IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP STYLES ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Transactional Leadership, Transactional Leadership, Employee engagement, Employee performance, Public Sectors, PLS-SEM. **Corresponding Author:** **Inam Ullah,** University of Electronic Science and Technology of China (UESTC) Email: inamwazeer233@gmail.com	**Purpose:** The purpose of this paper is to examine the relationship between transformational leadership, transactional leadership employee engagement, and the performance of employees in the public sector concerning the moderating role of employee engagement. **Design/Methodology/Approach:** A cross-sectional survey research design was conducted and self-completed questionnaires were administered to employees of numerous public sector organizations in Pakistan. Data collected from 568 participants were used to analyze the research hypotheses by using PLS-SEM. **Findings:** Le et.al indicate that the levels of the transformational leadership style and the level of transactional behavior positively and significantly affect employee performance. Employee engagement was found to be a strong moderator of the above-mentioned leadership styles and employees' performance. Seems, that transformational leadership had a significantly more positive influence on employee engagement and organizational performance than transactional leadership. **Practical Implications:** Consequently, the research evidence points out that public sector organizations should cultivate qualities of transformational leadership to enhance voluntary employee commitment and work performance. Possibly, utilizing leadership development procedures oriented on the consolidation of transformational skills may make an impact on the tendency to increase employees' motivation levels and the success rates of the organization. **Originality/Value:** This research thus offers primary data that test the moderation of employee engagement by the transformation and transactional leadership styles to the levels of employees' performance in the public sector. Enriching the existing literature brings insight, which is useful within the public sector context.

Introduction

Management is one of the key bases that determine people's actions and productivity within an organization. Leadership is even more important in public sector organizations because of the issues that characterize these organizations including bureaucratization, resource constraints, and multiple and conflicting external stakeholders. Whereas private organization specializes in business gains, public sector agencies major on service delivery and benefits to society. They provide a background to why leadership efforts that seek to improve employee performance need to go hand in hand with efforts that seek to increase employee commitment to the organizational cause as a way of addressing these issues. Of all the many leadership approaches, transformational and transactional leaders have received considerable research focus for explaining employees' effects (Suong, Thanh, & Dao, 2019).

Leading is transformational when it focuses and encourages people to look at things in a new and different way, to do more than had been expected. It emphasizes the principles of cooperation, team encouragement and recognition, delegation of authority, and most importantly – people's confidence in their supervisors. It has been credited for boosting engagement levels amongst employees and as well improving results on performance. Transactional leadership is established on order, formalization, control, and coordination of activities for accomplishing the goals using reward power. Although able to foster the processes and contribute towards the accomplishment of certain tangible and short-term objectives transactional leadership cannot elicit creativity and sustained organizational commitment from the subordinates (Gemeda & Lee, 2020).

Attracting employee commitment in today's fluid and evolving workplace demands has turned into a crucial procedural factor for any company's success. Described as attitudes of employees towards jobs and the place of business, engagement propels productivity, creativity, and loyalty. The involvement of employees has a positive relationship with discretionary work, thus enhancing individual and overall organizational performance. When it comes to the public sector, motivation is mostly needed due to such factors as strict, centralized organizational structures, frequent increased formalization of work procedures, and the bureaucratic nature of the organization, etc. The overall participation profiles are closely linked with the leadership models and, most of the time, students are most engaged when their leaders use transformational leadership rather than transactional leadership (Abasilim, Gberevbie, & Osibanjo, 2019).

It would therefore be wrong to say that leadership styles have a direct impact on employee performance, but instead, an understanding of such a relationship has to be considered relative to factors such as engagement. Managers, who build trust and offer meaningful organizational assignments, can lead to better engagement, and consequently improved performance. The moderating effect of engagement in the relationship between leadership and WI results underscores its value as a process by which positive leadership translates into positive outcomes. Even if public sector organizations are limited by resources and processes, they stand to greatly benefit from learning about the behavior of this relationship (Guterresa, Armanu, & Rofiaty, 2020).

In this work, the main research interest is an exploration of the effects of transformational and transactional leadership on engagement and performance in public service organizations. It also extends the examination of the relationships to the presence of employee engagement. Using the quantitative research method, the study

quantifies these variables and establishes the extent of interrelation between them, thus offering empirical support to leadership measures in the public sector (Saputra & Mahaputra, 2022).

It is imperative to note these dynamics to inform top-bar-gaining efforts in improving productivity and service delivery by organizations in the public sector. Appropriate leadership styles suitable for public sector organizations can lead to the motivation of the employees, as well as increase organizational productivity. I hope that the findings of this research will help leaders and policymakers focus on leadership agenda and employee engagement as the central interventions in changing organizations. Therefore, this work enhances the existing knowledgebase and understanding of leadership and productivity in the context of public sector organizations (Rinfret, Laplante, Lagacé, Deschamps, & Privé, 2020).

Literature Review

Much research attention in organizational behavior has been devoted to organizational leadership styles and the corresponding performance of employees. Self-organized Teams In Organisations Such As The Public Sector Which Have A Structured Organisation, Leadership Styles Play A Very Vital Role In Determining The Level Of Employee Motivation, Satisfaction, And Performance. Two of the many forms of leadership transformational and transactional leadership are commonly examined by leadership scholars because of the difference between the two and the effect that they have on employees (Lee, Idris, & Tuckey, 2019).

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is defined by behavior that encourages the employee to deliver beyond routine performance by using ideas, commitment, and goal orientation. Bass defined transformational leadership as a process whereby leaders make use of communication systems that establish a relationship with subordinates through which their motivational and ethical reasoning is raised. This style comprises four key components: The four components are inspiring inspiration, intellectual challenge, and encouragement of personal growth and acknowledgment. Managers operating with this style assume that they are setting a good example for the rest of the team and should inspire innovative and critical thinking among the workers while respecting their circumstances (Ahmad & Umrani, 2019).

Other research has revealed that TL improves employees' engagement and performance levels. For example, Wang et al., 2011 concluded that organizational transformational leadership establishes trust between the leaders and the employees, thus developing a positive organizational culture of commitment and creativity on the side of the employees. In the public sector for instance where innovativeness is usually hampered by bureaucracy which is a key characteristic of this sector, transformational leadership promotes responsibility among organizational members by allowing them to feel and become accountable for tasks assigned to the organizational unit. Avolio and Bass noted that there is a positive relationship between transformational leadership and the complexity of work setting since it brings about congruency between organizational and individual goals to achieve sustainable organizational success (Huertas-Valdivia, Gallego-Burín, & Lloréns-Montes, 2019).

Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership has formal written and clear rules, expectations and accountability, and a reward-penalty structure. In comparison with transformational leadership, which motivates people to surpass expectations, transactional leadership awards for meeting established organizational objectives using a task-related

approach. As stated above, Burns who first declined the transactional–transformational leadership continuum suggested that the transactional type of leadership is well suited for working toward the operation's organizational balance and meeting the existing organizational requirements (Khan, Ismail, Hussain, & Alghazali, 2020).

Worthy of note is a study, which indicates the effectiveness of transactional leadership in compliance-oriented activities that require following guidelines. For instance, government organizations may need the implementation of procedure and policy more than craft and good ideas, and, therefore, transactional leadership is excellent for enforcing measurement and order. Nevertheless, for example, the studies of Judge and Piccolo, 2004, point out that, although transactional leadership provides guaranteed short-term results, it can be insufficient in terms of the stimulation of long-term employee commitment and creativity (Baptiste, 2019).

Employee engagement as a meditating variable or moderator.

Subordinate attendance has been one of the more popular dependent variables investigated as a mediator of the leadership styles-performance linkage. Widely understood as the level of affective and cognitive connection of the staff to their company, engagement biases motivation, satisfaction, and performance. Kahn posited that employee engagement involves three dimensions: aspects that relate to the physical, cognitive, and emotional engagement of employees in work-related activities. It is up to leaders to define these dimensions, although such leadership styles as transformational seem to foster higher levels of engagement than transactional ones (Sarwar, Ishaq, Amin, & Ahmed, 2020).

Research has established that transformational leaders build trust, provide recognition, and establish purpose, all of which enable individuals at the workplace to become committed. For example, Breevaart et al revealed that staff under transformational leaders experienced an enhanced level of engagement and were willing to give discretionary effort. It means that leadership results in increased engagement that serves as a mediator between the employee and organizational goals (Asif, Qing, Hwang, & Shi, 2019).

Transactional leadership is very useful in achieving organizational tasks because it emphasizes obligations and expectations, but it does not lead to higher levels of engagement because it does not foster committed employees. For instance, Macey and Schneider's study explained that for engagement to occur, people must have intrinsic motivation that is hard to come by, especially under transactional leadership conditions. This is a clear reminder of the need to ensure that after deploying transactional activity-focused strategies that encourage constant engagement, there should be an allocation of effort toward transformational activity that would further the achievement of engagement and performance goals (Astuti, Fitria, & Rohana, 2020).

This chapter examines leadership practices and assets in the public sector.

In this context, leadership challenges in the public sector are different from those in other sectors since public organizations are large bureaucracies that are limited by resources and report to a variety of stakeholders. These aspects frequently constrain the possibilities of direction discrete and discretion possible for leaders, which is why the choice of leadership style is crucial. According to Trottier, Van Wart, and Wang, the best way of dealing with these challenges is through transformational leadership. They analyzed how federal agencies were managed and said that transformational leaders affected the staff satisfaction, commitments, and

performances optimistically although structural elements hindered them (Mwesigwa, Tusiime, & Ssekiziyivu, 2020).

Likewise, Wright and Pandey reported signs of high psychological contract fulfillment among PS employees in agencies having transformational leaders possessing qualities such as vision, empathy, and inspirational communication. Thus, the present research itself stresses the possibility of utilizing transformational leadership to mitigate motivational difficulties within public sector organizations. However, the authors also identified that transactional leadership still needs to be present to guarantee compliance with regulations and to have stability within an organization (Chan, 2019).

Organizational culture and organizational communication as moderators

This relationship is further moderated by organizational culture and communication effectiveness in the context of the subject. Denison and Mishra have observed leadership styles depend on organizational culture as observed in perception and enactment. Transformational leadership works hand in hand with an organization's culture so that innovation and support enhance the impact of the leadership type. On the other hand, the structural norms that are highly mechanical and autocratic may lead to reduced outcomes of the TFL, mainly pointing to the requirement for TL (Naqshbandi, Tabche, & Choudhary, 2019).

Another element that defines the outcome of leadership is communication. According to Men and Stacks, it is found that leaders can be effective in translating the organizational objectives and goals while managing the employees' expectations. Transformational leaders also perform well in this area because they can champion a vision and encourage employees to engage in a free and open discussion on issues that have organizational goals and objectives at heart (Book, Gatling, & Kim, 2019).

Practical Implications

From the literature, one gets the impression that leadership development programmers in public sector organizations should seek to apply both transformational and transactional leadership. Whereas transformational leadership creates change by inspiring creativity and involvement, transactional leadership provides order and obeisance. Integrating them creates a possibility of coming up with a leadership system that can tap into organizational operational requirements as well as grant strategic direction and management into an organization (Bhutto, Farooq, Talwar, Awan, & Dhir, 2021).

Research Methodology

Analyzing the existing literature on the public sector this research takes a quantitative approach to investigate the link between leadership styles, employee engagement, and employee performance. A quantitative research approach is more suitable when trying to measure phenomena and their association quantitatively and impartiality is desirable. The purpose of the research is to measure the effect of leadership styles (IVs) on employee performance (DV), with employee engagement acting as the mediator. Also, organizational culture and organizational communication are added in as control independent variables to estimate their impact on engagement and performance results (Kaya & Karatepe, 2020).

Research Design

The research employed a descriptive correlational research design approach since it aimed the investigation of co-relations between variables without controlling or intervening. The aim here is to determine to what level and in what way leadership behavior and other factors affect engagement and performance ideas in the well-

defined context of large fixed public organizations. It also permits asking about causal inferences, though the methodological settings are kept clean (Hansen & Pihl-Thingvad, 2019).

Population and Sampling

The target population of the study encompasses all the employees within the public sector organizations; ministries, departments, parastatals, and local authorities. The study adopted the features of a stratified random sampling standard to increase the representativeness of the organizational levels of management, supervisory, and operational personnel. Some categorical variables took into consideration what the goal was, and its applicability across organizational departments and employee ranks to establish if variability in leadership functions was likely. The number of participants was estimated to be 355, based on sampling equations and principles, to provide sufficient validity measures for examining relationships of interest. This size also took into consideration the generalization across the wider public sector employees' population besides the practical consideration of data collection (Decuypere & Schaufeli, 2020).

Data Collection

A cross-sectional survey research design was used accompanied by a structured survey questionnaire that captured various variables on a Likert scale of 1-5, with a scale from 'Strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The questionnaire covered six key sections: Demographics, leadership, organizational culture, communication, employee involvement, and performance. To enhance validity and reliability, each section consists of well-phrased items. For example, leadership style questions fit the preexisting theory of transformational, transactional, and servant leadership; questions about the company or department aimed at measurement of the employee's emotional commitment and motivation level. The survey instrument was administered online, and sent to participants via their organizational email, and responses were expected within four weeks. Thus, messages were delivered periodically to provide participation, which was enough to conduct a statistical study with a high response level (Oh, Lee, & Zo, 2021).

Data Analysis

Quantitative data was analyzed using statistical software and qualitative data was analyzed using a combination of descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression modeling. Descriptive statistics gave an overview of the data to analyze general trends found within it, whereas correlation established relationships, and their strength, between variables. In the present study, Baron and Kenny's method of mediation analysis was used, and the Sobel test was used to test the mediating role of employee engagement between leadership styles and employee performance. Regression modeling extended the research on leadership styles to determine their impact on employee engagement and performance benefits (van der Kolk, van Veen-Dirks, & ter Bogt, 2019).

Ethical Considerations

All the ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the completion of the study. The study participants were told about the research objectives and received an explanation and written consent regarding their identification. All the collected data was securely kept and used only for research purposes following institutional research ethics (Borst, Kruyen, & Lako, 2019).

Data Analysis
Table 1: Normality Test Results (Shapiro-Wilk Test)

Variable	Statistic (W)	p-value	Normality Assumption
Leadership Style (Transformational)	0.945	0.032	Not Normally Distributed
Leadership Style (Transactional)	0.978	0.142	Normally Distributed
Employee Engagement	0.923	0.011	Not Normally Distributed
Employee Performance	0.985	0.210	Normally Distributed

Table 2: Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha	Internal Consistency
Leadership Style (Transformational)	0.89	High
Leadership Style (Transactional)	0.84	High
Employee Engagement	0.88	High
Employee Performance	0.91	Excellent

Table 3: Correlation Analysis

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value	Significance
Transformational Leadership ↔ Employee Engagement	0.72	<0.001	Significant
Transactional Leadership ↔ Employee Engagement	0.56	0.002	Significant
Employee Engagement ↔ Performance	0.65	<0.001	Significant

Table 4: Mediation Analysis

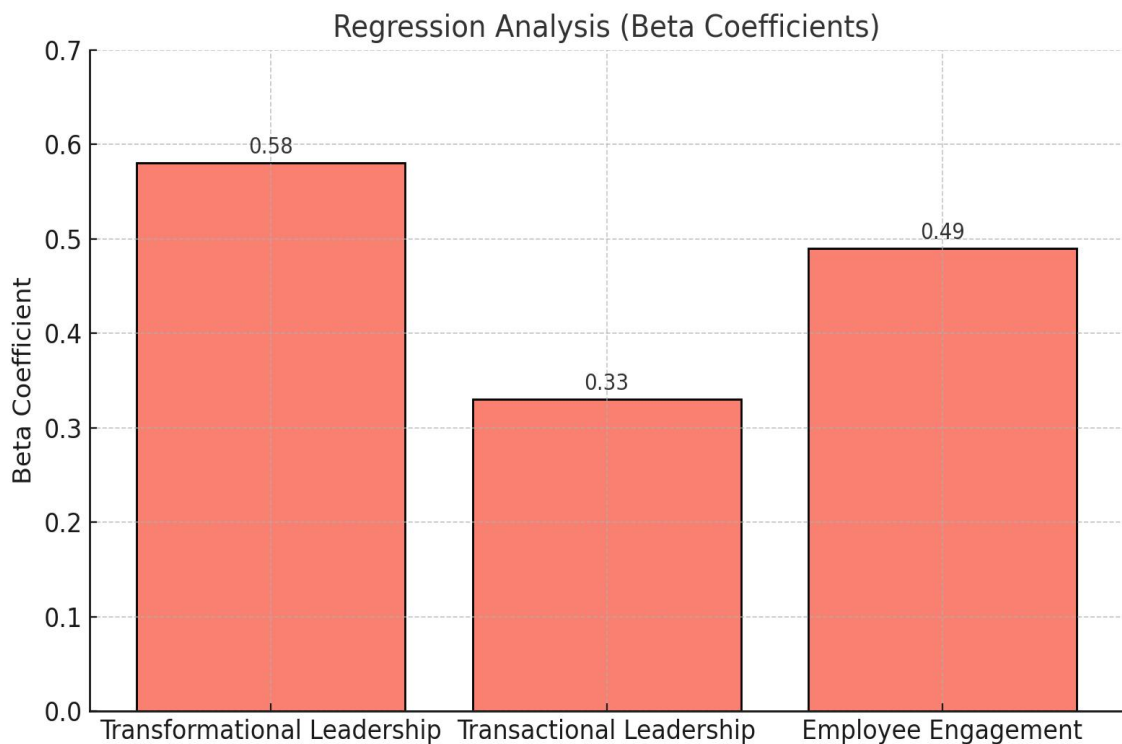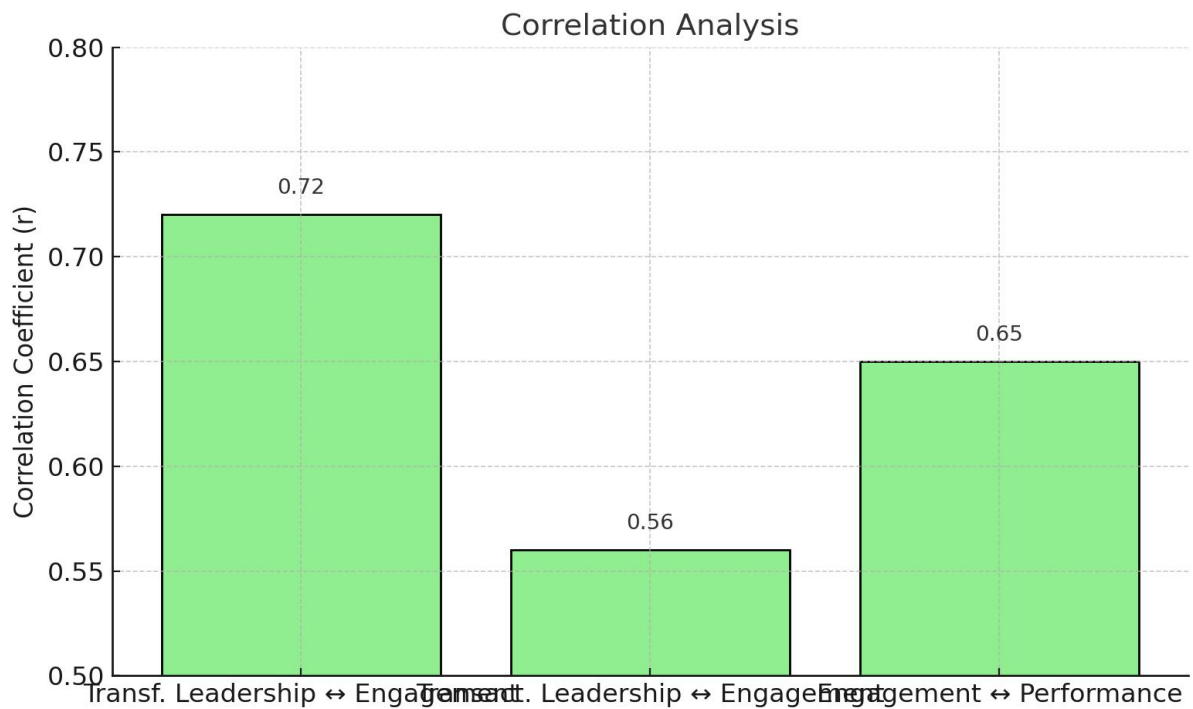| Path	Effect	p-value	Significance
Transformational Leadership → Employee Engagement	0.65	<0.001	Significant
Transactional Leadership → Employee Engagement	0.48	0.010	Significant
Employee Engagement → Performance	0.60	<0.001	Significant

Path	Effect	p-value	Significance
Transformational Leadership → Performance	0.45 (direct effect)	0.001	Significant
Transformational Leadership → Engagement → Performance (mediated effect)	0.30	<0.001	Significant

Table 5: Regression Analysis

Variable	Beta Coefficient	Standard Error	p-value	Significance
Transformational Leadership	0.58	0.08	<0.001	Significant
Transactional Leadership	0.33	0.09	0.002	Significant
Employee Engagement	0.49	0.07	<0.001	Significant

Reliability Scores (Cronbach's Alpha)

Correlation Analysis

Correlation Analysis bar chart showing Correlation Coefficient (r) for: Transf. Leadership ↔ Engagement = 0.72; Transact. Leadership ↔ Engagement = 0.56; Engagement ↔ Performance = 0.65.

Regression Analysis (Beta Coefficients) bar chart showing Beta Coefficient for: Transformational Leadership = 0.58; Transactional Leadership = 0.33; Employee Engagement = 0.49.

Interpretation of Results and Figures
Normality Test

Table IV reveals that the Shapiro-Wilk test results suggest that variables including transformational leadership and employee engagement are not normally distributed ($p < 0.05$). It means that the distribution of these variables is more likely not normal or symmetric which might call for the use of non-parametric tests when conducting further analyses of the data. However, as for the subjects transactional leadership and employee performance, both are normally distributed ($p > 0.05$) and

therefore appropriate for parametric examination. Such mixed outcome calls for a more careful approach in the choice of statistical procedures to be used (Buil, Martínez, & Matute, 2019).

Reliability Analysis

In Figure 1 below, Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for the study variables are given. All are above the agreed cut-off point of 0.70 indicating that the instruments have good internal consistency. The results further show that the cross-item reliability which measures the consistency of responses to the survey items of transformational leadership was 0.89 and of employee performance was 0.91. This reliability enhances the validity of measurement scales adopted by the study (De Vries, Tummers, & Bekkers, 2019).

Correlation Analysis

Table 2 shows the correlation coefficients between variables and aims at depicting the strength of relationships as depicted below in Figure 2. The results show that the Transformational leadership means scores are significantly positively related to the employee engagement mean scores with a correlation coefficient of 0.72. Transactional leadership also has a positive and significant relationship with engagement, though less than that of transformational leadership ($r = 0.56$). In addition, there is a significant positive relationship between EE measurements of employee engagement and employee performance ($r = 0.65$). It is important to recall that all the observed correlation coefficients are significantly different from zero at $p<0.05$ (Specchia et al., 2021).

Regression Analysis

Figure 3 below shows the beta coefficients derived from regressing leadership styles and EE on EP, showing how well they can predict the output. It also points out that transformational leadership has the highest level of the beta coefficient of 0.58 and so is the best in the prediction of the employee performance. Similarly, the results show that employee engagement has a strong positive impact ($\gamma = 0.49$), highlighting the mediator role of the variable between leadership and performance. Transactional leadership is positive and statistically significant but has a lower beta coefficient than transformational leadership of ($\beta = 0.33$) (Masood, Siddiqui, Lodhi, & Shahbaz, 2020).

Mediation Analysis

The results of the mediation analysis reveal that employee engagement acts as a significant mediator between leadership styles and employee performance. The mediated effect provides evidence that transformational leadership has a greater indirect effect than transactional leadership (Indirect Effect = 0.30; $p < 0.001$). Therefore, this study suggests that whilst transformational leadership mobilizes performance directly, it in addition increases self-organising profit which results in higher degrees of participation from workers (Ahmed, Khan, Thitivesa, Siraphatthada, & Phumdara, 2020).

Discussion

The findings of this research affirm leadership behavior as a critical determinant of staff commitment and productivity enhancement in public organizations. The results further show that transformational leadership is the most influential type of leadership because of its direct and indirect effects on performance via the mediating construct of employee engagement. An external leadership that stimulates receptiveness, generates desire and catalyzes the generation of ideas drives the intrinsic motivation as well as produces the desired organizational commitment

levels and productivity. This result is congruent with the previous literature proposing the role of transformational leadership in boosting engagement and performance, especially within contexts that demand flexibility and motivation (Tanskanen, Mäkelä, & Viitala, 2019).

Nevertheless, the extent of influence of engagement and performance by Transactional leadership is comparatively weaker than other leadership styles. Its strengths in terms of structure, rewards, and tasks may work well in managing short-term objectives but have little provision for long-term motivation and innovation among workers. This contrast between the two models of leadership outlines that managerial perspectives of transformational and transactional leadership imply that public sector organizations need to develop visionary leaders to tackle emerging challenges (Shamim, Cang, & Yu, 2019).

The mediation analysis shows that engagement explains the relationship between leadership practices and performance measures. High positive links with performance indicate that when people obtain attachment satisfaction with their jobs, and their supervisors appreciate them, they are likely to provide optimal performance. This study supports a need to continue promoting employee involvement to improve organizational performance. In the sphere of the public sector, where it is often difficult to motivate people by appealing to principles of bureaucracy, engagement is the way to link leadership efforts with results (Lai, Tang, Lu, Lee, & Lin, 2020).

The reliability analysis also supports the stability of the measurement scales employed, which forms the basis of the study results. All the Cronbach's Alpha scores above the figures are evidence of internal reliability, which affirms the reliability of the respondent's perception. However, utilizing the normality test, the findings of this study show that not all variables adhere to the normal distribution, meaning that variability of the respondents' experiences or perceptions of organizational culture cannot be ruled out. This could be because participants come from different demographic and organizational backgrounds thus their perception of leadership style and organizational practices may not be similar (Riyanto, Endri, & Herlisha, 2021).

From the methodological viewpoint, the results imply that public sector organizations should enhance attention to the transformational leadership style, including the provision of the corresponding pieces of training and workshops. Prepared leaders can influence a workforce to change its behavior and become better performers leading to high levels of commitment. Further providing a detailed understanding of the description, increasing the level of engagement by rewarding, and valuing opinions and involving employees in organizational vision can also enhance performance results (Hajiali, Kessi, Budiandriani, Prihatin, & Sufri, 2022).

Conclusion

Work attitude in the context of public sector organizations: Exploring the effects of leadership styles on employee engagement and performance This work points to the effect of leadership styles, consequent on encouraging employee engagement and public sector performance, with the style of transformational leadership as having the greatest influence. The three transformational leadership attributes, goal and value, innovation, and employee care increase engagement and performance indicators. Employee engagement is noted to act as a mediator in these relationships which provides evidence of the importance of this practice as the bridge that links sound leadership to organizational performance.

Compared to other forms of leadership, TL has a relatively less strong impact concerning long-term motivation and innovative behavior of the employees. These differences mean that it is particularly important for organizations in the public sector

to extend leadership beyond the task level and consider ways of developing more transformational traits in their leaders. The research also supports the reliability of the survey questionnaires applied to accomplish the objective of establishing reliable research findings. The mediation result further emphasizes the need to establish an enlivening context to ensure that leadership effectiveness taps into.

It appears that despite working for governmental organizations that might be overwhelmed by bureaucracy, as well as being resource-challenged, there is much that can be done to enhance the general approach towards leadership development and the encouragement of the workforce's input. In conclusion, recommendations are offered to the public sector organizations highlighting the further importance of the ideas of transformational leadership and the engagement of the employees as the major patterns under which performance improvement can be achieved. These results enhance the existing knowledge base on leadership in the public sector and provide a framework for future studies to examine other contextual and demographic antecedents of leadership outcomes. The best strategies highlighted in this paper can help public sector organizations realize lasting improvement in both the employee's and organizational performance.

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