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Leading with Care: Individualized Consideration and Teachers' Job Satisfaction in Public Secondary Schools of Rusizi District, Rwanda.



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Leading with Care: Individualized Consideration and Teachers' Job Satisfaction in Public Secondary Schools of Rusizi District, Rwanda.

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of the study was to examine how headteachers' individualized consideration shapes teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Rusizi District, Rwanda.

Methodology: The study adopted a convergent parallel mixed-methods design. Data were collected through structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews from 145 teachers and 17 headteacher across 17 public secondary schools in Rusizi District. Quantitative analysis included descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically.

Findings: The study reveals that teachers perceive high levels of individualized consideration ($M=4.03$, $SD=1.16$), accompanied by positive levels of job satisfaction ($M=3.88$, $SD=1.09$). There is a strong positive relationship between individualized consideration and satisfaction ($r = 0.558$, $p < 0.01$), and approximately 31% of the variation in teachers' job satisfaction is explained by personalized leadership practices. The study demonstrates that equitable and consistent individualized consideration is essential for fostering teacher motivation, engagement, and professional commitment. It recommends that there is need for relational leadership training, structured mentorship, fair recognition, and policy integration to enhance teachers' job satisfaction.

Unique Contribution To Theory, Policy, and Practice: Theoretically, results clearly show that how headteachers relate to teachers deeply shapes teachers' satisfaction with their work. Thereby revealing that Transformational leadership theory is not an abstract model but a lived experience that influences teachers' motivation, well-being, and commitment to the profession. At the policy level, there is need to integrate transformational leadership competencies into headteacher training, appraisal, and promotion frameworks. Leadership development programs should emphasize ethical leadership and emotional intelligence. Policy initiatives should provide teachers with structured support for professional development, and mentoring systems. From a practical perspective, the strong influence of individualized consideration suggests that effective headteachers must combine professional support, and genuine care for teachers as individuals. Teachers should also communicate openly with school leaders about their professional needs and challenges.

Keywords: *Individualized consideration, Public secondary schools, Professional support, Teacher job satisfaction, Transformational leadership.*

Background of the study

Teachers' professional experience-whether they feel valued, supported, and understood-profoundly influence instructional quality, student outcomes, and long-term commitment to the profession (Urlick & Bowers, 2022; Asiimwe & Zuena, 2023; Kedia, 2025; Jiang, Yip, & Gong, 2025). In public secondary schools, leadership practices play a pivotal role in shaping teachers' motivation, well-being, and engagement (Jiang, Yip, & Gong, 2025). Globally, (Yong, 2025; Young and Zhang, 2025; Jiang, Yip and Gong, 2025), argue that rising accountability pressures, curriculum reforms, and expanding student populations have made teachers' job satisfaction an urgent policy concern. This is particularly evidence in low- and middle-income countries where challenges such as limited resources, Heavy workloads, and large class sizes are pronounced (UNESCO & International Task Force on Teachers, 2023; World Bank, 2025).

Recent studies and policy discussions increasingly emphasize leadership approaches that foster supportive and motivating school environments (Leithwood et al., 2020; OECD, 2025). Transformational leadership, therefore, emerges as particularly effective due to its relational and motivational focus (Uwanyirigira & Sikubwabo, 2022; Asiimwe & Niyikiza, 2023; Apolot, 2024; Sekiswa & Matovu, 2025). As argued by Boateng and Mensah, (2024), transformational leadership does not rely solely on compliance or extrinsic incentives, rather it cultivates shared values, intrinsic motivation, professional growth among staff.

In that way, Urlick and Bowers 2022; Shukri & Noor, 2024 attest that one key dimension of individualized consideration is the leader's capacity to attend to each teacher's unique professional and emotional needs. International evidence links individualized consideration with higher teacher satisfaction, engagement, and well-being (Bellibaş et al., 2023; Eryilmaz & Strietholt, 2025; OECD, 2025), and in Sub-Sahara Africa, relational leadership is particularly crucial in resource-limited contexts (Uwanyirigira & Sikubwabo, 2022; Boateng & Mensah, 2024; Wang, Law, Hackett, Wang & Chen, 2025).

Despite these insights, Rwandan studies have largely focused on general working conditions and leadership practices, leaving a gap in understanding the effects of specific transformational leadership dimensions (Uwanyirigira & Sikubwabo, 2022; Asiimwe & Zuena, 2023); Shukri & Noor, 2024; Ochia,2025); Government of Rwanda 2025). This study addresses this gap by investigating how headteachers 'individualized consideration influences teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Rusizi District of Rwanda. It asks: How does individualized consideration affect teachers' job satisfaction? The study contributes both theoretically to leadership scholarship and empirically to informing policy and practice in Rwanda.

Theoretical framing

This study is grounded in transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985; Bass & Riggio, 2006), which conceptualizes leadership as a relational and value-driven process. The leaders inspire followers to move beyond self-interest, embrace shared goals, and pursue collective

growth (Eryilmaz & Strietholt, 2025; OECD, 2025). While other frameworks, such as servant leadership and self-determination theory, also emphasize rational and motivational aspects of leadership (Jiang, Yip, & Gong, 2025), transformational leadership fits well with the study. Among the four dimensions of transformational leadership, this study focuses on individualized consideration.

This dimension involves mentoring, providing personalized feedback, offering recognition, and creating supportive interactions (Uwanyirigira & Sikubwabo, 2022; Asimwe & Zuena, 2023): Shukri & Noor, 2024: Ochia, 2025): Government of Rwanda 2025). In education, where teaching is both relational and emotionally demanding, individualized consideration helps to understand how headteacher's leadership behaviors influence teachers' motivation, engagement, and overall job satisfaction. This dimension fosters teachers' psychological safety and trust Eryilmaz & Strietholt, (2025); OECD, (2025) which allows for sharing ideas and concerns without fear of judgement.

Related literature

Within the field of leadership studies, transformational leadership offers a comprehensive framework to understand how leaders influence followers beyond mere compliance or transactional exchanges (Leithwood et al., 2020, Judge & Piccolo, 2004, Burns, 1978, Bass & Riggio, 2006). Burns (1978), Bass (1985) and Bas and Raggio (2006) suggest that of the four dimensions of transformational leadership namely; idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration; the most salient in educational context is individualized consideration due to its relational and emotional nature.

According to Hallinger (2020), individualized consideration refers to the deliberate attention leaders give to the unique professional and emotional needs of each follower. This includes personalized mentoring, constructive feedback, recognition of individual contributions, active listening, and emotional support (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Shukri & Noor, 2024). Unlike transactional leadership, which emphasizes compliance, monitoring, and reward systems (Burns, 1978, Bass & Riggio, 2006, Judge & Piccolo, 2004, (Uwanyirigira & Sikubwabo, 2022; Asimwe & Zuena, 2023): Shukri & Noor, 2024: Ochia, 2025): Government of Rwanda 2025). Individualized consideration prioritizes rational engagement, professional growth, and well-being. It enhances intrinsic motivation and reinforces perceptions of organizational support (Jiang & Wei, 2024, Hallinger, 2020), which are essential for sustained job satisfaction. That means, individualized consideration creates a school environment where teachers feel valued not only as employees but as autonomous professionals with distinct strengths, aspirations, and needs.

Empirical research from diverse international contexts consistently underscores the positive influence of individualized consideration on teacher outcomes (Bellibaş et al., 2023; Eryilmaz & Strietholt, 2025; OECD, 2025). For example, Yong (2025) found that individualized consideration reduces teachers' role stress while enhancing affective commitment, demonstrating that relational

leadership can buffer the emotional and professional challenges inherent in teaching profession. Across a variety of educational systems, teachers who perceive their leaders as attentive, responsive, and supportive report higher occupational fulfillment and stronger professional commitment (Uwanyirigira & Sikubwabo, 2022; Yong & Zhang, 2025; OECD, 2025; Li et al., 2025).

However, the effectiveness of individualized consideration is contingent upon equitable and consistent application (Asiimwe & Zuena, 2023; Shukri & Noor, 2024; Sekiswa & Matovu, 2025). Studies caution that inconsistent support or favoritism can erode trust and morale, which undermine teachers' job satisfaction (Apolot, 2024; Ochoa, 2025; Elriymaz, & Strietholt, 2025). This highlights that while individualized consideration is a powerful relational dimension (Boateng & Mensah, 2024; Elriymaz, & Strietholt, 2025), it requires intentional, fair, and transparent implementation to realize its full potential. The combination of supportive engagement and equitable practices fosters a sense of belonging and reinforces teachers' commitment to their schools and profession.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, where many schools operate under conditions of limited material resources (UNESCO, 2023; World Bank, 2025), relational leadership practices are particularly influential. In Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, and Ethiopia, the research indicates that teachers highly value approachable and supportive leadership, recognition for effort, and opportunities for professional growth (Uwanyirigira & Sikubwabo, 2022; Boateng & Mensah, 2024; Yong & Zhang, 2025). These contexts, relational leadership compensates for structural constraints by reinforcing teachers' professional identity, motivation, and morale. Such practices can help sustain teacher commitment in environments where resource limitations and workload pressures are significant challenges.

In East Africa, empirical studies increasingly demonstrate the relevance of individualized consideration in school context. For example, research conducted in Uganda found that headteachers' transformational leadership practices-including individualized consideration- were positively associated with teachers' work engagement and commitment (Sekiswa & Matovu, 2025). Similarly, studies in Kenya on secondary school leadership report that principal's individualized support, particularly in mentoring teachers and guiding ICT integration, significantly enhances teacher confidence and instructional effectiveness (Thuku, Kalai, & Tanui, 2023). Evidence from Ethiopia further indicate that principal's individualized consideration significantly predicts teachers' job satisfaction (Shukri & Noor, 2024). These findings from East Africa assert that personalized leadership attention strengthens teacher motivation, engagement, and professional performance.

In Rwanda, educational reforms have focused on improving teacher quality, professional standards, and instructional effectiveness (Government of Rwanda, 2025). However, the challenges of large class sizes, limited instructional resources, and heavy workload exist (Ufitiwabo, 2025; Ochoa et al., 2025). Like in other African countries, individualized consideration, well-practiced, can buffer those challenges. Existing studies in the area of

educational leadership examine general leadership practices and working conditions (Uwanyirigira & Sikubwabo, 2022; Kedia, 2025). These studies treat leadership as a broad construct, overlooking how leaders' attention to teacher's individual professional and emotional needs influences satisfaction, motivation, and engagement.

Although studies explicitly isolating individualized consideration remain limited in Rwanda, research framed within transformational leadership consistently highlights supportive and personalized leadership behaviors as influential for teacher performance and school outcomes. A study in Nyaruguru District found a significant positive relationship between transformational leadership and teacher performance with individualized consideration embedded within leadership construct (Uwamahoro et al., 2024). These studies indicate that while Rwanda's empirical literature often measures transformational leadership holistically rather than isolating individualized consideration statistically, the dimension is conceptually present in practices such as mentoring, responsive supervision, and individualized professional support. However, there remains a clear research gap for district level studies that quantitatively examine individualized consideration as a standalone predictor of teachers' job satisfaction.

The reviewed literature indicates that individualized consideration is an important dimension of transformational leadership that directly impact teacher's job satisfaction. International studies highlight its benefits, while regional and African studies suggest that relational leadership is valuable in the context of limited resources. However, empirical studies about individualized consideration in Rwandan public secondary schools remain scanty. This study, therefore, explores how headteachers' individualized consideration affects teachers' job satisfaction in Rwandan public secondary schools with particular attention to Rusizi District.

Methods of the study

The methodology followed in this study is drawn from the thesis about headteacher's transformational leadership and teachers' job satisfaction. This study adopted a convergent parallel mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2022) to explore how headteachers' individualized consideration influences teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools of Rusizi District. This design allowed for the simultaneous collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2022), with integration occurring during interpretation. In this study, the target population comprises all 17 public secondary schools, the 230 teachers and 17 headteachers from the public secondary schools in Rusizi District.

For the quantitative component, the adequacy of the sample was assessed using an a priori power analysis using the GPower tool for quantitative analysis (Faul et al., 2009). According to Creswell & Plano Clark, 2022 a medium effect size of ($f^2 = 0.15$), $\alpha = 0.05$, and power = 0.80 should be considered adequate. The sample size adequacy was approximated at 85 participants for this study. Since quantitative strand of this study involved a sample of 133 teachers, the achieved sample size exceeded the minimum requirement. Purposive sampling was used to select 12 teachers alongside

all 17 headteachers to participate. The sample size, therefore, was 162 participants. Quantitative data were collected using structured questionnaire while semi-structured interviews were used to collect qualitative data.

Findings of the study

The findings in this study are drawn from the data presented in the thesis. The influence of headteacher's individualized consideration was assessed through different statistical analysis. The descriptive statistics indicated positive perceptions of leadership. Teachers reported relatively high levels of individualized consideration ($M=4.03$, $SD=1.16$), suggesting that many perceived their headteachers as attentive to their professional and personal needs, with positive levels of job satisfaction ($M=3.88$, $SD=1.09$) indicating some variations in attitude towards work across schools. Pearson correlation analysis revealed a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between individualized consideration and teachers' job satisfaction ($r = .558$, $p < .01$). This indicates that teachers who perceive higher levels of personalized leadership support tend to report higher levels of job satisfaction. Simple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine whether individualized consideration significantly predicts teachers' job satisfaction.

Table 1. Model summary

R²	Adjusted R²	Std. Error	N
.311	.306	-	133

Source: Primary data collected by researcher, 2025

The model explains 31.1% of the variance in the teachers' job satisfaction. This indicates a moderate explanatory power, meaning that individualized consideration contributes substantially to predicting the outcome, although other factors not included in the model also play a role.

Table 2. ANOVA

F	df	p-value
59.18	(1, 131)	< .001

Source: Primary data collected by researcher, 2025

The ANOVA results show that the model is statistically significant $F(1,131) = 59.18$, $p < .001$. This means that the regression model provides a significantly better prediction of teachers' job satisfaction than a model with no predictors. In other words, the individualized consideration meaningfully improves the model.

Table 3. Coefficients

B	β	t	p-value
.280	.558	7.69	< .001

Source: Primary data collected by researcher, 2025

Individualized consideration has a positive and statistically significant effect on teachers' job satisfaction. That means, B (= .280) indicates that a one-unit increase in the practice of

individualized consideration leads to 0.280 increase in teachers' job satisfaction outcome. ($\beta = .558$) suggests a strong positive effect size, meaning that individualized consideration has substantial influence. The high t-value (7.69) and very small p-value confirm that this effect is not due to chance.

The overall model was statistically significant $F(1,131) = 59.18, p < .001$. The model explained 31.1% of the variance in teachers' job satisfaction ($R^2 = .311$), indicating a substantial predictive effect. The $B = 0.280$ suggests that every one-unit increase in individualized consideration, teachers' job satisfaction increases by 0.280 units. $\beta = .558, p < .001$ reflects a strong positive effect, confirming that individualized consideration is a meaningful predictor of teachers' job satisfaction.

The qualitative findings provided insights into statistical trends. Four key themes emerged from the interviews. The supportive and approachable was the first theme that was emphasized. Teachers described headteachers who were accessible, empathetic, and willing to listen as crucial for fostering confidence and psychological safety, for example: "our headteacher usually offers reassurance and provides guidance in the school, and adjust to workload when necessary, and teachers then feel comfortable sharing their concerns" (R107). The second theme was recognition and professional worth. This theme highlighted the motivational power of acknowledging teachers' efforts. Teachers reported that personalized feedback and public recognition strengthened their sense of values and reinforced commitment as this one said: "She usually celebrates the small achievements of the various teachers and also encourages us to set personal targets. She has also a positive reinforcement and motivates us to work." (R102). The third theme was motivation beyond formal responsibilities as one teacher reported "What motivates mostly is student success." (R103), which revealed that individualized consideration encourages teachers to go beyond routine duties. The fourth and final theme was equity and consistency. This emerged as a critical consideration. Some teachers noted that support was unevenly distributed or insufficiently sensitive to personal circumstances. For example, respondent R109 voiced gender-related concern saying that mostly female teachers with family obligation may be overlooked.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings demonstrated that individualized consideration is strongly associated with teachers' job satisfaction. However, the effectiveness of individualized consideration depends not only on its presence but also on its equitable and consistent implementation, ensuring that all teachers feel valued and supported in their professional roles.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate the role of individualized consideration in shaping teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools of Rusizi District. Quantitative results revealed a strong positive relationship between individualized consideration and teachers' job satisfaction. Regression analysis showed that 31% of variance on job satisfaction was explained by

individualized leadership practices. This underscores the practical significance of relational behaviors while suggesting that other factors may also contribute to teachers' job satisfaction. The results suggest that when headteachers attend to teachers' unique professional and emotional needs- through mentoring, recognition, and active listening- teachers experience greater fulfillment, motivation, and engagement.

The qualitative findings indicated that some teachers experienced strong mentorship and flexible support while others perceived inconsistencies, selective flexibility or favoritism in access to workshops, further studies, workload adjustments, and informal mentoring. Teachers distinguished clearly between genuine individualized consideration and favoritism. When empathy was accompanied by practical follow-through, teachers felt valued and motivated. When support appeared symbolic or unevenly distributed, its positive effects diminished.

These outcomes align with transformational leadership theory, which emphasizes that leaders foster higher levels of commitment and satisfaction by providing personalized support and guidance (Uwanyirigira & Sikubwabo, 2022; Kedia, 2025). Qualitative findings reinforced these patterns, revealing that supportive leadership, acknowledgement of individual effort, and opportunities for professional growth contribute to teachers' intrinsic motivation and sense of professional worth.

The results also resonate with international research, indicating that relational leadership behaviors enhance teacher well-being, commitment, and commitment across diverse contexts (Ufitiwabo, 2025; Ochoa et al., 2025). Personalized support and recognition help sustain motivation even in the absence of substantial material incentives. However, the qualitative evidence highlights a crucial injunction that effectiveness of individualized consideration depends on equitable and consistent implementation. Variation in support, perceived favoritism, or insufficient sensitivity to personal circumstances can undermine trust and morale. These insights underscore that relational leadership must be transparent, fair, and inclusive to maximize its impact on teachers' job satisfaction.

Limitations of the study

The study presents the limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the study focused exclusively on public secondary schools in a single district, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions or educational contexts. Second, the cross-sectional design captures perceptions at a single point in time, precluding inferences about causal relationships or longitudinal effects. Third, although mixed methods were employed, self-reported data may be influenced by social desirability bias, particularly in the qualitative interviews. Finally, while individualized consideration accounted for a significant portion of variance in satisfaction, other factors were not directly measured, leaving room for further investigations.

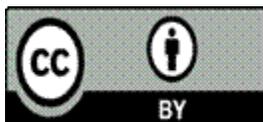
Conclusions and recommendations

The study concluded that individualized consideration is a central mechanism through which headteachers influence teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools of Rusizi District. The findings highlight that relational leadership is not merely an optional complement to structural interventions but a fundamental component of effective school management. At the same time, equitable and consistent implementation is essential to sustain trust and morale among all staff. The study recommends for relational leadership training, structured mentorship, fair recognition, and policy integration to enhance teachers' job satisfaction.

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