages employees to invest their resources and effort to help their working group fulfill its tasks successfully (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Porck *et al.*, 2019). Consequently, it is tremendously influential for transformational leaders to bring about stronger identification with the work group among employees to lead to collective efficacy. Thus, the finding is in consensus with past research pointing to how transformational leadership may influence followers' collective efficacy (Chen, Zhou, and Klyver, 2019; Horstmeier *et al.*, 2017; Walumbwa and Hartnell, 2011). Leader identification

significantly mediates the effect of transformational leadership on followers' affective commitment, it indicates that transformational leaders may indirectly heighten employees' affective commitment by fostering their leader identification. Consequently, it is remarkably critical for transformational leaders to create personal identification among employees to lead to affective commitment from followers. Thus, the finding is congruent with past research pointing of how transformational leadership may influence followers' affective commitment (Avolio, Walumbwa, and Weber; 2009; Horstmeier *et al.*, 2017; Walumbwa and Hartnell, 2011; Zhu *et al.*, 2012).

Finally, based on the self-concept of Kark *et al.* (2003) as having three aspects of a personal self, a relational self, and a collective self, this study viewed two aspects of identification, that is, leader identification and social identification. The former is in view of employee attributes and preferences, and of close relations with the particular other party like a leader; while the latter in view of group affiliations and identifications. Adopting this standpoint to the findings, one could consider that transformational leadership may instruct thoroughly personal identification with the leader but also prime social identification with the work group. The different consequences are engendered by two faces of transformational leadership. The findings of the current study can also be interpreted that priming leader identification results in affective commitment is supported, whereas priming social identification results in collective efficacy.

5.2 Practical implication

This study also provides interesting implications for practice. The first of which is that effective transformational leadership needs to connect with and build on the self-structure. That is, managers must be aware of the employee's identity and should adapt to the self-concepts of his/her employee on the effects they want to achieve. A transformational leader should make the emotional connection of employees with dedication to their organization and cultivate employees' societal identity. Managers are better off when building

"psychological bridges" connecting the individual's identification with their leader and social identification (Sluss and Ashforth, 2008). Transformational leader behaviors are tailored to employees' needs as they require their leader to give emotional support, recognition and praise, and to provide challenges to them. Leadership training programs may be better equipped for revealing a key role in enhancing employees' affective commitment and collective efficacy. This study was accomplished within the insurance sector, so the findings may bear unquestionably relevance to leaders who work in a life insurance environment. For example, two big topics were organized to discuss the leadership and human capital challenges facing the insurance industry: (1) the social environment calls for new leadership models; (2) industry transformation makes greater demands of leadership (IGLN, 2018). There may be greater crucial for leaders in the insurance setting to model expected behaviors to concern others, and to be attentive and satisfactory of the welfare and well-being of others.

Second, organizations should encourage greater leader and social identification, rather than focusing on inhibiting workplace emotions. Sense-giving is essential to identification processes (Ashforth, Harrison, and Corley, 2008), and organizational communication is a key contributor to sense-giving (Pratt, 2000). Leaders can communicate work group information that enhances the organizational reputation, thereby making social identification a contributor to the member's collective efficacy. Indeed, social identification is an effective way to bring down employee's uncertainty in workplace, because belonging to a working group delivers an "identity prototype" (George and Chattopadhyay, 2005; Porck *et al.*, 2019). It helps employee estimate how colleagues may react and behave, thereby setting what she/he should think, feel, and do (Chattopadhyay, George, and Lawrence, 2004; George and Chattopadhyay, 2005). Organizations can also make sense-giving through policies such as compensation systems which encourage employees to see themselves as group members to display identification. Overall, my findings suggest the value of encouraging identifications, particularly those tied to leader and working group in workplace, as well as helps understanding the dual

processes (Liou, 2018) of transformational leadership.

5.3 Research limitations and future research

Some limitations in this study will need to be addressed in future research. First, the participants come from the same organization so that all other factors affecting the research results were excluded. Thus, the research conclusions must be cautiously generalized. It will be interesting to evaluate the linkage of transformational leadership on workplace performance in larger samples, and across different industries. Second, although based on theories to give the reasons for both effects of social identification on collective efficacy, and leader identification on affective commitment, these five variables including transformational leadership measured in the two waves from Time 1 to Time 2, but it still exists hidden possibilities which hinder to make conclusions about causality. Furthermore, the specific insurance context to which the research sampling grant permission could also limit the generalization of the research conclusions. From the perspective of insurance culture, it is possibly constrained by insurance procedures limited to convey the full range of transformational behaviors and not likely very conducive to complete transformational leadership picture. Third, the research may not deny potential options that collective efficacy (or affective commitment) may synthesize in the meantime or even before social identification (or leader identification). Last, long-term designs had better be used to test the sequence of variables. transformational leadership processes from a dual level prospect or multilevel will be suggested to investigate, that is, at both level of individual and team respectively.

In summary, the current study merges transformational leadership, self-concept, and social identity theories to explore an identity-based analysis of the effects of transformational leader behaviors on follower outcomes. From dual processes — the motivational process shaping collective efficacy and the relational process leading to affective commitment, transformational leadership is considered as a sense-making process. At least in the context of the organization conducted in this study, it has shown that leader and social

identification processes are affected by transformational leader behaviors, and that social identification is a more common utility/explanatory mechanism. The relevant results could help leaders to guide and make decisions about how and why they will apply transformational leadership depends on their situation and the underlying psychological processes of employees.

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