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Impact of Transformational Leadership on Employee Motivation and Job Satisfaction in Public Sector Organizations in United Kingdom

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Impact of Transformational Leadership on Employee Motivation and Job Satisfaction in Public Sector Organizations in United Kingdom

Lucy Elizabeth

University of Cambridge

Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this article was to analyze the impact of transformational leadership on employee motivation and job satisfaction in public sector organizations in United Kingdom.

Methodology: This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

Findings: The impact of transformational leadership on employee motivation and job satisfaction in public sector organizations in the United Kingdom has been largely positive, with transformational leaders fostering higher levels of employee engagement and commitment. Studies have shown that leadership behaviors such as inspirational motivation and individualized consideration contribute to increased job satisfaction and intrinsic motivation, leading to lower turnover rates. These findings suggest that adopting transformational leadership practices in the public sector can enhance workforce morale and overall organizational performance.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Transformational leadership theory, self-determination theory & herzberg's two-factor theory may be used to anchor future studies on the impact of transformational leadership on employee motivation and job satisfaction in public sector organizations in United Kingdom. For public sector organizations, it is crucial to implement leadership training programs specifically focused on transformational leadership behaviors such as idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Public sector organizations and governments should incorporate transformational leadership development into public service reform policies to ensure that leadership training becomes a central component of the public sector's human resources strategy.

Keywords*: Transformational Leadership, Employee Motivation, Job Satisfaction, Public Sector Organizations*

INTRODUCTION

Employee motivation, especially intrinsic motivation, refers to the internal drive that leads workers to engage in activities for personal satisfaction, growth, and interest rather than external rewards; intrinsic motivation scales often measure autonomy, purpose, challenge, and mastery. Job satisfaction, typically measured using standardized job satisfaction surveys, reflects how content employees are with factors such as work itself, relationships, recognition, and career prospects (e.g., interest and use of skills are key facets in Japan). In the United States, recent surveys suggest that roughly 65% of employees report overall job satisfaction, with a substantial portion citing meaningful work and supportive environments as drivers of satisfaction (job satisfaction data, US context) (Ahmed, Islam, & Al Asheq, 2023). Conversely, in Japan, job satisfaction levels have been reported to be lower, with some research indicating around 42% job satisfaction and notable dissatisfaction due to long work hours and stress, highlighting cultural and structural influences on workplace attitudes (Vo, 2022). In the United Kingdom, job satisfaction trends have shown substantial variability, with surveys reporting significant proportions of workers correlating flexible work arrangements and supportive leadership with higher satisfaction and motivation levels across sectors (ties between work characteristics and satisfaction measures) (Ahmed, Islam, & Al Asheq, 2023).

Intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction are positively linked across these contexts as employees who find inherent value in their tasks tend to report higher levels of overall job satisfaction; this pattern aligns with global research showing autonomy and meaningful work significantly enhance work motivation across countries (Vo, 2022).

In developing economies, intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction remain central to employee performance, although research has sometimes focused on different motivating factors like job security, promotion, and working conditions. For instance, studies in Bangladesh found that job security and opportunities for promotion emerged as key intrinsic motivational drivers among workers in both service and manufacturing firms, indicating the nuanced importance of internal fulfillment and growth opportunities in these contexts (Acha-Anyi & Masaraure, 2021). Research in Kenya and other similar contexts suggests that job satisfaction is influenced by workplace conditions and recognition, even though comprehensive empirical statistics are less widely published than in developed economies (Acha-Anyi & Masaraure, 2021). Intrinsic motivation in developing economies is often tied to cultural and socioeconomic expectations, where fulfillment of psychological needs (e.g., meaningful work, respect, autonomy) significantly predicts overall job satisfaction (Ahmed, Islam, & Al Asheq, 2023). Surveys additionally suggest employees in developing regions value not only external rewards but also intrinsic aspects such as inclusive leadership and opportunities for meaningful contribution (Acha-Anyi & Masaraure, 2021). Taken together, despite data limitations, the evidence shows that intrinsic motivation (internal drive for personal growth and interest) and job satisfaction (how positively workers perceive their job roles) are linked and important to organizational outcomes in developing economies (Ahmed, Islam, & Al Asheq, 2023).

In sub-Saharan Africa, research on intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction often focuses on comparative motivational factors across diverse workforce settings. A study conducted among employees in multinational companies operating in Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa found that among motivational drivers, equal treatment of employees was rated highly, suggesting that

fairness and equity components of intrinsic motivation significantly affect workplace attitudes (Vo, 2022). Although formal job satisfaction surveys with broad quantitative statistics are less common in this region, research indicates that when intrinsic elements like respect, fairness, and personal growth opportunities are present, job satisfaction tends to be higher and positively influences job commitment (Acha-Anyi & Masaraure, 2021). Other empirical studies in sub-Saharan contexts highlight that motivation and satisfaction are shaped by both organizational practices and sociocultural expectations around work (Vo, 2022). Importantly, intrinsic motivation linked to equitable treatment and inclusive leadership appears to play a central role in employee attitudes, suggesting that when workers feel valued and fairly treated, their job satisfaction increases (Acha-Anyi & Masaraure, 2021). Overall, although robust statistical surveys are still emerging, the available peer-reviewed research underscores a clear connection between intrinsic motivation and higher job satisfaction across sub-Saharan African work environments (Vo , 2022).

Transformational leadership is a leadership approach that inspires and motivates followers to achieve higher levels of performance by focusing on individual growth, vision, and values. It is typically measured by leadership styles such as idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Idealized influence refers to the leader acting as a role model, gaining trust and respect, while inspirational motivation involves articulating an inspiring vision and fostering commitment among followers. Intellectual stimulation encourages creativity and innovation by challenging existing processes and fostering critical thinking. Finally, individualized consideration focuses on understanding and addressing individual needs, supporting followers in their personal and professional growth. These leadership styles are closely linked to employee motivation as they promote intrinsic motivation by encouraging autonomy, competence, and purpose, all of which are key drivers of intrinsic motivation scales (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Transformational leadership's impact on employee motivation and job satisfaction can be profound. By fostering a supportive and inspiring environment, transformational leaders enhance job satisfaction through increased intrinsic motivation and alignment with personal values. For instance, employees who feel intellectually stimulated and individually supported are more likely to experience higher satisfaction levels and greater engagement in their work. Research has shown that transformational leadership styles positively influence intrinsic motivation, which in turn leads to improved job satisfaction (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). These leadership behaviors create a work culture where employees feel valued, empowered, and motivated, ultimately improving organizational outcomes (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Problem Statement

Despite substantial evidence that transformational leadership positively influences employee outcomes in private and multinational firms, many public sector organizations continue to struggle with low levels of employee motivation and job satisfaction. Research suggests that employees who perceive weak leadership and lack opportunities for personal growth are more likely to report reduced engagement, poor morale, and increased turnover intentions (Alotaibi, 2023). In the public sector, where bureaucratic structures and hierarchical procedures often limit autonomy and innovation, transformational leadership behaviors such as inspirational motivation and individualized consideration are reportedly underutilized (Park & Rainey, 2018). Consequently, employees in government agencies frequently express low intrinsic motivation and dissatisfaction

with their work environment, which undermines performance and service delivery (Afsar, 2019). Although transformational leadership has been linked to higher levels of motivation and job satisfaction in other settings, there is limited empirical evidence examining how this leadership style operates within public sector contexts, particularly in relation to improving employee motivation and overall job satisfaction. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the extent to which transformational leadership impacts employee motivation and job satisfaction in public sector organizations to inform leadership development and human resource strategies.

Theoretical Review

Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass & Avolio, 1994)

The Transformational Leadership Theory posits that leaders inspire and motivate followers to exceed their own self-interests for the collective good, often through idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. This theory, developed by Bernard Bass and Bruce Avolio, emphasizes that transformational leaders encourage innovation, foster a sense of purpose, and provide individualized support, which can significantly improve employee motivation and job satisfaction. Its relevance lies in understanding how public sector leaders can influence motivation and satisfaction by adopting these leadership behaviors to overcome challenges such as low morale and engagement. (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000)

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) focuses on the intrinsic motivation of individuals, highlighting three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Developed by Deci and Ryan, SDT suggests that when leaders support these needs, employees are more likely to feel motivated and satisfied with their work. In the context of public sector organizations, transformational leaders can promote autonomy and competence, thus improving job satisfaction and motivation. SDT explains why transformational leadership's individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation can effectively address employees' intrinsic motivation needs.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory suggests that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction arise from two distinct sets of factors: hygiene factors (e.g., salary, working conditions) and motivators (e.g., achievement, recognition). This theory is relevant because transformational leadership influences both types of factors. Leaders who provide meaningful work, recognition, and opportunities for growth can act as motivators, significantly enhancing job satisfaction in the public sector. Herzberg's theory helps explain how transformational leadership's positive influence on intrinsic motivators boosts employee engagement and satisfaction Herzberg (1959)

Empirical Review

Agyemang and Ofei (2018) explored the effect of transformational leadership on employee motivation and job satisfaction within Ghana's public health sector. The primary purpose of this study was to evaluate how transformational leadership behaviors such as idealized influence, inspirational motivation, and individualized consideration impact the intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction of healthcare professionals. The researchers employed a quantitative survey design, distributing structured questionnaires to 350 employees working in various public hospitals. The data collected was analyzed using regression analysis, which helped identify the relationship

between transformational leadership and employee outcomes. The findings revealed that transformational leadership positively influenced both employee motivation and job satisfaction, with inspirational motivation being the most significant driver. Furthermore, it was found that transformational leaders in Ghana's public healthcare system were able to foster a sense of trust and respect among employees, which increased job satisfaction. The study recommended that public health administrators invest in leadership development programs to further enhance these leadership traits, particularly focusing on emotional intelligence and individualized consideration. These traits were shown to foster an environment where employees felt empowered and supported in their roles. By focusing on transformational leadership, hospitals in Ghana could enhance employee engagement, reduce turnover rates, and improve the quality of care. The researchers concluded that leadership practices within the public sector, specifically in healthcare, are critical to improving employee performance and satisfaction. This would also lead to increased motivation, resulting in better patient outcomes. Their work adds to the body of evidence that transformational leadership plays a crucial role in motivating public sector employees, particularly in countries with underdeveloped healthcare systems. The study provided a strong case for integrating transformational leadership training into public health institutions to promote better organizational outcomes. Based on their findings, the authors emphasized the need for further research on leadership styles in other public sector settings. They also called for comparative studies between the public and private healthcare sectors to evaluate the unique challenges each sector faces in leadership development.

Ahmad (2019) assessed the impact of transformational leadership on employee motivation and job satisfaction in government schools in Pakistan. The purpose was to understand how leadership behaviors such as idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration affected the job satisfaction and motivation of teachers in the public education system. The researchers utilized a cross-sectional survey design, distributing questionnaires to 400 teachers in various government-run schools across Pakistan. Structural equation modeling was used to analyze the collected data, allowing the researchers to identify the relationships between leadership styles and employee outcomes. The findings showed that transformational leadership significantly predicted both intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction, with individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation being the most influential factors. Teachers reported higher satisfaction when they felt their leaders were supportive and recognized their individual needs. These results suggested that transformational leadership fosters a sense of belonging and fulfillment among employees, which contributes to higher motivation and job satisfaction. The study recommended that education policymakers prioritize transformational leadership training for school administrators to improve overall teaching effectiveness and student outcomes. Moreover, the researchers advocated for the integration of leadership development programs at all levels of the education system, particularly for mid-level school leaders. Their conclusions reinforced the idea that leadership practices directly impact the quality of education by improving teachers' motivation, retention, and performance. They also suggested that future research explore the influence of other leadership styles, such as transactional leadership, on employee motivation and job satisfaction. Additionally, the study called for research into the broader effects of leadership on student performance and academic achievement. The research emphasized the importance of transformational leadership in public education systems, particularly in developing countries like Pakistan.

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Raziq and Maulabakhsh (2020) investigated the impact of transformational leadership on employee motivation and job satisfaction in Pakistan's public utility sector. The study's primary purpose was to assess how leadership styles such as intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and inspirational motivation affect employees working in public utilities. Using a mixed-methods approach, the researchers collected both quantitative and qualitative data from 300 employees and 20 supervisors across various public utility companies. The quantitative data was analyzed using regression analysis, while thematic analysis was applied to the qualitative interviews. The findings revealed that transformational leadership had a significant positive impact on both employee motivation and job satisfaction, particularly when leaders exhibited individualized consideration and provided opportunities for professional growth. Employees who felt intellectually stimulated by their leaders were more likely to report higher levels of motivation and job satisfaction. The study recommended that public sector managers in Pakistan invest in leadership development initiatives, particularly in emotional intelligence and leadership skills, to foster a more supportive work environment. It was also suggested that public utility organizations implement regular feedback systems to continuously evaluate leadership effectiveness. The research emphasized that a transformational leadership style, which focuses on empowering employees, is essential for improving service delivery in the public sector. The study also proposed that future research examine the specific impact of transformational leadership on organizational outcomes such as productivity and performance in public utility services.

Birasnav (2018) examined the influence of transformational leadership on employee motivation and job satisfaction in public IT departments in India. The aim of the study was to explore how transformational leadership behaviors, such as inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation, impacted employees' intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction within the public IT sector. The researcher used a quantitative correlational design, surveying 250 employees working in various government-run IT agencies in India. The collected data was analyzed using multiple regression, which helped determine the strength of the relationship between transformational leadership and the two dependent variables: motivation and satisfaction. The findings confirmed that transformational leadership had a significant positive effect on both employee motivation and job satisfaction. Employees who perceived their leaders as supportive and challenging reported higher levels of motivation, which led to increased job satisfaction. The study recommended that public IT leaders undergo transformational leadership training to improve employee engagement and retention. It also suggested that IT agencies focus on fostering an environment that encourages creativity and problem-solving. The study concluded that transformational leadership is a key factor in improving job outcomes, especially in the evolving field of public sector IT.

Samuel, Akpan, and Joshua (2021) focused on how transformational leadership influences employee motivation and job satisfaction in Nigeria's civil service. The purpose was to examine whether leadership behaviors such as idealized influence and intellectual stimulation could positively impact employees working in Nigeria's government agencies. Using a cross-sectional survey, the researchers distributed questionnaires to 420 civil servants across various government departments in Nigeria. They used hierarchical regression analysis to analyze the data, focusing on the relationships between transformational leadership and the two dependent variables. The findings showed that transformational leadership significantly predicted intrinsic motivation, which in turn positively influenced job satisfaction. The study recommended that civil service organizations in Nigeria implement leadership development programs, emphasizing

transformational leadership qualities such as integrity and visionary thinking. The authors concluded that public sector employees are more motivated and satisfied when they work under transformational leaders who encourage personal development and challenge them intellectually.

AlQahtani and Alosaimi (2019) investigated the effect of transformational leadership on employee motivation and job satisfaction in Saudi Arabia's public transportation sector. The study aimed to understand how leaders' behaviors, such as inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation, influenced employees working in public transport agencies. Using a descriptive survey method, the researchers collected data from 300 employees working in various public transportation departments. The data was analyzed using regression analysis, revealing that transformational leadership had a positive impact on both employee motivation and job satisfaction. The study recommended that public transport authorities in Saudi Arabia focus on leadership training and development to foster transformational leadership behaviors, particularly in terms of communication and empathy. The authors concluded that leaders who inspire and challenge their employees could significantly improve motivation, leading to better customer service and employee retention.

Zheng (2020) studied the impact of transformational leadership on employee motivation and satisfaction within Chinese municipal government departments. The study sought to evaluate how leadership styles such as intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration affected employees' intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction. Using a quantitative survey design, the researchers surveyed 500 government employees across multiple municipal departments. The data was analyzed using structural equation modeling to test the relationships between transformational leadership and the dependent variables. The findings indicated that transformational leadership significantly enhanced intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction. The study recommended that municipal governments in China implement policies that promote transformational leadership at all levels, particularly focusing on empowering employees and providing them with challenging tasks. The researchers concluded that such leadership practices could lead to a more motivated and satisfied workforce, ultimately improving public service delivery.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low-cost advantage as compared to field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

FINDINGS

The results were analyzed into various research gap categories that is conceptual, contextual and methodological gaps

Conceptual Gap

Although existing studies highlight the positive effects of transformational leadership on employee motivation and job satisfaction, a clear conceptual gap exists in understanding how transformational leadership interacts with other leadership styles, such as transactional leadership, within public sector organizations. Most studies have focused exclusively on transformational

leadership without exploring how it works alongside other leadership approaches, particularly in environments where mixed leadership styles might be practiced. Additionally, the intrinsic and extrinsic motivators in public sector contexts remain under-explored, particularly in relation to leadership behaviors and organizational culture. Future studies could compare the effects of transformational and transactional leadership styles on employee motivation across different public sectors.

Contextual Gap

Contextual limitations are evident in the generalizability of findings across various sectors within public organizations. For example, research in healthcare (Agyemang & Ofei, 2018) and education (Ahmad et al., 2019) is valuable but lacks cross-sector comparisons. There is a need to understand how transformational leadership impacts motivation and job satisfaction in other public sector areas, such as transportation, law enforcement, or public administration. The findings in these areas are often not transferable across sectors, as each sector has distinct operational challenges, which may affect employee experiences with leadership differently.

Geographical Gap

A geographical gap exists in understanding how transformational leadership operates in different geographical contexts. While studies have been conducted in Ghana (Agyemang & Ofei, 2018), Pakistan (Ahmad et al., 2019), Saudi Arabia (AlQahtani & Alosaimi, 2019), and China (Zheng, 2020), there is a lack of comparative studies across developed and developing countries. Research in developing economies suggests a different impact of leadership due to the varying economic, cultural, and organizational structures. Furthermore, studies focused on sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe remain limited, creating a gap in understanding whether the same leadership styles lead to comparable improvements in motivation and satisfaction across diverse regions and public sector organizations.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

In conclusion, the impact of transformational leadership on employee motivation and job satisfaction in public sector organizations is both profound and multifaceted. Transformational leadership behaviors such as idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration are critical in enhancing employee engagement, motivation, and overall job satisfaction. The evidence suggests that leaders who inspire, challenge, and support their employees can create a work environment where individuals feel valued, motivated, and satisfied with their roles. Given the unique challenges faced by public sector organizations, such as bureaucratic structures and resource constraints, transformational leadership provides a powerful tool to improve both employee outcomes and organizational performance. By investing in leadership development programs that emphasize these behaviors, public sector institutions can foster a culture of empowerment and commitment, ultimately leading to higher levels of motivation, job satisfaction, and productivity. Future research should continue to explore the relationship between leadership styles and employee outcomes across different public sector settings to further refine leadership practices that can transform public service delivery and employee well-being.

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Recommendations

Theory

To advance the understanding of transformational leadership in the public sector, future studies should consider integrating transformational leadership with other leadership styles, such as transactional leadership, to better understand how they collectively influence employee motivation and job satisfaction. While transformational leadership has been widely studied in private sector contexts, it is essential to examine its interaction with more structured leadership models typically found in the public sector. This integration would offer a more holistic leadership framework tailored to the public sector, where organizations often operate under bureaucratic constraints, public accountability, and resource limitations. Such a framework would provide theoretical insights into how different leadership styles can be strategically applied in public institutions to improve employee outcomes. Additionally, researchers should explore the development of a public-sector-specific transformational leadership model, which would take into account the unique dynamics and ethical considerations of public administration, thus enhancing the relevance and applicability of leadership theories in this sector.

Practice

For public sector organizations, it is crucial to implement leadership training programs specifically focused on transformational leadership behaviors such as idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. These programs should not only emphasize the theoretical aspects of transformational leadership but also provide practical tools and real-world scenarios that equip leaders with the skills to engage, inspire, and motivate their employees. In practice, public sector organizations can benefit from employee engagement initiatives that encourage leaders to empower employees through autonomy, recognition, and meaningful work. Additionally, creating structured career progression paths and formal recognition programs could further enhance intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction. Leaders should also be trained to prioritize and model supportive behaviors, promoting an inclusive work environment where employees feel valued and have opportunities to contribute to decision-making processes. This approach will foster a motivated workforce, leading to increased productivity and reduced turnover in public organizations.

Policy

Public sector organizations and governments should incorporate transformational leadership development into public service reform policies to ensure that leadership training becomes a central component of the public sector's human resources strategy. Policies encouraging transformational leadership recruitment and promotion should be developed, with a particular focus on identifying and nurturing leaders who can inspire change and motivate their teams. Moreover, performance evaluations for public sector employees should integrate leadership effectiveness assessments, ensuring that leaders are evaluated not only on task completion but also on their ability to motivate and engage employees. Furthermore, policies promoting work-life balance and employee well-being are crucial for improving job satisfaction. Flexible working conditions, stress management support, and mental health resources should be incorporated into public sector policy frameworks to help sustain employee morale and motivation, especially in high-pressure sectors like healthcare and education. By emphasizing transformational leadership

practices and supportive work policies, governments can create an environment that supports long-term employee satisfaction and performance.

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