



# **Managing high potential employees: the impact of transformational leadership on behavioural outcomes and the moderation effect of role stress**

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## Abstract

Previous research on transformational leadership has mainly focused on work outcomes such as job satisfaction, commitment and performance as well as emphasizing the advantages of transformational leadership over transactional leadership. Relatively few studies have systematically examined the impact of transformational leadership on behavioural outcomes of high potential employees. By using a questionnaire of 146 trainees from the financial sector, the effects of transformational leadership on personal growth initiative, turnover intention and organizational citizenship behaviour have been examined. Furthermore, the moderating effects of role ambiguity and role conflict have been taken into account. Results showed significant support for the direct effects of transformational leadership on personal growth initiative, turnover intention and organizational citizenship behaviour. In addition, significant results have been found for the moderating effect of role ambiguity on the relationship between transformational leadership and personal growth initiative as well as the moderating effect of role conflict on the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational citizenship behaviour. Limitations, suggestions for future research, and theoretical and practical implications of these findings are discussed.

**Keywords:** *Transformational leadership, Personal growth initiative, Turnover intention, Organizational citizenship behaviour, Role stress, Trainees, High potentials.*

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## 1. Introduction

According to Ashton and Morton (2005) Talent Management (TM) is one of the most crucial human capital challenges faced by twenty first century organizations. Mc Kinsey research reveals that 75% of corporate employers are concerned about talent shortages and Deloitte concluded that retaining high potentials is a top priority for 87% of the Human Resources (HR) directors (Ashton & Morton, 2005). The purpose of exclusive talent management is to ensure that high potential and high performing talents work to the maximum of their potential to gain competitive advantage (Redford, 2005). Talents are essential in the workforce and needed for success, efficiency and consistency (Phillips & Edwards, 2008). The importance for organizations to manage high potentials and fulfil their development needs comes from their ability to effectively achieve performance goals (Dries & Pepermans, 2007). Aguinis & O'Boyle (2014) state that the output of high performers in the organization could be enormous and might directly affect performance at the organization level. Therefore, this small minority of workers are valuable, rare and not replaceable with multiple average workers or less productive alternatives. Despite the fact that managing high potentials is seen as one of the major priorities, empirical publications on the topic are exceptionally rare, especially from the actual high potential population itself (Dries & Pepermans, 2007).

According to Ashton and Morton (2005), the role of line managers is crucial in managing and recognizing high potential developmental needs and helps high potentials by providing opportunities and resources for development. Transformational leadership is a leadership style focused on development and is characterized by inspiring followers to share a vision, empowering them and encouraging them to seek new ways to approach their jobs (Bass, 1996). Seeking new ways to resolve problems motivates followers to become more involved in their duties, resulting in higher levels of personal growth initiative, job satisfaction and commitment (Walumbwa, Wang, Lawler, & Shi, 2004). Therefore, the immediate manager's behaviour is fundamental for the shaping of high potential's attitudes and behaviours such as turnover intention, personal growth initiative (PGI) and organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) (Richard, Ismail, Bhuian, & Taylor, 2009).

High potentials have a willingness to grow and change over time, and because of that acquire new skills which influence their performance level. Therefore, Personal Growth Initiative (PGI) is seen as a pivotal high potential behaviour. Robitschek (1998) defined PGI as "active, intentional engagement in the process of personal growth" (p.184). The behaviour

of transformational leaders to encourage followers to develop themselves is expected to result in employees taking more personal initiatives (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012). Furthermore, organizations attempt to retain high potentials who are considered to be core to the purpose and continued success of the business (Birt, Wallis, & Winternitz, 2004). As development investments are higher for high potential employees, more efforts are made to prevent them from making inter-organizational moves through retention management (Dries & Pepermans, 2007). Therefore, turnover intention is seen as an important outcome variable regarding the high potential population. Tett and Meyer (1993) defined turnover intention as the deliberate willingness to leave the organization. The final outcome variable taken into account in the current research is organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) as high potentials are known to contribute to broader or different roles in the organization (Silzer & Church, 2009). OCB is defined as behaviour that supports task performance by enhancing a social and psychological work environment (Wang, Law, Hackett, Wang, & Chen, 2005). Employees who are motivated to fulfil the collective vision without expecting immediate personal and tangible gains may be inclined to contribute towards achieving shared workplace goals in ways that are not formally prescribed in their roles (Wang et al., 2005).

Finally, the interaction effect of role stress is a central premise of this research as high potentials often encounter stressful work situations because of the pressure to manage expectations (Dries & Pepermans, 2007). Role stress occurs when there exists uncertainty regarding the behaviour in the role, or when employees receive an incompatible set of expectations that need to be satisfied simultaneously (Behrman & Perreault, 1984). In stressful conditions, individuals benefit more from transformational leadership because they need it to be less susceptible to resource loss (Hobfoll, 2001). This implies that transformational leadership gains its influence on OCB, turnover intention and PGI particularly when employees are confronted with stressful conditions (when transformational leadership is mostly needed).

This research examines the effect of transformational leadership on PGI, turnover intention and OCB. Furthermore, the interaction effect of role stress will be taken into account to examine whether this variable strengthens the relationships between transformational leadership and PGI, OCB and turnover intention. This study therefore focuses on the following research question:

*To what extent does transformational leadership influence PGI, turnover intention and OCB, and to what extent are these relations moderated by role stress?*

Empirical publications about the high potential population and the role of leadership are particularly scarce (Dries & Pepermans, 2007). Ashton and Morton (2005) aim for managers to have the responsibility for talent development besides the role of HR providing tools and guidelines. However, research is rare regarding to the role of managers for high potentials, especially for these outcome variables. Therefore, the scientific relevance is to get a more extended view on the role that managers have on their high potentials within the organization. The practical relevance of this study is getting a better understanding of the influence of transformational leadership on PGI, OCB and turnover intention and the effect of role stress. Human resource practitioners and managers can take this into account when designing high potential programs and development opportunities focused on the involvement of managers.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

In this section, transformational leadership, PGI, turnover intention, OCB, role stress and the relations between these concepts will be discussed.

### **2.1 Transformational leadership**

According to Avolio and Bass (1999) and Den Hartog, Van Muijen, and Koopman (1997), transformational leadership is the most effective leadership style compared to other major leadership styles (e.g. laissez-faire leadership or transactional leadership). Transactional leadership involves clarifying subordinate responsibilities and goals, rewarding them for their effort and performance, and correcting them for failing to meet objectives. In contrast, the laissez-faire style is characterized by a failure to take the responsibility for managing and a frequent absence and lack of involvement (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt & Van Engen, 2003). In contrast to these major leadership theories, transformational leadership mainly focuses on encouraging people to reach their full potential and perform beyond expectations in the exchange agreement. Therefore, transformational leadership is taken into account in the current research because it is expected to have the most influence on the outcome variables: PGI, OCB and turnover intention for high potentials.

Transformational leadership is characterized by a leader who inspires followers to share a vision, empowers them to achieve this vision, and provides resources necessary for developing their personal potential (Smith, Montagno, & Kuzmenko, 2004). Transformational leaders serve as role models, support optimism and commitment, and focus on follower's

needs for growth and development (Bass, 1996). Rafferty and Griffin (2004) identified a number of dimensions which together form transformational leadership, including vision, inspirational communication, intellectual stimulation, supportive leadership and personal recognition.

According to Rafferty and Griffin (2004) vision means the articulation of an ideology that enhances goal clarity, task focus and shared values. To achieve the vision, leaders influence employees to take over organizational goals as their own goals (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004). Leaders add affective, emotional qualities to this influence process by using inspiration talks and emotional appeals (Bass, 1985). More specifically, the second concept is inspirational communication and is used by transformational leaders through the expression of positive and encouraging messages about the organization in order to build motivation and confidence (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004). The third concept is defined as supportive leadership which is the expressed concern for followers and the support for their individual needs (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004). This individualized support indicates that the leader respects his or her followers, creates a supportive work environment and is concerned with their needs and preferences. In addition, the most underdeveloped component of transformational leadership is intellectual stimulation (Lowe, Kroeck & Sivasubramaniam, 1996). While this dimension has not been the subject of extensive research, it consists of a more focused and consistent set of behaviours than the other sub dimensions (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004). Intellectual stimulation includes leadership behaviours that increase follower's interest in and awareness of problems and develops their ability to think about new problems in innovative ways (Bass, 1985). The effects of intellectual stimulation are seen in increases in follower's to conceptualize, analyze and understand problems and in the improved quality of innovative solutions that are generated (Bass & Avolio, 1990). Finally, the fifth dimension is defined as personal recognition which occurs when a leader indicates that he or she values the efforts of followers and rewards the achievement of outcomes (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004). This is consistent with the transformational vision of praise and acknowledgement because of the achieved goals and efforts of follower.

Research has consistently found a link between transformational leadership and diverse work outcomes such as job satisfaction, commitment and performance (Lowe et al., 1996; Dumdum, Lowe, & Avolio, 2002). Other studies demonstrated effects on follower's motivation, morality and empowerment (Dvir, Eden, Avolio, & Shamir, 2002). Furthermore, theoretical indications exist about the influence of transformational leadership on OCB and turnover intention (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012; Sosik & Godshalk, 2000; Podsakoff et al.,

1990). However, there is limited research evidence about the relations between transformational leadership and these outcomes for the high potential population specifically. Therefore, an obvious direction for future clarification is to examine the effect of transformational leadership on work behaviours such as turnover intention, personal growth initiative and extra role performance (Walumbwa et al., 2004).

## **2.2 Transformational leadership and personal growth initiative**

The need to be proactive and to take initiative has become more important in today's global work environment, especially for the high potential population (Crant, 2000). Anticipating the future and taking initiative to develop in advance is an approach to cope with change in a complex and uncertain work environment (Griffin, Neal, & Parker, 2007). PGI is a form of proactive behaviour focused on taking the initiative to grow and develop amongst diverse domains.

PGI is a set of skills aimed at an active and intentional process of self-improvement across diverse life and work domains (Robitschek, 1998). The level of PGI that a person has influences the extent to which that person searches opportunities to grow (Robitschek & Cook, 1999). PGI encompasses both the cognitive components of self-efficacy as well as behavioural components which involve implementing these cognitions across growth domains. Cognitive components of self efficacy include the beliefs, attitudes and values that support personal growth driven by expectations while behavioural components imply the actual implementation and initiation of the cognitions regarding personal growth (Robitschek, 1998). To clarify, PGI is broader than self-efficacy because it includes the behavioural components as well. The behavioural components put into practice the cognitions by initiating personal growth processes. High potentials are people who have a willingness to learn new skills, grow and change across their careers. Because of the growth initiative of these professionals, they incorporate new skills which influence their performance level. (Lombardo & Eichinger, 2000). Therefore, organizations depend on the willingness of high potentials to initiate personal growth to gain higher levels of performance.

Transformational leadership seems to play an important role for high potential proactive behaviour. Transformational leaders articulate a challenging vision, have high performance expectations and stimulate followers intellectually. By developing, empowering and challenging employees intellectually, transformational leaders directly stimulate proactive behaviour (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012). Because transformational leaders are more change

oriented and proactive themselves, they may act as role-models of growth initiative (Shamir & Howell, 1999). Furthermore, through individualized consideration transformational leaders help their high potentials to recognize their capabilities and encourage them to take greater responsibility for their own development (Walumbwa et al., 2004). Leaders can also indirectly enhance personal growth initiative by stimulating positive emotions. These positive emotions enhance and broaden the thought-action repertoire of employees resulting in taking more personal initiatives (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012). Research shows that transformational leaders enhance positive affect and affective commitment (Bono, Foldes, Vinson, & Muros, 2007; Bycio, Hackett, & Allen, 1995). Both affect and commitment have a positive influence on proactive behaviour (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012). Based on existing literature, it is expected that transformational leadership has a positive effect on PGI for high potentials. Therefore the following hypothesis is formulated:

*H1: Transformational leadership is positively associated with PGI*

### **2.3 Transformational leadership and turnover intention**

The retention of high potentials is an important organizational goal because of their pivotal skills and abilities to achieve goals and objectives (Birt, Wallis, & Winternitz, 2004). Employee turnover intention is seen as a negative phenomenon because of the failure to meet predetermined objectives and goals and therefore negatively linked to performance (Shaw, Gupta, & Delery, 2005). Turnover of talented employees causes the loss of valuable knowledge and key skills which is a threat to the growth and existence of the organization (Kay & Moncarz, 2004). Furthermore, turnover of high potentials generates costs because of recruitment, selection and on boarding procedures which involve money, time and energy. According to the Resource- Based View, talents are unique and valuable resources that can contribute to gaining competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). Therefore, talented employees have become more important in the current competitive environment and firms do not want to lose these talents to competitors.

Turnover intention is the deliberate cognitive process of thinking, planning and desiring to leave the organization (Tett & Meyer, 1993). It has been defined as a stage in the sequence of withdrawal behaviours, which is a set to which thinking of quitting and intent to search for alternative employment also belong (Mobley, Horner, & Hollingsworth, 1978).

Turnover intention refers to an estimation of the probability for employees to leave the organization in the near future.

Bass (1998) and Avolio (1999) have argued that transformational leaders cause followers to become attached to the organization and therefore influence their decision to stay at the organization. According to Kuvaas and Dysvik (2010) there continues to be a need for a better understanding of the critical role of leadership behaviour in stimulating the employee's decision to leave the organization. Bass (1998) argues that transformational leaders show respect and confidence as well as they motivate their followers to obtain their goals in order to improve organizational effectiveness. By showing respect and confidence, leaders are able to create a high degree of trust and loyalty on the part of their followers. As a result, followers are more able to identify themselves with the leader and organization such that they are willing to stay within the organization (Walumbwa et al., 2004). Furthermore, by encouraging followers to think more about the challenges in their jobs, transformational leaders are able to help them develop a better understanding of successful behaviours which results in reduced withdrawal behaviours (Walumbwa et al., 2004). Some studies found a negative relationship between the two variables (Sosik & Godshalk, 2000; Walumbwa & Lawler, 2003). Because of these findings, it is expected that transformational leadership will most likely have a negative relationship on turnover intention for the high potential population as well. Therefore, the following hypothesis is expected:

*H2: Transformational leadership is negatively associated with turnover intention*

## **2.4 Transformational leadership and organizational citizenship behaviour**

OCB is extra-role behaviour that supports task performance by enhancing a social and psychological work environment (Wang et al., 2005). High potentials who are intrinsically motivated to fulfill a collective vision without expecting immediate rewards may be inclined to contribute towards achieving the shared workplace goal. These behaviours can be considered as OCB (Wang et al., 2005). OCB is focused on bringing changes in the broader context of the work role to promote the effective functioning of the organization including helping co-workers, being punctual and attending voluntary meetings (Bettencourt, 2004).

Generally, researchers have investigated the impact of transformational leadership on in-role performance and employee attitudes such as job satisfaction. For example Bass (1985) states that transformational leadership behaviours are positively related to employee

satisfaction, self-reported effort and job performance. While the effects of transformational leadership on employee in-role performance are interesting and often researched, they do not capture all the important effects of transformational leader behaviours (Podsakoff et al., 1990). Another purpose of transformational leadership behaviours is to lift followers to extraordinary heights, cause them to do more than expected and perform beyond the level of expectations (Bass, 1985). In line with this reasoning, previous research found a positive relationship between transformational leadership and OCB (Podsakoff et al., 1990; Bettencourt, 2004).

Several potential lines of reasoning exist to support the relationship between transformational leadership and OCB. First, supportive leadership behavior has a role in establishing OCB (Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983). This relationship can be supported by reciprocity theory which implies the exchange of supportive behaviours. Leader supportiveness is characterized by a pattern of exchange that is social and non-contractual because of the individualized support, respect and focus on the needs of followers (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004). In response to that, subordinates may choose OCB as a means of reciprocation to their leaders (Smith et al., 1983).

Second, transformational leadership behaviors could influence OCB indirectly through follower's trust in their leaders and job satisfaction. According to Yukl (1989), one of the key explanations why followers are motivated to perform beyond expectations is of leaders' trust and respect. Transformational leadership is expected to have an influence on followers trust and respect towards the leader resulting in the motivation to do more than they are expected to do (Podsakoff et al., 1990). Moreover, research has consistently found a positive and well established relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction (Lowe et al., 1996; Dum Dum et al., 2002). Organ (1988) has reviewed empirical research which indicates that employee job satisfaction is an important determinant of OCB. Based on former research and theories, the following hypothesis is most likely expected for high potentials:

***H3: Transformational leadership is positively associated with OCB***

## **2.5 Moderating effects of role stress**

High potentials are often positioned into stressful work situations. Failing to manage expectations, pressure to take on certain functions or responsibilities are the most frequently mentioned pitfalls related to role stress in high potential career management (Dries &

Pepermans, 2007). Role ambiguity and role conflict are viewed as the primary components of role stress. An individual experiences role conflict when he/she receives an incompatible set of expectations that need to be satisfied simultaneously. Role ambiguity occurs when an individual is uncertain about the type of behaviour to show in a given work situation (Behrman & Perreault, 1984).

The Job Demands –Resources (JD-R) and Conservation of Resources (COR) theory can be used to explain the moderating effects of role stress. The JD-R model is an overarching model that may be applied to diverse occupational settings, irrespective of the particular demands and resources involved (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Job demands refer to physical, psychological or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained cognitive and emotional effort and skills and are therefore associated with certain psychological costs. Examples are a high work pressure, role stress, or an unfavourable physical environment. Job resources on the other hand, refer to psychological, social or organizational aspects of the job that are functional in achieving work goals and stimulate personal growth, learning and development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). In the current study, job resources refer to transformational leadership as including autonomy, supportive leadership and a focus on followers needs for growth and development (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004).

According to the JD-R model, job demands and job resources have an interaction effect in two different ways. Job resources can buffer the negative effects of role stress and job resources can gain their importance in situations with high job demands. Because of the scarce research regarding the interaction effects of job demands, role stress is taken into account as a moderator in the current research. According to the JD-R model, job demands (role stress) moderate the relationship between job resources (transformational leadership) and motivation/work engagement. Work engagement is positively related to OCB (Babcock-Roberson & Strickland, 2010) and negatively related to turnover intention (Bhatnagar, 2012). Furthermore, PGI captures the concept of motivation because it encompasses both the cognitive and behavioural components of self-efficacy (Robitschek, 1998). Therefore, the JD-R model could also be applied as an explanation of the moderation effect of the current research because motivation and work engagement are related to PGI, OCB and turnover intention.

Based on the JD-R model, transformational leadership will be more strongly related to PGI, OCB and turnover intention when high potentials are confronted with high levels of role stress. According to the COR theory (Hobfoll, 2001), people seek to obtain, retain, and protect that which they value, for instance social or personal resources. The theory explains

that in stressful conditions, individuals are seeking for more resources and make more use of transformational leadership because they need it to be less susceptible to resource loss (Hobfoll, 2001). Hakanen, Bakker and Demerouti (2005) found that based on the COR theory, job resources are most beneficial in maintaining work engagement under conditions of high job demands. Job resources are thus useful in coping with high demands to stay engaged. This implies that transformational leadership particularly influences OCB, turnover intention and PGI when employees are confronted with stressful conditions (when transformational leadership is most needed). Based on the conditions of the JD-R model and COR theory the following hypotheses are formulated:

**H4a:** *The positive relation between transformational leadership and PGI will be strengthened by role stress.*

**H4b:** *The negative relation between transformational leadership and turnover intention will be strengthened by role stress.*

**H4c:** *The positive relation between transformational leadership and OCB will be strengthened by role stress.*

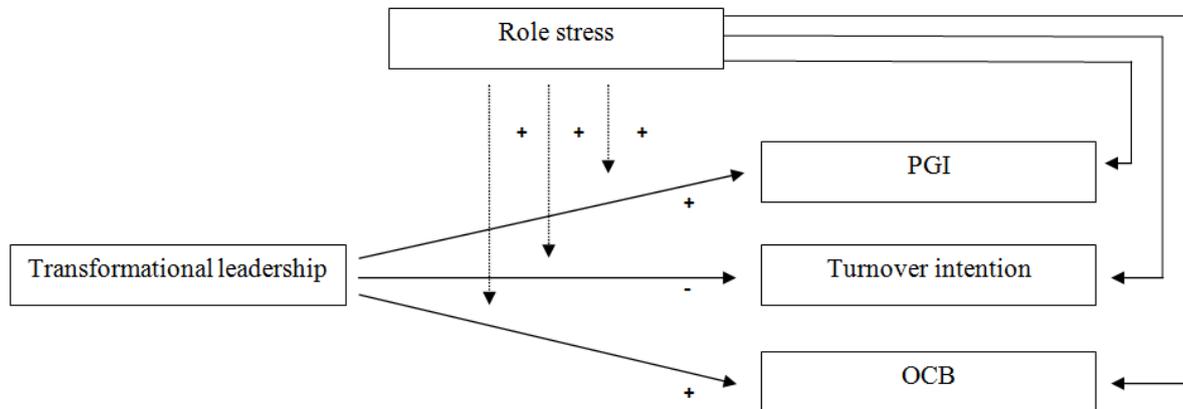


Figure 1: Conceptual model

### 3. Method

#### 3.1 Sample

For the current research, data has been collected from trainees in an organization in the financial sector. The trainee program of the organization attracts, selects and develops international ambitious top-graduates with high growth potential to become the leading

bankers. Furthermore, the programme enables the company to effectively develop talent, gives presence in the various labour markets and creates preference for the company as a preferred employer. Trainees within this organization in the financial sector (371) are asked to contribute to this research. Purposive sampling is used focused on the trainees (high potentials) within the organization based on the aim of the current research.

Eventually, three reminders have been sent out to improve the response rate. Eventually 146 trainees participated in the current study. The response rate was 39.35% after the final deadline of providing data. Data of the respondents showed similarities regarding to demographical and organizational characteristics. With regard to the demographical data, 63% of the trainees were male and 37% female. Furthermore, 91% of these employees completed a master degree at University. The average age of the sample of employees is 26 years. With regard to the organizational characteristics, employees have been employed on average for 2 years.

### **3.2 Procedure**

The questionnaire (appendix 1) has been distributed via e-mail to 371 trainees. The survey has to be filled in within four weeks through the use of a web survey tool named Qualtrics. This web survey has primarily been used for the ease of use and speed of response. Additional benefits of web surveys are the flexibility in design and layout, the ability for large-scale samples and reduction of costs (Weible & Wallace, 1998). However, a major issue with online surveys is the response rate because of varied access, exposure and usage patterns associated with e-mail and internet (Mehta & Sivadas, 1995). Response rates could be improved through good accessibility, frequent reminders, providing rewards, assuring anonymity and keeping questionnaires brief (Nulty, 2008). Therefore, an accompanying text is used to explain the purpose of the study and to assure the confidentiality and anonymity of the gathered cross sectional data. Furthermore, three reminders are sent out to the respondents to fill in the questionnaire. After all, the opportunity is offered to receive the report of the findings.

### **3.3 Measures**

The variables used in this research are measured by previously developed scales. A separate exploratory factor analysis has been done to examine the coherence of the items per scale. To clarify, a Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) analysis is conducted. The number of

factors is decided based on the screeplot. A Varimax rotation is applied in case of two or more factors and the items are developed into factors based on the values in the component matrix. Average scores are made according to the result of the factor analysis. Furthermore, the items are tested on reliability with the use of Cronbach's  $\alpha$ . Appendix 2 shows the results of the factor analyses.

*Transformational leadership.* Rafferty and Griffin (2004) designed 15 items which are used to measure transformational leadership consisting of five subscales. These subscales measure: Articulating a Vision (three items, e.g. "has a clear understanding of where he/she wants our unit to be in 5 years"), Intellectual Stimulation (three items, e.g. "challenges me to think about old problems in new ways"), Inspirational Communication (three items, e.g. "says things that make employees proud to be part of this organization"), Supportive Leadership (three items, e.g. "sees that the interests of employees are given due consideration"), and Personal Recognition (three items, e.g. "commends me when I do a better than average job"). Response options are based on a 5-point scale that ranges from 1- "strongly disagree" to 5- "strongly agree". The results of the Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) analysis supported a single factor solution. Therefore, an average score is created of the 15 items of Transformational Leadership. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for Transformational Leadership= .90.

*Personal Growth Initiative.* Robitschek et al. (2012) developed 16 items which are used to measure Personal Growth Initiative. There are four subscales measuring PGI: Using Resources (three items, e.g. "I ask for help when I try to change myself"), Intentional Behaviour (four items, e.g. "I take every opportunity to grow as it comes up"), Planfulness (five items, e.g. "I set realistic goals for what I want to change about myself"), and Readiness for Change (four items, e.g. "I can tell when I am ready to make specific changes in myself"). Response options are based on a 6-point scale ranging from 0- "disagree strongly" to 5- "agree strongly". The results of the Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) analysis supported a single factor solution. Therefore, an average score is created of the 16 items of PGI. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for PGI= .89.

*Turnover Intention.* Three items developed by Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, and Klesh (1979) are used to measure turnover intention. An example of an item in this scale is: "I often think of leaving the organization". Response options are based on a 7-point scale that ranges from 1- "strongly disagree" to 7- "strongly agree". The results of the Principal Axis Factoring

(PAF) analysis supported a single factor solution. Therefore, an average score is created of the three items of turnover intention. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for turnover intention= .85.

*Organizational Citizenship Behaviour.* Pond, Nacoste, Mohr, and Rodriguez (1997) modified a scale developed by Smith et al. (1983) into a 16 items scale measuring OCB. Each item has been modified to fit with the self-report nature (applicable for the current study) instead of requiring supervisors to rate their subordinates. Other than this modification, the scale was identical to the one used by Smith et al. (1983). An example of an item in this scale is: "I volunteer for things that are not required". Response options are based on a 5-point scale that ranged from 1- "always" to 5-"never". The results of the Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) analysis showed weak factor loadings and an unclear factor solution. Therefore, the items were forced on one factor and the items with a factor loading <0.3 are removed. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for OCB= .69.

*Role Stress.* Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman (1970) designed 14 items which are used to measure role stress consisting of two subscales: Role Conflict (eight items, e.g. "I receive incompatible requests from two or more people"), and Role Ambiguity (six items, e.g. "I know exactly what is expected of me"). Response options are based on a 5-point scale that ranged from 1- "strongly disagree" to 5-"strongly agree". The results of the Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) analysis supported a two factor solution. Although other studies have used role stress as one variable, Rizzo, House and Lirtzman (1970) found that the two constructs of role ambiguity and role conflict emerged as separate dimensions. This is in line with the finding of the current study taking into account role ambiguity and role conflict separately based on a two-factor solution. Therefore, an average score is created of the eight items of Role Conflict and the six items of Role Ambiguity. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for Role Conflict= .79 and for Role Ambiguity=.77.

### *Control variables*

Several control variables are taken into account in this research in order to check for the possibility of spurious results. Prior research has emphasized the importance of controlling for the effects of potentially confounding demographic factors in the research of leadership processes and work-related attitudes (Berson, Shamir, Avolio, & Popper, 2001). Walumbwa and Lawler (2003) found that age, gender and organization tenure confound the relationship between leadership and outcome variables. Furthermore, Meyer and Allen (1984) have shown that gender, education level and organizational tenure were related to turnover

intention. Therefore, the following control variables are taken into account: age, gender, organizational tenure and education level. Eventually, only the significant control variables are taken into account in the regression analysis.

### **3.4 Statistical analysis**

Gathered data with the use of Qualtrics has been converted, tested and analyzed using IBM SPSS statistics. The dataset has been checked and screened for errors in order to avoid data distortion. Furthermore, negatively worded items are reversed and dummy variables are created for dichotomous variables. The variables are made based on the result of the separate exploratory factor analyses. A Pearson's correlation analysis has been carried out to indicate whether a correlation exists between the independent, dependent, and moderating variables in order to check for multicollinearity.

Regression analysis is used to describe the relationships between transformational leadership, OCB, PGI and turnover intention. The relationships between variables are estimated with different linear regression analyses. The standardized variables have been used to test for the moderation effect of role conflict and role ambiguity. Firstly, the effect of transformational leadership on PGI (H1) has been tested by using a regression analysis with PGI as dependent variable. In block one, age, gender, organizational tenure and education level are taken into account as control variables. In block two, transformational leadership is entered and in block three, role conflict and role ambiguity are entered as independent variables. Finally, block four includes the interaction effect of role conflict x transformational leadership and role ambiguity x transformational leadership to test for interaction effects.

Secondly, the effect of transformational leadership on turnover intention (H2) is tested by the use of a linear regression analysis with turnover intention as dependent variable. In block one, age, gender, organizational tenure and education level are taken into account as control variables. Again, in the second block, transformational leadership is taken into account as independent variable and in block three, role conflict and role ambiguity are entered. In block four, the interaction effects of role conflict x transformational leadership and role ambiguity x transformational leadership are entered to test for interaction effects.

Finally, the effect of transformational leadership on OCB (H3) is tested by the use of a regression analysis with OCB as dependent variable. In block one, age, gender, organizational tenure and education level are taken into account as control variables. In block two, transformational leadership is taken into account as independent variable. In block three, role conflict and role ambiguity are entered as independent variables. And in block four, the

interaction effects of role conflict x transformational leadership and role ambiguity x transformational leadership are entered to test for interaction effects.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Findings

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations and correlations among all variables. Transformational leadership is positively correlated with PGI ( $r = .32, p < .001$ ), OCB ( $r = .20, p = .015$ ) and educational level ( $r = .17, p = .036$ ), but negatively correlated with turnover intention ( $r = -.35, p < .001$ ), role ambiguity ( $r = -.52, p < .001$ ) and role conflict ( $r = -.29, p < .001$ ). In addition, PGI is negatively correlated with turnover intention ( $r = -.24, p = .003$ ), role ambiguity ( $r = -.46, p < .001$ ), and role conflict ( $r = -.23, p = .006$ ) but positively correlated with OCB ( $r = .36, p < .001$ ). Turnover intention shows a significant correlation with all other variables. Turnover intention is negatively correlated with OCB ( $r = -.20, p = .016$ ) and positively correlated with role ambiguity ( $r = .23, p = .006$ ) and role conflict ( $r = .21, p = .012$ ). In addition, OCB is negatively correlated with role ambiguity ( $r = -.20, p = .016$ ) and role conflict is positively correlated with role ambiguity ( $r = .33, p < .001$ ). Regarding the control variables: turnover intention is negatively correlated with educational level ( $r = -.22, p = .009$ ) and positively correlated with organizational tenure ( $r = .22, p = .007$ ). Age positively correlates with educational level ( $r = .34, p < .001$ ) and organizational tenure ( $r = .52, p < .001$ ). Finally, gender has been found to negatively correlate with role conflict ( $r = -.21, p = .010$ ). Furthermore, no other significant correlations exist between the variables.

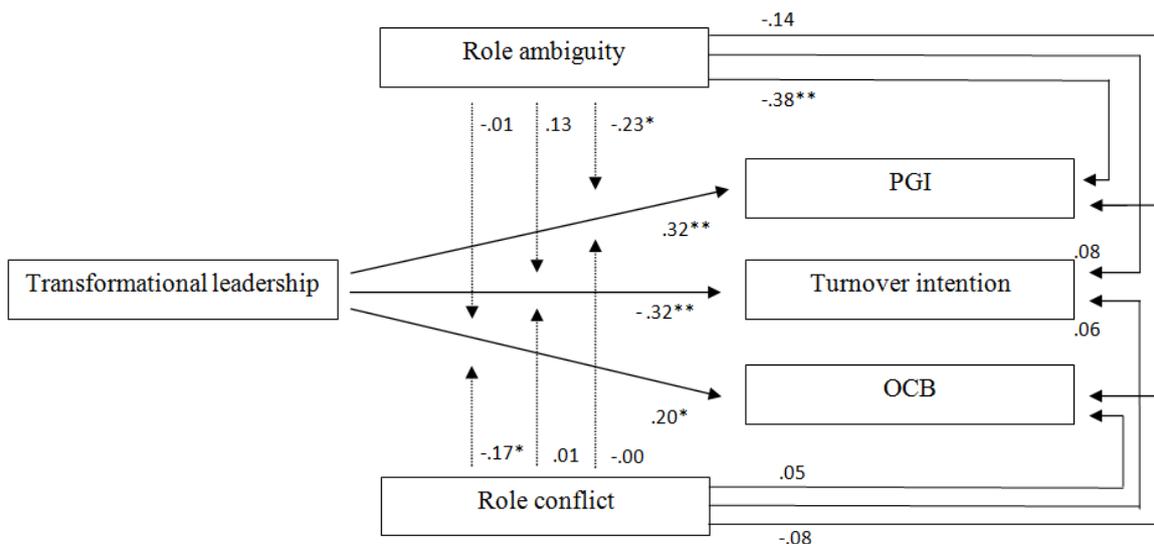
Table 1

*Correlation matrix: means, standard deviations and correlations*

	M	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1. Transformational leadership	3.75	0.60									
2. PGI	4.75	0.51	.32**								
3. Turnover Intention	2.80	1.41	-.35**	-.24**							
4. OCB	3.70	0.52	.20*	.36**	-.20*						
5. Role Ambiguity	2.34	0.56	-.52**	-.46**	.23**	-.20*					
6. Role Conflict	2.86	0.67	-.29**	-.23**	.21*	-.04	.33**				
7. Educational level			.17*	.11	-.22**	.08	-.10	-.05			
8. Organizational tenure	2.15	1.35	-.00	.06	.22**	.07	-.13	.14	.09		
9. Age	26.31	1.78	-.02	.07	.07	-.02	-.57	.11	.34**	.52**	
10 Gender			.07	.12	-.16	.16	-.05	-.21*	.04	.02	-.07

**Note:** \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$

Regression analyses have been used to describe the relationships between transformational leadership, PGI, turnover intention, OCB and the interaction effects of role ambiguity and role conflict. Figure 2 shows the model with the relationship from transformational leadership on PGI, turnover intention and OCB moderated by role conflict and role ambiguity.



**Note:**  $** p < 0.01$ ;  $* p < 0.05$

Figure 2: Model

The relations between the variables have been estimated with different regression analyses with the use of SPSS. Firstly, the direct effect of transformational leadership on PGI (H1) has been tested. This effect (H1) is tested with a linear regression analysis with transformational leadership as independent variable and PGI as dependent variable. Secondly, role ambiguity and role conflict are taken into account and the final model also includes the interaction effects. No control variables are taken into account in this regression analysis because no significant results are found.

The results indicate that trainees who experience more transformational leadership from their managers experience more PGI ( $\beta = .32, p < .001$ ). This confirms hypothesis 1. Furthermore, significant effects have been found for the relationship between role ambiguity and PGI ( $\beta = -.44, p < .001$ ). The moderator role stress has been replaced by role ambiguity and role conflict based on a two-factor solution. The results show that the relation between transformational leadership and PGI is not moderated by role conflict ( $\beta = -.00, p = .985$ ). However, support has been found in the opposite direction regarding the moderation effect of role ambiguity. The relationship between transformational leadership and PGI is strengthened if people experience low role ambiguity ( $\beta = -.23, p = .005$ ). Figure 3 shows that PGI scores are highest in the low role ambiguity condition and the slope of the low role ambiguity condition is steeper than the slope of the high role ambiguity condition. The results show support in the reversed direction, therefore H4a has been rejected. All models were found to be significant and 10% of variance is explained by transformational leadership. Role

ambiguity and role conflict explain 12, 3% more variance of PGI. Furthermore, the interaction effects explain 4, 3% more variance. Table 2 shows the results of the linear regression analysis with corresponding F-values, R-squared values and significance of the models.

Table 2

*Linear regression with dependent variable Personal Growth Initiative*

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	B	SE(B)	$\beta$	B	SE(B)	$\beta$	B	SE(B)	$\beta$
<b>Transformational leadership (TL)</b>	0.27	0.07	.32**	0.08	0.08	.09	0.13	0.08	.15
<b>Role ambiguity</b>				-0.36	0.08	-.38**	-0.40	0.08	-.44**
<b>Role conflict</b>				-0.06	0.06	-.08	-0.03	0.06	-.03
<b>TL x role ambiguity</b>							-0.21	0.07	-.23**
<b>TL x role conflict</b>							-0.00	0.07	-.00
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>		.099			.222			.265	
<b>R<sup>2</sup> change</b>		.099			.123			.043	
<b>F</b>		15.899**			13.515**			10.089**	

**Note:** \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$

Secondly, the effect of transformational leadership on turnover intention (H2) has been tested. This effect (H2) is tested with a linear regression analysis with transformational leadership as independent variable and turnover intention as dependent variable. In the first model, the control variables educational level and organizational tenure were taken into account to check for spuriousness. In the second model the direct effect of transformational leadership on turnover intention is tested. Thirdly, role ambiguity and role conflict are taken into account and the final block also includes the interaction effects.

With regard to the control variables, significant support has been found for the relationship between educational level and turnover intention ( $\beta = -.19, p=.015$ ) and organizational tenure and turnover intention ( $\beta = .24, p=.002$ ). In addition, the results show that trainees who experience more transformational leadership from their managers experience less turnover intention ( $\beta = -.32, p<.001$ ). For this reason, hypothesis 2 is confirmed. Furthermore, no support for the interaction effect of role conflict on the relation

between transformational leadership and turnover intention (H4b) has been found ( $\beta = .01, p=.893$ ) as well as for the moderation effect of role ambiguity ( $\beta = .13, p=.106$ ). Therefore, H4b is rejected. All models were found to be significant and 10, 6% of variance of turnover intention is explained by the control variables. Transformational leadership explains 9, 7% more variance and role ambiguity and role conflict explain 1% more variance. Furthermore, the interaction effects explain 1, 3% more variance. Table 3 shows the results of the linear regression analysis with corresponding F-values, R-squared values and significance of the models.

Table 3

*Linear regression with dependent variable Turnover Intention*

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	B	SE(B)	$\beta$	B	SE(B)	$\beta$	B	SE(B)	$\beta$	B	SE(B)	$\beta$
<b>Educational level</b>	-1.18	0.40	-.24**	-0.90	0.38	-.18*	-0.90	0.38	-.18*	-0.94	0.38	-.19*
<b>Organizational tenure</b>	0.26	0.39	.24**	0.25	0.08	.24**	0.25	0.08	.24**	0.26	0.08	.24**
<b>Transformational leadership (TL)</b>				-0.75	0.18	-.32**	-0.60	0.21	-.25**	-0.68	0.22	-.29**
<b>Role ambiguity</b>							0.21	0.23	.08	0.29	0.24	.11
<b>Role conflict</b>							0.14	0.17	.06	0.08	0.18	.04
<b>TL x role ambiguity</b>										0.33	0.21	.13
<b>TL x role conflict</b>										0.03	0.21	.01
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>		.106			.203			.213			.229	
<b>R<sup>2</sup> change</b>		.106			.097			.010			.016	
<b>F</b>		8.383**			11.945**			7.545**			9.475**	

**Note:** \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$

Thirdly, the effect of transformational leadership on OCB (H3) has been tested. H3 is tested with a regression analysis with transformational leadership as independent variable and OCB as dependent variable. Secondly, role ambiguity and role conflict are taken into account and the final block also includes the interaction effects. No control variables are taken into account in this regression analysis because no significant results are found.

The results show that trainees who experience more transformational leadership from their managers experience more OCB ( $\beta = .20, p=.015$ ). Therefore, hypothesis 3 is confirmed. H4c proposed that the positive influence of transformational leadership on OCB is strengthened if trainees experience more role conflict. However, contrary to the expectations

the results show a negative significant moderation effect ( $\beta = -.17, p=.042$ ). Figure 4 shows that the relationship between transformational leadership and OCB is strengthened if people experience low role conflict. No evidence has been found for the interaction effect of role ambiguity on the relation between transformational leadership and OCB ( $\beta = -.01, p=.907$ ). Therefore H4c has been rejected. All models were found to be significant and 4, 1% of variance of OCB is explained by transformational leadership. Role ambiguity and role conflict explain 1, 4% more variance. Furthermore, the interaction effects explain 2, 9% more variance. Table 4 shows the results of the linear regression analysis with corresponding F-values, R-squared values and significance of the model.

Table 4

*Linear regression with dependent variable Organizational Citizenship Behaviour*

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	B	SE(B)	B	B	SE(B)	$\beta$	B	SE(B)	$\beta$
<b>Transformational leadership (TL)</b>	0.18	0.07	.20*	0.12	0.08	.14	0.17	0.09	.19
<b>Role ambiguity</b>				-0.13	0.09	-.14	-0.12	0.09	-.11
<b>Role conflict</b>				0.04	0.07	.05	0.05	0.07	.06
<b>TL x role ambiguity</b>							-0.01	0.08	-.01
<b>TL x role conflict</b>							-0.17	0.08	-.17*
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>		.041			.055			.084	
<b>R<sup>2</sup> change</b>		.041			.014			.029	
<b>F</b>		6.090*			2.762*			2.552*	

**Note:** \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$

Overall, significant effects have been found for the direct relationships of transformational leadership with PGI, turnover intention and OCB as expected. Most moderation effects were not statistically significant with the exception of the moderation of role ambiguity in H4a and role conflict in H4c. However, for these hypotheses significant support has been found in the reversed direction.

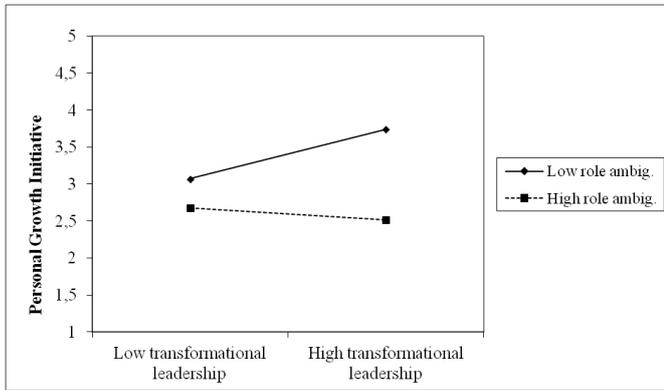


Figure 3: The moderation of role ambiguity on the relation between transformational leadership and PGI.

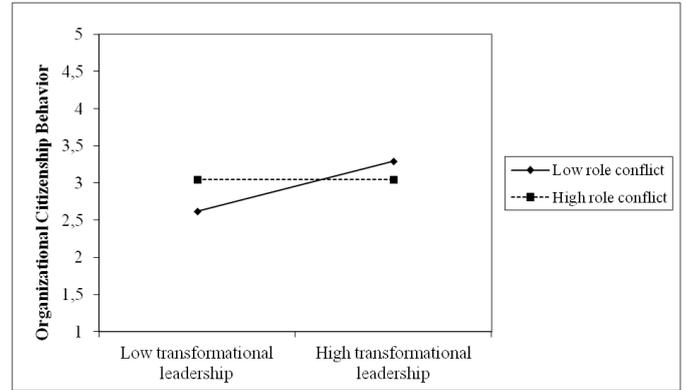


Figure 4: The moderation of role conflict on the relation between transformational leadership and OCB.

## 4.2 Additional analysis

Based on the results of the correlation and regression analyses, a possible mediation effect between transformational leadership on PGI via role ambiguity is expected. Furthermore, this relationship makes sense theoretically because transformational leaders articulate a vision that enhances goal clarity and task focus which could influence role ambiguity. In addition, if individuals experience less role ambiguity there could be more leeway for self development and personal growth. According to Mackinnon, Fairchild, and Matthew (2007) two conditions are necessary to establish a mediation effect: (a) the independent and mediating variables must be significantly related and (b) the mediator and dependent variable must be significantly related.

The regression results show that transformational leadership and role ambiguity are significantly related ( $\beta = -.49, p < .001$ ) thus supports condition a. Furthermore, Role ambiguity and PGI are also significantly related ( $\beta = -.42, p < .001$ ) which supports condition b. Further results show that, after role ambiguity was taken into account, the effect of transformational leadership on PGI became non-significant ( $\beta = .09, p = .230$ ), which suggests complete mediation. To further assess the significance of the mediation, a Sobel's (1982) test for indirect effects is applied. The results show that the relationship between transformational leadership and PGI is mediated by role ambiguity ( $Z = 4.76, p < 0.05$ ). No other significant results regarding possible mediation effects have been found.

## 5. Discussion and conclusion

The current research makes a contribution to the understanding of the following research question: *“To what extent does transformational leadership influence PGI, turnover intention and OCB, and to what extent are these relations moderated by role stress?”* Specifically, this study has found that transformational leadership plays an important role in the increase of a trainee’s PGI, OCB and reduction of turnover intention. Furthermore, contrary to the expectations a negative significant interaction effect of role ambiguity on the relation between transformational leadership and PGI has been found as well as a negative effect of role conflict on the relation between transformational leadership and OCB. These findings are important because, despite the commonly held view among researchers that transformational leadership is beneficial, considerably less is known about the influence on the high potentials of the organization (Dries & Pepermans, 2007). The findings will be explained in more detail below.

Managing high potentials is seen as one of the major priorities of current organizations because of their potential to flow into senior management roles and the objectives of organizations to create better leaders and managers. Despite the high strategic value, research is scarce regarding the influence of managers on high potentials especially from the high potential population itself (Dries & Pepermans, 2007). Evidence from the high potential population regarding the influence of transformational leadership on trainee important outcomes such as PGI, OCB and turnover intention is valuable. Also, as there does not seem to be any study that examines the moderation effects of role stress on these relationships, this study attempts to fill the significant gap of knowledge in this area.

The regression analysis of transformational leadership on PGI reveals a positive and significant relationship, indicating that trainees who experience more transformational leadership show more PGI. This study is in line with previous research of Den Hartog & Belschak (2012) and Shamir and Howell (1999), where scholars supported the positive influence of transformational leaders on growth initiative and proactive behaviour. Transformational leaders support the development of employees, challenge followers intellectually, and personally recognize them when doing a better than average job. Furthermore, transformational leaders are more proactive themselves and therefore act as role-models of growth initiative (Shamir & Howell, 1999). Generally, trainees show openness and would like to learn and develop themselves. The support, communication and individual consideration of transformational leaders positively stimulates the cognition and behaviour of

trainees. Therefore, trainees show more PGI to change and develop themselves, take opportunities, and change and plan next steps in their career.

In addition, transformational leadership is found to negatively influence turnover intention. This implies that if trainees experience more transformational leadership they have less intention to leave the organization. The positive impact of a manager's transformational leadership behaviour can generate trust in their subordinates and make them less likely to leave the organization. This is in line with the relationship-based perspective explaining that transformational leaders give individual consideration and therefore create a basis of trust (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). When trainees trust their leaders they are more likely to stay at the organization because they are not concerned about the decisions the leaders might make (regarding integrity, fairness, honesty, or competence). Interestingly, trainees with higher organizational tenure are more intended to leave the organization. This is not aligned with previous research stating that employees with higher organizational tenure are less intended to leave the organization (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Mitchel, 1981). However, the sample of the current research existing of high potentials could be more susceptible to switch organizations over time because of their drive to search for new opportunities and developments. Furthermore, the trainees have subscribed for a four year programme and might not want to leave before. The significant finding of the positive influence of transformational leadership on turnover intention indicates the importance to stimulate trainees with higher tenure even more to stay at the organization through individualized consideration and challenging next career steps to keep these talents.

Furthermore, transformational leadership is found to positively influence OCB. This finding is in line with previous research of Smith, Organ, and Near (1983) and Smith et al. (1983) who suggested a positive relationship of transformational leadership on OCB explained by a pattern of exchange. Social exchange and signalling theories argue that employees view transformational leadership as organizational support and a form of good treatment, which they then reciprocate back to the organization by showing OCB (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004). Despite the weak effect ( $\beta = .20$ ,  $p = .015$ ) and low Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of the OCB scale ( $\alpha = .69$ ), this result significantly contributes to the existing literature regarding the relationship of transformational leadership on OCB for the high potential population.

Finally, the moderation hypotheses of role ambiguity and role conflict were not supported by the results. Contrary to the expectations, the results show a negative significant interaction effect meaning that the relationship between transformational leadership and PGI is strengthened if people experience low role ambiguity. Furthermore, the relationship

between transformational leadership and OCB is strengthened if people experience low role conflict. Cummins (1990) and Wheaton (1985) found buffering effects of leadership support between role stress and diverse outcomes. Therefore, to gain insight in the interpretation of the moderation effect of transformational leadership in the current research, the figures have been changed.

Results (figure 5) show, that transformational leadership does not buffer the relationship between role ambiguity and PGI in the current sample. Specifically, PGI scores are lowest in the high transformational leadership condition and the slope of the high transformational leadership condition is steeper than the slope of the low transformational leadership condition. The same result (figure 6) has been found for the moderation of transformational leadership on the relationship between role conflict and OCB. The results show that OCB scores decrease in the high transformational leadership condition while OCB scores increase in the low transformational leadership condition. This indicates that transformational leadership may not be as supportive in stress situations as originally thought for the high potential population specifically. Transformational leadership captures a wider concept than leadership support only and therefore some dimensions such as intellectual stimulation could feel as pressuring or demanding and therefore not support in situations where role ambiguity or role conflict is already perceived. Trainees could prefer more guidance from their leaders because they are in an early stage of their career. Therefore, they might wish to have transactional leadership components next to the transformational aspect such as a clarification of responsibilities and goals, rewards for their effort and correction for failing to meet objectives especially in situations of role stress.

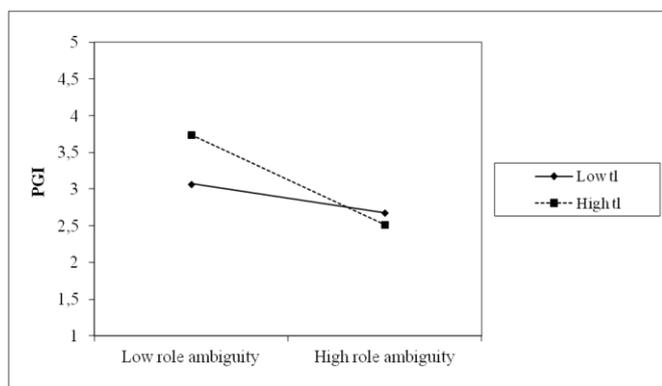


Figure 5: The moderation of transformational leadership on the relation between role ambiguity and PGI.

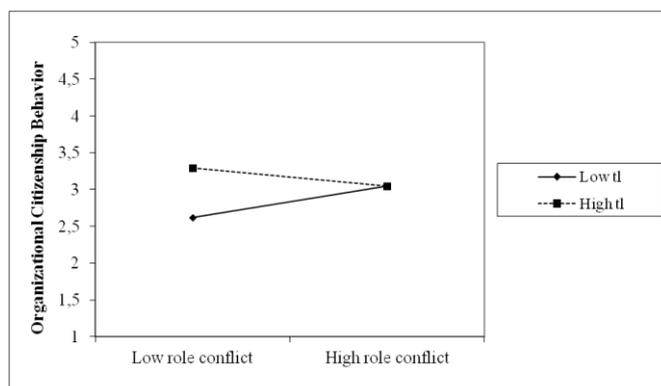


Figure 6: The moderation of transformational leadership on the relation between role conflict and OCB.

## 5.1 Limitations and suggestions for future research

The results of this study suggest several limitations and important areas of future research. First, all data was collected by a means of self-report measures which is a contribution to the scarce existing research regarding self report high potential measures according to Dries and Pepermans (2007). However, it also raises the possibility that the findings may have been confounded by sources of bias. For example, the answers of trainees regarding their identification of turnover intention could have led to biased responses. They might have felt their managers would check their answers despite that the cover letter assured confidentiality. Future studies should consider employing multiple sources of data collection and raters such as qualitative research methods in order to provide depth and detail to get an explanation why particular responses in quantitative research are given (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). In addition, multi-rater feedback from managers will give insight in the perspectives regarding their own transformational leadership behaviour and the comparison with subordinate ratings. Moreover, because data for this study was collected in the financial sector, it would be helpful for future studies to replicate these findings in non-financial sectors to enhance generalizability in other settings.

Secondly, another limitation is the poor Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of the OCB scale. Because of the poor alpha and the deleted items, this scale cannot be considered as fully reliable. Therefore, the results regarding OCB should be interpreted with caution. Pond, Nacoste, Mohr, and Rodriguez (1997) state that the behaviours being assessed with the OCB items were not truly OCBs in the eyes of respondents. For instance, some items such as "I arrive at work on time" seems not to be corresponding with the current way of flexible working. The current findings and the view expressed by other researchers indicate that a fuller understanding of the construct of OCB needs to be developed before the relationship between OCB and organizational behaviour outcomes can be examined (Pond, Nacoste, Mohr, and Rodriguez, 1997; Schnake, 1991). While self-report ratings of OCB are endorsed for certain purposes, it is believed that the approach that will reveal the most about OCB ratings will involve supervisor and peer ratings as well (Pond, Nacoste, Mohr, and Rodriguez, 1997). Future research should explicitly compare estimates obtained from each of these points of view to address concerns regarding possible bias.

In addition, despite the extended research regarding transformational leadership, there continues to be a need for a better understanding regarding the critical role of the buffering or demanding effects of leadership behaviour. The buffering effects of leadership support

between role stress and diverse outcomes have been widely researched but there seems to be a lack regarding the moderating effects of transformational leadership. While transformational leadership captures the concept of leadership support, it is broader and captures other concepts as vision, intellectual stimulation, personal recognition and inspirational communication as well. The current study did not find buffering effects of transformational leadership between role stress and diverse outcomes in contrast to the results of diverse other researchers (Cummins, 1990; Wheaton, 1985). Therefore, replication and comparison of diverse groups as well as knowledge of this process is needed to get an understanding of the possible situations and factors influencing this relationship. Furthermore, no extended research exists regarding the high potential population. Most research regarding the variables in the current research is collected by respondents as supervisors or subordinates (Walumbwa, Wang, Lawler, & Shi, 2004; Wang, Law, Hackett, Wang, & Chen, 2005). Therefore, there continues to be a need for a better understanding of the critical role of leadership behaviour in stimulating behavioural outcomes for the high potential population specifically (Dries & Pepermans, 2007).

## **5.2 Theoretical implications**

Despite the potential limitations noted above, the results of this research indicate several interesting implications for talent management. Talent management has become a strategy for International Human Resource practices and it is a widely shared belief that human resources are organization's top priority and source of competitive advantage (Hanif & Yunfei, 2013). As mentioned before, only a few studies have examined the effects of transformational leadership for the high potential population specifically (Dries & Pepermans, 2007). Earlier research found that employees experienced more turnover intention, OCB and PGI when experiencing more transformational leadership (Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983; Walumbwa & Lawler, 2003; Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012). However, these results were mainly based on a sample of employees in the whole organization and not on a specific group of employees specifically. Furthermore, this research found evidence that transformational leadership does not buffer the relationship between role stress and diverse work outcomes for high potentials in contrast with other studies and employees. Therefore, these results show the value of examining high potentials as a separate group in comparison with other employees in the organization. High potentials have the potential to be effective in future roles with much

broader responsibilities and at higher levels in the hierarchy (Silzer & Church, 2009). Therefore, research regarding this specific group of employees is valuable.

### 5.3 Practical implications

Christensen Hughes and Rog (2008) highlighted the benefits for implementing talent management practices in order to improve recruitment processes, rate of retentions and engagement of employees for a long period of time. The current findings show that transformational leadership has effects on follower's work-related outcomes and this has practical implications for leadership development programmes. The findings suggest that organizations can benefit greatly by providing transformational leadership training to managers to enhance positive outcomes. Furthermore, analyses have been done with the five different dimensions of transformational leadership to improve the quality and depth of practical implications for organizations. Appendix 3 shows the results of the factor analysis and regression analysis with the five separate dimensions of transformational leadership. Several significant results have been found, the results show that the dimension of personal recognition mainly influences PGI ( $\beta = .23, p=.026$ ). Furthermore, intellectual stimulation ( $\beta = -.21, p=.038$ ) and supportive leadership ( $\beta = -.28, p=.006$ ) mainly influence turnover intention. Finally, sharing a vision ( $\beta = -.24, p=.031$ ) and personal recognition ( $\beta = -.25, p=.016$ ) influence OCB. Interestingly, sharing a vision negatively influences OCB so should be avoided if the focus is on increasing OCB. Employers and HR can take these results into account when focusing on specific dimensions of transformational leadership in order to increase PGI, OCB or decrease turnover intention dependent on the focus of their talent management strategy.

More specifically, the following practices and activities can be implemented related to the diverse dimensions of transformational leadership constructs divided in implications for managers and HR based on research of Tymon, Stumpf and Smith (2011).

#### 5.3.1 Implications for managers

*Show personal interest:* this is related to the component of supportive leadership of transformational leadership existing of expressing concern for the personal needs of their followers (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004). This includes fostering personal relationships to build a sense of commitment and show support for individual needs. Remembering events that are

important to an employee's life are simple ways of showing a link to employees at a personal level. According to the analysis regarding the multiple dimensions of transformational leadership, this effort will especially influence turnover intention of the trainees.

*Acknowledge contributions on a regularly basis:* related to the dimension of personal recognition which occurs when a leader indicates that he or she values the efforts of followers. Managers have the opportunity to thank and recognize contributions and reward the achievements of employees in order to express praise and acknowledgement. According to the analysis regarding the multiple dimensions of transformational leadership, this effort will especially influence personal growth initiative and organizational citizenship behavior.

*Hold career discussions with subordinates:* related to the dimension of vision and supportive leadership. This could be achieved by sharing a vision and articulating an ideology which enhances goal clarity and shared values together with the support of development areas and needs of employees (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004). Meeting to discuss career progress and plans on a regular basis leads to manager support because of the opened dialogue regarding employee interests and motivators. According to the analysis regarding the multiple dimensions of transformational leadership, this effort will especially influence turnover intention and organizational citizenship behavior.

*Use a system of empowerment:* related to intellectual stimulation and supportive leadership. Creating a supportive and empowered working environment will improve the quality of innovative solutions because of the provided leeway. Providing autonomy and empowerment could be used to create intrinsic motivation derived from the meaningfulness of choice and creates a sense of ownership for the decisions and efforts of employees. According to the analysis regarding the multiple dimensions of transformational leadership, this effort will especially influence turnover intention of the trainees

### 5.3.2 Implications for HR

*Improve manager training:* The results of the current study share the importance of manager effectiveness in transformational leadership behaviour. Therefore, manager effectiveness in their discussions with employees on topics of their career and goals shows the importance of training managers how to do this efficiently. Many managers attend training designed to address company programs on productivity, quality metrics and cost management. Perhaps, attention should also be placed on developing managers to allow them to build

personal connections with employees and use intrinsic rewards as a way to engage and retain talent (Tymon, Stumpf, & Smith, 2011).

*Hold managers accountable for retention:* The current study suggests that manager behaviour influences turnover intention. HR leaders could include retention goals for talents as objectives for managers at all levels. While turnover is not entirely within the control of the managers, managers have a strong impact on retention (Tymon, Stumpf, & Smith, 2011). When talents leave the organization, HR can help ensure that the real reasons why talents leave the organization are understood. This could help to identify trends, issues and feedback that could be used to make improvements.

*Create a career management process:* Most organizations encourage self management of career by providing on- line job posting tools and general information regarding career choices on the company websites. This may be sufficient for some employees but does not proactively stimulate employees to search for career options. HR leaders could strive to put processes in place to encourage managers to have career discussions with their talents to work towards employee career goals.

*Use mechanisms for non-monetary rewards:* HR can develop systems for managers to use as tools to help foster intrinsic rewards and personal commitment. This stimulates recognition which acknowledges progress and the meaningfulness of work effort by employees.

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## Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Dear trainees,

I am currently writing my master thesis as part of my study Human Resources at Tilburg University. Therefore, I am conducting a research on the impact of leadership on trainee development. Your cooperation through the completion of the questionnaire will help to successfully complete my study and will give the organization further insight and recommendations in the influence of leadership behaviours on the development of trainees.

To conduct this research, I send out a questionnaire among all trainees. Therefore, I would like to ask you to fill in the questionnaire (which will take around 5 minutes) before the 31<sup>st</sup> of January. The questionnaire can be entered by clicking on the following link:

[https://tilburgss.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_eE55Lwg3U6g4yhv](https://tilburgss.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_eE55Lwg3U6g4yhv)

Data is collected anonymously and will be kept confidential for the purposes of my research. If you prefer to receive the report of the findings please send me an email. I would like to thank you in advance for your cooperation!

Should you have any questions regarding the questionnaire or the research, please contact me on: [w.vdrzee@tilburguniversity.edu](mailto:w.vdrzee@tilburguniversity.edu).

### Questions

- |                           |                                |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Gender:                | Male / Female                  |
| 2. Age:                   | _ years                        |
| 3. Organizational tenure: | _ years                        |
| 4. Educational level:     | Bachelor degree/ Master degree |
| 5. Nationality:           | _                              |

### Transformational leadership

(1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree)

Respond to the leadership items keeping in mind the manager of your work unit.

6. My manager has a clear understanding of where we are going

7. My manager has a clear sense of where he/she wants our unit to be in 5 years
8. My manager has no idea where the organization is going \*
9. My manager says things that make employees proud to be a part of this organization
10. My manager says positive things about the work unit
11. My manager encourages people to see changing environments as situations full of opportunities
12. My manager challenges me to think about old problems in new ways
13. My manager has ideas that have forced me to rethink some things that I have never questioned before
14. My manager has challenged me to rethink some of my basic assumptions about my work
15. My manager considers my personal feelings before acting
16. My manager behaves in a manner which is thoughtful of my personal needs
17. My manager sees that the interests of employees are given due consideration
18. My manager commends me when I do a better than average job
19. My manager acknowledges improvement in my quality of work
20. My manager personally compliments me when I do outstanding work

**Personal growth initiative**

(1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= somewhat disagree, 4=somewhat agree, 5=agree, 6=strongly agree)

21. I set realistic goals for what I want to develop about myself
22. I can tell when I am ready to make specific developments in myself
23. I know how to make a realistic plan in order to develop myself
24. I take every opportunity to grow as it comes up
25. When I try to develop myself, I make a realistic plan for my personal growth
26. I ask for help when I try to develop myself
27. I actively work to improve myself
28. I figure out what I need to develop about myself
29. I am constantly trying to grow as a person
30. I know how to set realistic goals to make developments in myself
31. I know when I need to make a specific development in myself
32. I use resources when I try to grow

- 33. I know steps I can take to make intentional developments in myself
- 34. I actively seek out help when I try to develop myself
- 35. I look for opportunities to grow as a person
- 36. I know when it's time to develop specific things about myself

### **Turnover intention**

(1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= somewhat disagree, 4=neither agree nor disagree, 5=somewhat agree, 6= agree, 7=strongly agree)

- 37. I often think of leaving the organization
- 38. It is very possible that I will look for a new job soon
- 39. If I may choose again, I will choose to work for the current organization \*

### **Organizational citizenship behaviour**

(1= never, 2= rarely, 3=sometimes, 4=most of the time, 5= always)

- 40. I assist my supervisor with his or her work
- 41. I make innovative suggestions to improve my department
- 42. I volunteer for things that are not required
- 43. I orient new people even though it is not required
- 44. I help others who have been absent
- 45. I attend functions that are not required but that help improve the image of the organization
- 46. I help others who have heavy workloads
- 47. I take undeserved breaks \*
- 48. I coast towards the end of the day \*
- 49. I spend a great deal of time on personal phone conversations \*
- 50. I arrive at work on time
- 51. I give advance notice if unable to come to work
- 52. I attend work above the norm
- 53. I do not take extra breaks
- 54. I do not spend time in idle conversations
- 55. I do not take unnecessary time off work

**Role stress**

(1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree)

- 56. I have to do things that should be done differently
- 57. I receive an assignment without the manpower to complete it
- 58. I have to argue about a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment
- 59. I work with two or more groups who operate quite differently
- 60. I receive incompatible requests from two or more people
- 61. I do things that are accepted by one person and not accepted by others
- 62. I receive an assignment without adequate resources and materials to execute it
- 63. I work on unnecessary things
- 64. I feel certain about how much authority I have \*
- 65. I have clear, planned goals and objectives for my job \*
- 66. I know that I have divided my time properly \*
- 67. I know what my responsibilities are \*
- 68. I know exactly what is expected from me \*
- 69. Explanation is clear of what has to be done \*

\* = reversed scoring

## Appendix 2: Factor analyses

Table 5

### *Factor analysis Transformational Leadership*

Scale	Transformational leadership
My manager has a clear understanding of where we are going.	.653
My manager has a clear sense of where he/she wants our unit to be in 5 years.	.585
My manager has no idea where the organization is going.	.574
My manager says things that make employees proud to be a part of this organization.	.633
My manager says positive things about the work unit.	.479
My manager encourages people to see changing environments as situations full of opportunities.	.689
My manager challenges me to think about old problems in new ways.	.623
My manager has ideas that have forced me to rethink some things that I have never questioned before.	.529
My manager has challenged me to rethink some of my basic assumptions about my work.	.592
My manager considers my personal feelings before acting.	.608
My manager behaves in a manner which is thoughtful of my personal needs.	.682
My manager sees that the interests of employees are given due consideration.	.653
My manager commends me when I do a better than average job.	.687
My manager acknowledges improvement in my quality of work.	.705
My manager personally compliments me when I do outstanding work.	.615
Eigenvalue	6.427
Cronbach's $\alpha$	.903

Table 6

*Factor analysis Personal Growth Initiative*

Scale	Personal Growth Initiative
I set realistic goals for what I want to develop about myself.	.488
I can tell when I am ready to make specific developments in myself.	.644
I know how to make a realistic plan in order to develop myself.	.616
I take every opportunity to grow as it comes up.	.558
When I try to develop myself, I make a realistic plan for my personal growth.	.496
I ask for help when I try to develop myself.	.398
I actively work to improve myself.	.656
I figure out what I need to develop about myself.	.631
I am constantly trying to grow as a person.	.578
I know how to set realistic goals to make developments in myself.	.714
I know when I need to make a specific development in myself.	.687
I use resources when I try to grow.	.584
I know steps I can take to make intentional developments in myself.	.641
I actively seek out help when I try to develop myself.	.436
I look for opportunities to grow as a person.	.643
I know when it's time to develop specific things about myself.	.702
Eigenvalue	6.355
Cronbach's $\alpha$	.892

Table 7

*Factor analysis Turnover Intention*

Scale	Turnover Intention
I often think of leaving the organization.	.937
It is very possible that I will look for a new job soon.	.891
If I may choose again, I will choose to work for the current organization.	.624
Eigenvalue	2.326
Cronbach's $\alpha$	.854

Table 8

*Factor analysis Organizational Citizenship Behaviour*

Scale	Organizational Citizenship Behaviour
I make innovative suggestions to improve my department	.346
I volunteer for things that are not required	.485
I orient new people even though it is not required	.704
I help others who have been absent	.681
I attend functions that are not required but that help improve the image of the organization	.443
I help others who have heavy workloads	.483
Eigenvalue	1.996
Cronbach's $\alpha$	.688

Table 9

*Factor analysis Role Stress*

Scale	Role Conflict	Role Ambiguity
I have to do things that should be done differently	.340	
I receive an assignment without the manpower to complete it	.648	
I have to argue about a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment	.485	
I work with two or more groups who operate quite differently	.560	
I receive incompatible requests from two or more people	.791	
I do things that are accepted by one person and not accepted by others	.593	
I receive an assignment without adequate resources and materials to execute it	.648	
I work on unnecessary things	.401	
I feel certain about how much authority I have		.534
I have clear, planned goals and objectives for my job		.760
I know that I have divided my time properly		.443
I know what my responsibilities are		.696
I know exactly what is expected from me		.637
Explanation is clear of what has to be done		.488
Eigenvalue	4.208	2.195
Cronbach's $\alpha$	.789	.770

### Appendix 3: Factor and regression analysis dimensions transformational leadership

Table 10

*Factor analysis dimensions transformational leadership (forced on 5 factors)*

Scale	Vision	Inspirational communication	Intellectual stimulation	Supportive leadership	Personal recognition
My manager has a clear understanding of where we are going.	.675				
My manager has a clear sense of where he/she wants our unit to be in 5 years.	.613				
My manager has no idea where the organization is going.	.462				
My manager says things that make employees proud to be a part of this organization.		.485			
My manager says positive things about the work unit.		.816			
My manager encourages people to see changing environments as situations full of opportunities.		.265			
My manager challenges me to think about old problems in new ways.			.507		
My manager has ideas that have forced me to rethink some things that I have never questioned before.			.790		
My manager has challenged me to rethink some of my basic assumptions about my work.			.715		
My manager considers my personal feelings before acting.				.713	
My manager behaves in a manner which is thoughtful of my personal needs.				.796	

My manager sees that the interests of employees are given due consideration.					.632
My manager commends me when I do a better than average job.					.831
My manager acknowledges improvement in my quality of work.					.721
My manager personally compliments me when I do outstanding work.					.820
Eigenvalue	0.955	0.820	1.196	1.680	6.427
Cronbach's $\alpha$	.728	.712	.791	.836	.897

Table 11

*Linear regression with dependent variables Personal Growth Initiative, Turnover Intention and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour*

	Personal Growth Initiative			Turnover Intention			Organizational Citizenship Behaviour		
	B	SE(B)	$\beta$	B	SE(B)	$\beta$	B	SE(B)	$\beta$
<b>Vision</b>	0.03	0.08	.04	-0.12	0.20	-.06	-0.17	0.08	-.24*
<b>Inspirational communication</b>	-0.02	0.08	-.03	0.02	0.22	.01	0.14	0.08	.18
<b>Intellectual stimulation</b>	0.12	0.07	0.19	-0.37	0.18	-.21*	0.05	0.07	.07
<b>Supportive leadership</b>	-0.01	0.06	-0.01	-0.46	0.17	-.28**	0.00	0.07	.00
<b>Personal recognition</b>	0.14	0.06	0.23*	0.13	0.17	.08	0.16	0.07	.25*
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>		.121			.167			.116	
<b>F</b>		3.872**			5.615**			3.675**	

**Note:** \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$