

TRUE NORTH

In today's workplace climate, career advisory has gone beyond the simple act of placing clients into job roles. It has become an intricate art of helping clients navigate workplace complexities and interweaving that closely with an individual's beliefs, values and principles. As a career practitioner, you are tasked with the all-important role of helping one find meaning and fulfilment in their career. You are instrumental in their search for a purpose-driven life; for their **TRUE NORTH**.

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CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

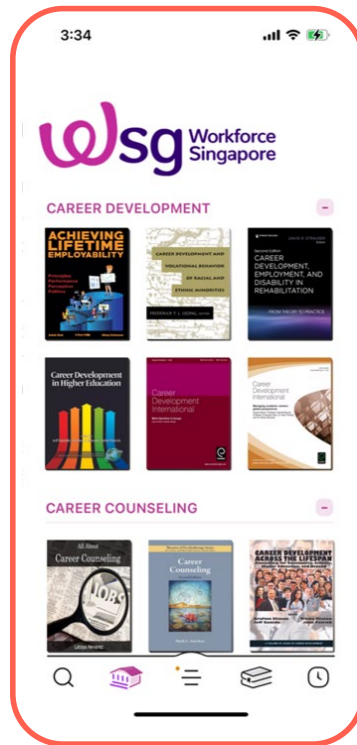
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Jul Intake: 10 Jul 2023
(Application closes: 1 Jun 2023)

Aug Intake: 21 Aug 2023
(Application closes: 13 Jul 2023)

Career Advisory Programme Assessment Pathway (CAP AOP)

Jul Intake: 10 Jul 2023
(Application closes: 26 May 2023)

Career Facilitation Programme (CFP)

Jul Intake: 25 Jul – 3 Oct 2023
(Application closes: 9 Jun 2023)

Sep Intake: 18 Sep - 28 Nov 2023
(Application closes: 4 Aug 2023)

Career Supervision Programme Assessment Pathway (CSP AOP)

Aug Intake: 21 - 22 Aug 2023
(Application closes: 12 Jun 2023)



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HAVE A MOMENT?

We're always looking for ideas and ways to improve **TRUE NORTH**. We would love to hear from you!

This short survey takes only 6 mins to complete, but will go a long way towards shaping future **TRUE NORTH** issues.

Take the survey here:
[go.gov.sg/
true-north-survey](https://go.gov.sg/true-north-survey)



SCAN HERE

GOOD NEWS For Career Practitioners!



01. We can accept credit card payment now!
02. We will absorb the 1% GST increase for 2023. The breakdown of the course fees (inclusive of GST) can be found on our [website](#).



FROM THE CASE CHEST

PERSISTING THROUGH FINANCIAL STRESS AND ANXIETY

Background

Amy (not her real name) was about to complete her studies in Diploma in Communications and Media Management, and would like to pursue a degree, fulfilling her career aspiration as a TV scriptwriter. However, Amy needed to save up for her education and support her family's finances for a few years first.

Challenge

Amy only managed to secure one interview after sending out more than ten applications. She was not successful in that interview. One of the reasons could be the lack of relevant scriptwriting experiences, as advertised. Her job search was further hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused many organisations to stop hiring due to weak business conditions.

She felt defeated and was on the verge of giving up before deciding to seek help from her Care Person (CP), Sue. As a CP, Sue provides pastoral care, guidance and counselling to her students. She also handles administrative matters and guides students, where necessary, in problems relating to studies, family relationships as well as personal and financial matters. Sue is also the first point of contact between students, parents and Temasek Polytechnic.

Intervention

Sue helped Amy realise the importance in taking responsibility for her own career planning, such as understanding her career values, interest, personality and skills, exploring career options and making informed career decisions. With this, Amy concluded that she is still keen to be a TV scriptwriter. From here, Amy tailored her resume and portfolio to the specific job that she was applying for. She did research and practised answering interview questions to prepare for the interviews with her prospective employers. Additionally, through the helping process, Amy realised that is equally important to develop a professional online image for her social media and personal websites that showcased her skills and interests. Amy learned to overcome shyness and engage confidently and effectively with others, all with the help of Sue.



Coupled with Sue's encouragement and persuasion, Amy also stepped out of her comfort zone to seek help from her family and friends, as well as her polytechnic's career services centre, to learn about job opportunities and to get referrals. She also attended industry networking events and connected with professionals in the media field through e-networking platforms. All these exposures helped expand her horizon and enhanced her network and increased her chances of securing job opportunities that align with her career goals.

Outcome

With Amy's persistency and proactive approach, she eventually managed to secure about ten interviews and received job offers from two established media organisations. The job hunt process was mentally and emotionally challenging, but Amy overcame the anxiety and became more confident with Sue's career guidance. She took ownership of the process and became more assured of her career pathway. Amy successfully transitioned into her role as an assistant writer and is learning much on the job. She understood the importance of staying updated in the ever-changing media landscape to stay agile and relevant in her career.



Contributed by
Sue Lou

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Designation: Senior Lecturer/
School of Business
WSG CDF Certified Career
Practitioner (CCP)

FURTHER READINGS:

Developing Perseverance

**Coaching for Anxiety:
Techniques for Helping Clients**

**8 Steps to Help Your Clients Reach
Their Career Goals Faster**



MAIN ARTICLE

STRENGTHS-BASED LEADERSHIP AND EMPLOYEE WORK ENGAGEMENT: A MULTI-SOURCE STUDY

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2023.103859>

Leaders play a crucial role in helping employees perform to the best of their abilities, and positive psychology literature suggests that focusing on employees' strengths rather than weaknesses is key to achieving optimal performance. Strengths-based leadership helps employees identify, utilize and develop their strengths. While strengths-based leadership is a relatively new field of study, it already shows potential benefits for both employees and organizations, such as improved innovative behavior and task performance.

This study aims to expand the understanding of the relationship between strengths-based leadership and employee task performance by exploring underlying mechanisms (i.e. work engagement) and a boundary condition (i.e. Leader-Member Exchange) using a two-wave lagged design. The study also uncovers the causal mechanisms behind strengths-based leadership and its effect on performance based on Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory, addressing the question of how strengths-based leaders can help employees play to their strengths to stay engaged and achieve work-related goals.

1. Strengths-based leadership

Strengths-based leadership is a leadership style that focuses on magnifying the unique strengths of each employee, helping them to be more productive and efficient. This approach has been linked to increased employee well-being, creativity, and performance, and with reduced burnout and absenteeism. Recent empirical studies revealed that self-efficacy and psychological well-being mediate the positive relation between strength-based leadership and employee innovative behaviour. Strengths-based leadership is different from other positive leadership styles like transformational, authentic, and humble leadership as they do not actively identify, use and develop employees' strength. Similarly, empowering and servant leadership emphasize employee growth and development.

2. Strength-based leadership and task performance

Leaders can encourage employees to use their strengths to enhance task performance, which can be achieved by identifying and utilizing their strengths through various



methods such as informal observations, formal assessments, performance appraisals, and discussing how to regulate strengths in specific contexts. By helping employees match their job with their strengths, leaders can improve employees' confidence, effectiveness, and persistence in achieving performance goals. Studies have found a positive relation between strengths use and performance.

Hypothesis 1

Strengths-based leadership at T1 is positively associated with supervisor-rated employee task performance at T2. Refer to Fig 1 for the proposed conceptual model.

3. Strength-based leadership, work engagement and task performance.

When leaders focus on their employees' strengths, it can lead to greater engagement and job satisfaction. This is because employees feel excited and invigorated when they get to work with their strengths, and leaders who appreciate and align their employees' strengths with their job tasks can provide social support and contribute to their engagement. Engaged employees are more likely to invest their energy into their work and are better equipped to handle challenges. Studies have shown that engaged employees are also more likely to proactively optimize their job demands and resources, which can improve their job performance. Therefore, when leaders adopt a strengths-based approach, they can serve as an important resource for their employees and contribute to their engagement, leading to better performance and motivation.

Hypothesis 2

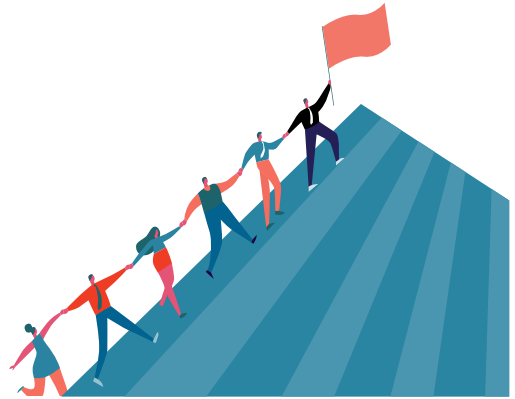
Strengths-based leadership at T1 is positively associated with employee work engagement at T2.

Hypothesis 3

Employee work engagement at T2 mediates the relation between strengths-based leadership at T1 and supervisor-rated employee task performance at T2.

4. The moderating role of Leader-Member Exchange

The Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory suggests that leaders have unique social relationships with their employees, which can vary in quality from low to high. High-quality LMX relationships bring about more behavioral and emotional exchange, enhancing mutual trust, respect, and obligations between leaders and employees. This, in turn, leads to greater open communication and engagement between leaders and employees, resulting in better use of employees' strengths and higher work engagement. In contrast, low-quality LMX relationships are characterized by economic exchanges, where employees perform only according to their job requirements, and not to their full potential. In such relationships, employees may not trust their leaders and may not be willing to expose their strengths. This may result in reduced levels of work engagement and decreased effectiveness of strengths-based leadership.



Hypothesis 4

The positive relation between strengths-based leadership at T1 and employee work engagement at T2 is moderated by Leader-Member Exchange at T1 in such a way that the relation is stronger when Leader-Member Exchange is high (vs. low).

Hypothesis 5

The indirect relation between strengths-based leadership at T1 and employee task performance at T2 via work engagement at T2 is moderated by Leader-Member Exchange at T1 in such a way that the indirect relation is stronger when Leader-Member Exchange is high (vs. low).

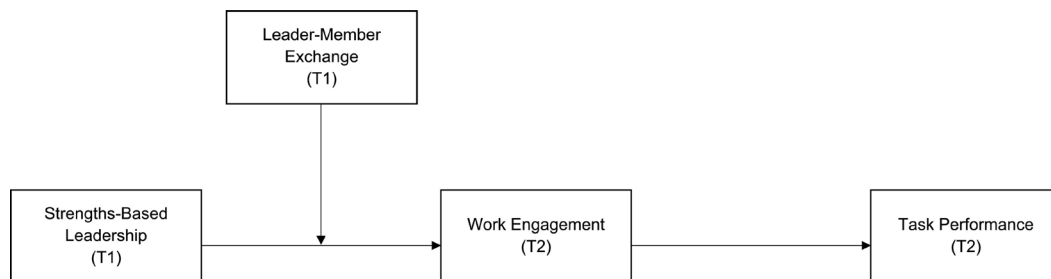


Figure 1: Guide to good decision-making

Method

The study recruited participants through convenience and snowball sampling, with questionnaires distributed to workers and their supervisors in various Chinese organizations. Data was collected at two time points, one month apart, with participants working in various sectors with information technology (22.84 %), manufacturing (14.75 %), wholesale (13.85 %), communication (11.51 %) and hospitality (11.33 %) representing the majority of sectors. The study obtained 556 employee questionnaires paired with 104 leaders for analysis. The strengths-based leadership scale had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.97, the work engagement scale had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.93, and the task performance scale used three items.

Results

Descriptive statistics and Measurement model

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, and correlations between the study variables, and confirms that strengths-based leadership and LMX are positively correlated with work engagement and task performance. Confirmatory factor analyses suggest that a four-factor model with strengths-based leadership, work engagement, task performance, and LMX loading on four separate factors had a good fit to the data, with better fit than alternative models.

Variable	M	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. Gender	1.52	0.50							
2. Age	33.12	7.56	-0.04						
3. Education	3.61	0.84	-0.10*	-0.30**					
4. Organizational tenure	4.70	4.97	-0.01	0.55**	-0.14**				
5. Strengths-based leadership	5.48	1.01	-0.11**	-0.09*	0.10*	-0.05			
6. Work engagement	4.83	1.17	-0.04	-0.16**	0.28**	-0.04	0.35**		
7. Task performance	5.47	0.93	-0.05	-0.07	0.19**	0.09*	0.12**	0.15**	
8. Leader-Member Exchange	3.91	0.61	-0.12**	-0.09*	0.11**	-0.03	0.83**	0.33**	0.12**

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and correlations between the study variables.

Hypotheses testing

The study tested three hypotheses regarding the relationship between strengths-based leadership, work engagement, and employee task performance. The results show that there was no significant relationship between strengths-based leadership and employee task performance, not supporting Hypothesis 1. However, the results indicated a positive relationship between strengths-based leadership and work engagement, supporting Hypothesis 2.

Furthermore, the study found that employees' work engagement mediated the relationship between strengths-based leadership and employee task performance, supporting Hypothesis 3. The results also revealed that employee work engagement was positively related to employee task performance.

Lastly, the study supported Hypothesis 4 as the interaction between strengths-based leadership and LMX was positively related to employee work engagement.

Conclusion

This study investigated the relationship between strengths-based leadership, employee task performance, and the moderating role of LMX in this relationship. Although it did not find a direct effect of strengths-based leadership on employee performance, it did find an indirect effect through increased employee work engagement. The study also found a small positive moderating effect of LMX in the relationship between strengths-based leadership and work engagement. However, LMX did not moderate the full indirect process between strengths-based leadership and task performance via work engagement. The study contributes to the literature by showing that LMX can moderate the effectiveness of strengths-based leadership.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

- 01** As a career practitioner performing career advisory as the secondary role, eg, HR, line manager, etc, how can you take steps to practise strengths-based leadership to improve employees' work engagement?
- 02** How can you influence your organisation to invest in strengths-based leadership?

Source: Wang, J., van Woerkom, M., Breevaart, K., Bakker, A. B., & Xu, S. (2023). Strengths-based leadership and employee work engagement: A multi-source study. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 142, 103859. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2023.103859>

FURTHER READINGS:



Leadership and Job Demands-Resources Theory: A Systematic Review



Strengths-Based Leadership: How to Optimize Your Team's Abilities



A New Concept of Work Engagement Theory in Cognitive Engagement, Emotional Engagement, and Physical Engagement



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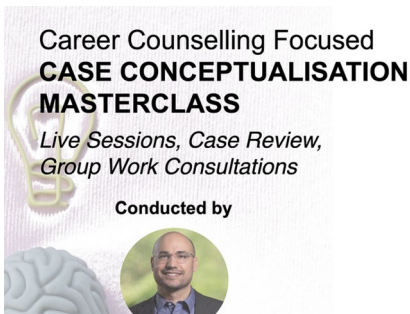
1) Career Construction Masterclass (Advanced)

The Career Construction Interview is a structured career counselling centric process to help clients discover personal motivating beliefs, values and reconstruct new possibilities to support career decision making.

Participants will learn and develop an understanding of career and counselling theories, and how the constructs and concepts explain, and support the use of the Career Construction Interview. Coupled with related resources such as the Career Adapt-abilities Scale and the My Career Story Workbook as well as practicum, participants can help clients to construct, narrate and voice their own story that best fits who they are and who they want to become.



I love the practicum most! It's interactive and through the practicums, I was able to observe carefully and learn from the feedback given to the participants by Dr. Kevin.

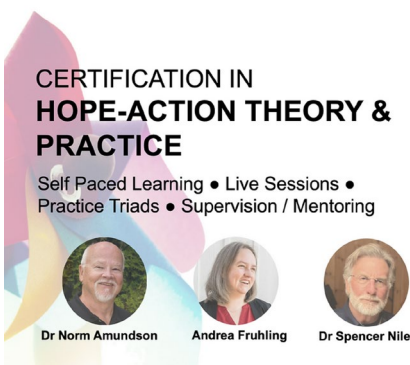


2) Career Counselling - Focused Case Conceptualisation Masterclass

Case conceptualisation is key to highly effective counseling. It is a systematic method and clinical strategy for obtaining and organizing information about a client, understanding and explaining the client's situation and maladaptive patterns, guiding and focusing treatment, anticipating challenges and roadblocks, and preparing for appropriate intervention. What is particularly useful is the group case study discussion during the masterclass where participants get to apply the 8-step case conceptualization model in a case study discussion.



The examples and metaphor are helpful for learning and application.



3) Certification in Hope-Action Theory & Practice (CHATP)

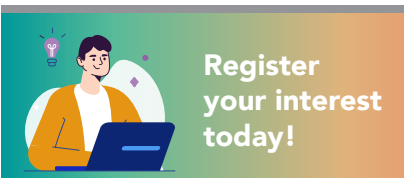
The CHATP is a Certification Programme that uses hope, positive psychology and strength-based competencies to further deepen Career Practitioners' repertoire of coachings skills and toolkits into your career practice



I find the programme objectives to be very powerful and meaningful. The course has also equipped me with the confidence to apply the pin-wheel to help create a greater sense of hopefulness...



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