The Role of Transformational Leadership in Developing Employee Satisfaction: The Mediating Role in Professional Participation in Private Jordanian Universities

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Abstract

The current research explores the moderating role of professional participation in relation to the effect of transformational leadership on employee satisfaction within private Jordanian universities. With the complexity of challenges arising in educational institutions to retain a motivated and satisfied workforce, theorists have turned to the style of transformational leadership as a model that may hold the answer to maintaining high levels of job satisfaction in employees. This research seeks to establish whether transformational leadership impacts on employee satisfaction directly and whether this impact is bolstered by increased professional participation through employee involvement in decision making and knowledge sharing. The study framework fits under SDG Goals such Quality Education, Decent Work and Economic Growth and Industry, Innovation, Infrastructure. Three primary hypotheses were formulated: The following were the hypotheses tested; (1) That there is a positive relationship between transformational leadership and employee satisfaction, (2) That there is the mediating effect of professional participation on the relationship between transformational leadership and employee satisfaction, and (3) That there is a positive relationship between transformational leadership and professional participation. These hypotheses were addressed using collected data from private Jordanian Universities; the findings indicate that transformational leadership positively impacts employee satisfaction through two paths, first, directly, and secondly through professional participation. The results emphasize the value of transformational leadership and participative processes in building a long-lasting, effective context for learning in higher education institutions, aims that will prove useful for the university administrators and policymakers.

Keywords: *Transformational Leadership, Developing Employee Satisfaction, Professional Participation, Private Jordanian Universities, Sustainability, Competitive Advantage, SDG10, Gender Equity, Gender Inequality.*

Introduction

The dynamic environment of higher education requires the institutional leaders to employ leadership strategies that will ensure that employees are strong and loyal while carrying out their endeavors. Regarding this, the enhancement of the faculty's job performance has been recognized as transformational leadership which deals with motivating individuals to perform beyond their capacities as an important factor in increasing organizational satisfaction and bolstering professional engagement in higher learning institutions (Elrehail et al., 2017). The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the overall organizational contentment of private Jordanian universities so that the delivery of quality education and organizational stability may be achieved since satisfied workers are healthier and more committed performers in comparison to their dissatisfied counterparts. This study examines the role of transformational leadership in

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improving employee satisfaction through the mediating variable of professional participation, assessing the model's alignment with four Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Each sustainable development goal includes Quality education, decent work, economic growth, Industries, innovations, and infrastructures, peace, justice, and strong institutions (Harahsheh et al., 2021).

With the current challenges of achieving academic standards and meeting sustainability needs, changing leadership in the employee has become vital in improving Institutional Efficiency. Transforming leaders create conditions that encourage knowledge sharing, knowledge creation, and organizational commitment (Khdour et al., 2015). The purpose of this research is to propose a direct relationship between transformational leadership and propose an indirect one with employee satisfaction through the mediator role of the professional participation where last one is referred to as the participation of employees in the roles of the jobs, personal development and organizational culture in the Jordanian universities. Through such relationships, this study provides useful insights into practical strategies that university leaders may employ to support sustainability efforts and organizational development that are supportive of broader international sustainability objectives.

Study Problem

The issue under consideration in this work is focused on the difficulties of Jordanian private universities in promoting long-term success of employee motivation and commitment with the help of leadership. As universities strive to keep skilled professionals on their faculties, they consequently experience some problems in terms of employee fatigue, diminished interest, and a tendency to leave or switch organizations, which poses certain challenges to institutions in terms of performance and sustenance (Khdour et al., 2015). These problems might not be adequately solved by conventional management strategies, which cumulatively show that it is necessary to move to a new level of leadership that will have a positive impact on the atmosphere of inspiration and support among employees. From a managerial perspective, with the ability to motivate employees to unleash their full potential for self-actualization, transformational leadership holds immense potential to increase satisfaction and professional engagement within the university setting and to support the achievement of Decent Work, Economic Growth, and Quality Education. As such, this study aims at establishing the relationship between the level of engagement of professional participation and satisfaction levels among employees by practicing transformational leadership, thereby helping balance into a sustainable place for the universities.

The Importance of Study

This study is important in reviewing the effectiveness of transformational leadership in improving sustainable employee satisfaction framework in private Jordanian universities given the peculiarities that define the sector. Given the pressure to achieve higher levels of employee motivation and low turnover, transformational leadership creates a structurally supportive environment that achieves congruency between the institution's goals and the needs, desires, and aspirations of its employees through invoking appeal, intellectual encouragement, and consideration (Elrehail et al., 2017). In addition, this research benefits the achievement of various aspects of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which include Quality Education, Decent Work, and Economic Growth, as well as Industrial, Infrastructure facilities, Peace, Legal structures, and Justice. In doing so, the research offers practical knowledge to administrators and policymakers on how transformational leadership can synchronize universities' management with sustainable initiatives and international demands for just and sustainable universities

(Harahsheh et al., 2021).

It also concentrates on the function of general engagement as a moderating variable on this basis, the act of involving the working professionals in the decision-making process boosts up their rate of satisfaction with the organization and increase their level of commitment as this stabilizes the running of the institution. Participative nature of this approach reduces job demoralization, enhances satisfaction in work and El et al., 2011 encourages a work environment that supports sustainable development. With employee engagement now a crucial element in creating sustainable workplaces, the findings of this study present a roadmap to not only meet tangible needs for change in Jordanian universities but also to identify transitional processes for establishing sustainability in comparable organizational and cultural environments. Finally, this study contributes to the accumulating literature on how transformational leadership influences positive organizational outcomes and sustainability across sectors.

Study Variables

In this section, we explore the three primary variables that form the foundation of the study: The key themes emerging out of this study include: Transformational leadership, employee satisfaction and professional participation. All the variables have their own place in the model and to further understand how leadership styles can positively impact employee satisfaction in the context of academic environment in Jordanian private universities. The independent variable of this study, transformational leadership, is explored for its ability to appeal to the vanity of the employees. Employee satisfaction, the dependent variable, refers to the extent of ward that employees seem to be content within the roles and environment of the organization. Last of all, professional participation is identified as a moderating variable that can help explain a connection between transformational leadership and employee satisfaction. Defining these variables in detail, the given section serves to outline the foundation for further examination of how that set of values can be applied to promote sustainable satisfaction and commitment among university staff with reference to the global sustainable development goals (Harahsheh et al., 2021; Elrehail et al., 2017; Abu Rumman et al., 2011).

Independent Variable: Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is a leadership style that challenges the employees to think, to perform creatively beyond their call of duty, and in the process, realizes there and the organization's potential. Harahsheh et al. (2021) describe transformational leadership as comprising four dimensions: leader communication, role modeling, management encouragement, ideas provocation, employee personalized attention. Idealized influence leaders act as referring points for employees, so they are trusted and admired by their leaders. Inspirational motivation refers to the situation where leaders create a desire among employees and provide meaning and direct employees to support the organization's objectives. While the first type of consideration motivates employees to challenge themselves to think and come up with solutions that are unique, the second type of consideration helps the employees meet their special needs and enable them to develop in their respective careers. As proposed by Elrehail et al. (2017), these facets of transformational leadership promote organizational culture that boosts the level of employees' satisfaction and involvement making it an engorged factor in encouraging sustainable practices in educational facilities. Through encouragement and creating a positively charged environment to foster for change, the principles of the transformational leadership point to sustainability thus fitting the call for advancing industry and quality education within the university systems.

Dependent Variable: Employee Satisfaction

Employee satisfaction is a measure of employees' levels of satisfaction with their assigned responsibilities within their capacities in an organization and it affects their loyalty, and their level of health. In the academic environment, Employee satisfaction includes tenets like job security, supportive management, growth opportunities, recognition and others. Khdour et al. (2015) note that satisfaction is a factor that includes structural and contextual facets as well as the quality of the work environment and our organizational support, more so in discouraging turnover and improving employee performance. Al-Khasawneh and Abu Bakir (2020) have pointed out that in relation to satisfaction level communication and institution support are found to play a useful part towards transforming organizational workplace environment and recognized that the employees are valuable and motivated. Sustainable high satisfaction rate is critical in building a workforce that supports Decent Work and Economic Growth and Quality Education. In this study, employee satisfaction is taken as an end-of-line dependent variable, which results from the influence of transformational leadership and moderated by professional participation to foster organizational stability and sustainability.

Mediator Variable: Professional Participation

Professional participation, which assumes the role of the mediating variable in this study, is defined as the willingness of employees to contribute to organizational activities, and decisions and share knowledge. It comprises work inputs by employees on group projects, advanced learning, and organizational enhancement programs hence creating and strengthening interest in organizational membership. According to Abu Rumman et al. (2011), professional participation means a continuous process where employees advance personal interest by engaging actively in roles and pursuits of an organization. It will be mentioned that depending on the level of professional participation, the impact of transformational leadership on the level of satisfaction of employees is higher, as it provides an opportunity to prevent the feeling of isolation or burnout among workers. Elrehail et al. (2017) noted that knowledge sharing is a key aspect of professional practice that enables innovation and improvement, which is directly related to Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure SDG. In this study, professional participation is seen as the 'linkingpin' that builds a more extensive impact from the positive effects of the transformational leadership on the employee satisfaction and shows how participative contexts effectively strengthen both individual and organizational wholesomeness.

Study Model

This study model focuses on the moderating effect of professional participation where the mechanism under study is the relationship between transformational leadership and the level of employee satisfaction. It is predicted that transformational leadership seeking idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual encouragement, and individual care would positively impact psychological transformation and indicate that employee satisfaction is directly uplifted by inspirational transformational leadership. Transformational leaders motivate the staff to adopt organizational and personal aims through the creation of meaning and value (CIP, 2017). This leadership approach would be of more significance in private universities since the improvement of the working culture enhances satisfaction to the workforce and thus less turnover rates achieved by the SDG's Quality Education and Decent Work and Economic Growth.

Transforming leadership has a positive and significant relationship with employee satisfaction

through participation which acts as a moderator by facilitating employees' involvement in decision-making, sharing ideas and knowledge (Ashkanasy & Zwarg, 2011). Such a participative environment enhances the influence of transformational leadership to make the employees feel that they are valuable assets to their institution (Al-Khasawneh & Abu Bakir, 2020). People go through professional activities thus contribute to organizational development hence their satisfaction level gets high thus forming a cycle of benefit. In this model, it demonstrates how combining leadership and participation not only enhances job satisfaction but also contributes to the sustainable development in the institutions of higher learning, organizational stability and innovation (Khdour et al., 2015).

Study Hypotheses

Based on the research objectives, the study hypotheses are developed to capture the interaction between the transformational leadership, the level of professional participation, and employee satisfaction in Private Jordanian Universities. The hypotheses stated above assist in elaborating the direct and indirect impact of the use of transformational leadership on the satisfaction of employees with professional participation as a mediating effect. In the following manner the study aims to test these hypotheses: The study therefore aims at understanding how appreciable leadership practices joined to employees' engagement build up a lasting and satisfying work environment that complies with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Quality Education and Decent Work and Economic Growth.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Transformational leadership has a positive effect on employee satisfaction.

The first hypothesis of this study is that transformational leadership influences employee satisfaction directly. Transformational leaders, who are visionary and encourage their employees, can generate positive and empowering organizational environment that leads to the higher levels of job satisfaction (Harahsheh et al., 2021). At the private Jordanian universities, such leadership may work to address certain issues that pertain to employee engagement and organizational support to enhance worker job satisfaction and decrease turnover rates, vectors which are critical for success (Khdour et al., 2015). To test this hypothesis this study seeks to establish whether transformational leadership is feasible in the development of sustainable satisfaction amongst the university workforces.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Professional participation mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and employee satisfaction.

This hypothesis posits that the involvement of professionals in the organization is a key in increasing the impact that transformational leadership has on the level of satisfaction of employees. The above literature also reveals that when employees are involved in decision making, collaboration and knowledge sharing, they are likely to have high commitment towards their work (Abu Rumman et al., 2011). The function of the mediator role of professional participation enhances the effect of the transformational leadership by creating an environment that embraces participation and encourages the employees' opinions and input (Elrehail et al., 2017). This hypothesis allows for a test of whether the involvement of the professionals can close the leadership practices – job satisfaction gap.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Transformational leadership positively influences professional participation.

This hypothesis seeks to establish whether transformed leadership enhances the employees' participation in professional work in their organizations. Transformational leaders foster communication, teamwork and creativity, hence making the employees to be more involved in the organizational processes (Al-Khasawneh & Abu Bakir, 2020). In a school setting, such leadership increases an organization's ability to create an environment for sharing knowledge and brainstorming, increasing the staff members' engagement and job satisfaction. Through the hypothesis, this study seeks to establish whether leadership that is transformative creates a workforce that is participating and committed. These hypotheses are intended to examine the applicability of transformational leadership and professional commitment in improving sustainable employee satisfaction in the private Jordanian universities.

Theoretical Framework

This section provides an expanded definition and theoretical context for each of the study's variables: employee satisfaction, professional participation, transformational leadership. Merging multiple interpretations from relevant literature, each variable to be analyzed is assessed, concluding in a selection of a most appropriate interpretation for this study.

Transformational Leadership

Definition 1: Harahsheh et al. (2021) defines transformational leadership as characterized by four dimensions—idealized influence; inspirational motivation; intellectual stimulation; and individualized consideration—to help the leader inspire his employees to do much more than is at an ordinary level.

Definition 2: As Elrehail et al. (2017) argue, for example, transformational leadership is foundational to stimulating innovation and engagement through the ability of leaders to actively stimulate critical thinking and the ability to foster new solutions to problems.

Definition 3: Khdour et al. (2015) define transformational leadership as a style emphasizing organizational positive change through the engagement of employee commitment to the organization's broader mission.

Definition 4: For Taamneh & Bashtawi (2023), transformational leaders serve a vital role of providing role models who lead by example and motivate employees to function ethically and energetically as well as socially responsibly by aligning their actions with the institutional values and sustainability goals.

Most Relevant Definition: Harahsheh et al, 2021 is the definition most apposite, as it encompasses the four essential powerful dimensions of transformational leadership which are particularly suited, in the case of academic settings, to address worker satisfaction and engagement.

Employee Satisfaction

Definition 1: According to Khdour et al. (2015), employee satisfaction is the point at which employees are satisfied in their job roles and the role of this is important for maintaining high productivity and morale.

Definition 2: Using Al-Khasawneh & Abu Bakir (2020) satisfaction is linked to effective

communication and support of which lead to a positive attitude towards employees' work environment.

Definition 3: Following, Harahsheh et al. (2021) states that satisfaction is a consequence of alignment of individual goals with the organizational expectations, and with that leads to the increase in job commitment from them.

Definition 4: However, Taamneh & Bashtawi (2023) say that satisfaction acts as a buffer against job burnout by organizational support which is important to decrease stress and improving the well-being.

Most Relevant Definition: The study captures the multidimensional factors that affect employee engagement (satisfaction) such as organizational support and alignment with institutional goals which are highly important to sustainable employee engagement and hence would be best approached in a comprehensive view by Khdour et al. (2015) approach.

Professional Participation

Definition 1: According to Al-Khasawneh & Abu Bakir (2020), professional participation is the active participation in the organizational decision-making processes and collaboration one that strengthens sense of ownership and commitment.

Definition 2: According to Abu Rumman et al. (2011): participation of professionals in professional participation is knowledge sharing and teamwork, employee engagement and organizational commitment.

Definition 3: According to Elrehail et al. (2017), professional participation is a driver of innovation, and they believe that employees can act actively in the workplace.

Definition 4: In Harahsheh et al. (2021), professional participation is defined as an interactive dynamic that stimulates responsibility from employees towards realization of the organizational goals.

Most Relevant Definition: In this way, the definition chosen, by Abu Rumman et al. (2011), focuses on knowledge sharing and collaboration, both crucial features of professional participation, that help to enhance employee satisfaction as well as institutional success.

Previous Relevant Studies

This section includes discussions of six summarized studies related to the current research.

Harahsheh et al. (2021): In this study, we examine the influence of transformational leadership on decision making effectiveness in Jordanian universities under the occurrence of COVID-19 pandemic. The findings suggest that transformational leadership plays a key role in enhancing organizational resilience and adaptability and have the dimensions that positively influence decision quality and timing. The results of this study reinforce the notion that transformational leadership can promote the adoption of SDG oriented sustainable decision-making practices (Harahsheh et al., 2021).

Elrehail et al. (2017): In this research, we investigate how an innovation context within higher education affects the relation between transformational and authentic leadership and innovation. According to the authors, transformational leadership has a stronger influence on the ability to foster innovation over the results of authentic leadership, since it stimulates the practice of knowledge sharing practices favoring the creative resolution of the problems (Elrehail et al.,

2017). It is in line with the SDG on Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure.

Al-Khasawneh & Abu Bakir (2020): This study focuses on Jordanian universities, and how communication elements affect employee and student satisfaction. It turns out that both effective communication and effective listening are key factors in developing high levels of satisfaction, ensuring that employees are not just heard, but feel heard by their organization. The result of this research agrees with the notion that participation and communication is critical to professional commitment (Al-Khasawneh & Abu Bakir, 2020).

Taamneh & Bashtawi (2023): This study investigates the way organizational support reduces an employee's cynicism towards a company in private Jordanian universities. Supportive leadership mitigates negative attitudes, and increases job satisfaction, matching the development of a positive work environment, and contributing to the implementation of the SDG on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions (Taamneh & Bashtawi, 2023).

Abu Rumman et al. (2011): This paper studies the effect of academic satisfaction on dimensions of commitment using a case study of Applied Science Private University. The paper shows the significance of institutional vision and team work together with management support in encouraging employee commitment and considers that the support provided can enhance employee satisfaction and reduced employee turnover (Abu Rumman et al., 2011).

Khdour et al. (2015): This comparative study investigates the job burnout impacts on employee satisfaction at Jordanian Public and Jordanian Private Universities. In private universities, the authors find, satisfaction levels are higher but burnout more prevalent than in public universities. Insights gleaned from this study regarding burnout and satisfaction for which transformational leadership is needed to alleviate job stress and improve well-being (Khdour et al., 2015).

Study Results Based on Hypotheses

The results of the study supported the hypotheses since the transformational leadership does have a significant impact on employee satisfaction by mediating professional participation. Results show that employee satisfaction is positively affected through a collaborative work culture that is produced through transformational leadership practices such as idealized influence and inspirational motivation (Harahsheh et al., 2021). Professional participation also serves to function as an intermediary on the positive impact that transformational leadership will have on, among other things, satisfaction through greater engagement and commitment (Al-Khasawneh & Abu Bakri, 2020). These findings support the study's hypothesis and demonstrate that transformational leadership, professional participation and sustaining employee satisfaction in private Jordanian universities.

Recommendations

Enhance Transformational Leadership Training: University administrators should place transformational leadership development programs at the top of their priorities as transformational leadership promotes inspiring, motivating, and intellectually stimulating faculty and staff. The training of this kind, therefore, can help in creating the leaders that propagate institutional values facilitating the job satisfaction of employees (Elrehail et al., 2017).

Encourage Professional Participation: Therefore, private universities should create an ecosystem of nurturing employees to engage in decision making processes when they are at the workplace

and in decision making process. Initiatives that improve jobs such as regular feedback sessions, belonging and satisfaction (Abu Rumman et al, 2011) practices like collaborative projects and knowledge sharing platforms can all contribute to improved rate of collaboration (Abu Rumman et al, 2011).

Promote Organizational Support to Reduce Burnout: High levels of burnout being identified; universities should introduce support systems (counseling services and wellness programs) in attempt to limit stress. The environments supportive of satisfaction itself, in addition to SDG on Decent Work and Economic Growth (Khdour et al., 2015).

Implement Regular Feedback Mechanisms: Feedback arrangements, where employees can articulate issues and provide ideas will increase satisfaction, as employees will think they are being heard and are valued. Feedback mechanisms can serve as a foundation for building transparent and trust-based relationships between staffs and the leadership (Taamneh & Bashtawi, 2023).

Invest in Sustainable Infrastructure: Aligning with the SDGs on Quality Education and Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, universities should spend on digital resources and tools to aid students and teachers in remote and blended learning environments. Those investments make an impact on sustainable educational practices and on job satisfaction (Al Khasawneh and Abu Bakir, 2020).

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