

# Employee Satisfaction In Transactional Leadership Contexts: The Influence Of Trust And Organizational Climate

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## **Abstract:**

*The purpose of this study was to look into the relationship between transactional leadership, leader trust, organisational climate, and employee empowerment. The study specifically looked at the direct relationship between transactional leadership, leader trust, and employee satisfaction, as well as the role of organisational climate as a mediator. Using the Krejcie and Morgan sampling approach, 348 personnel from important organisations in India were recruited. To get insights, the data was analysed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). According to the findings, organisational climate has a substantial role in mediating the relationship between transactional leadership, leader trust, and employee satisfaction. According to the report, organisations should carefully evaluate leaders during the recruitment process and, if necessary, seek to cultivate a favourable organisational atmosphere in order to increase employee happiness.*

**Keywords:** Organisational Climate, Transactional Leadership, Leader Trust, Employee Satisfaction.

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## **INTRODUCTION:**

Recent global social and workforce shifts have exacerbated organisational issues. Staff and policymakers must find ways to balance work, family, and employee pleasure. Ineffective solutions often increase work-family conflict, leading to higher turnover, absenteeism, job dissatisfaction, and lesser commitment. In several European and Asian countries, people are lowering family size to manage such issues, threatening national economies.

Today's competitive climate requires leaders to drive organisational growth and long-term success (Thite, 2000). Meanwhile, leadership is crucial to company performance (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Research shows that leaders strongly affect organisational outcomes (Masih, Daniel, Saher, & Hewawitharana, 2020; Seltzer & Bass, 1990). Transactional and transformational leadership have gained popularity in recent decades (Khanin, 2007). Transactional leadership, in particular, involves leaders and subordinates exchanging goals (Seltzer & Bass, 1990).

This study examines how transactional leadership and leader trust affect employee happiness. The effects of transactional leadership and leader trust on satisfaction have been poorly studied, with diverse results ranging from negative to positive and even inconsequential. Research has not determined whether transactional leadership, leader trust, and employee satisfaction are directly or mediated by other organisational characteristics. This study addresses this gap by evaluating organisational climate as a moderator of transactional leadership, leader trust, and employee satisfaction.

The rising consensus that employees' task-related attitudes and behaviours are key to organisational effectiveness is supported (Podsakoff, Ahearne, & MacKenzie, 1997). The organization's perceived value of employee happiness and contributions strongly influences good employee attitudes (Staves, Wayne, & Leopold, 1997). This study examines how organisational climate mediates transactional leadership, leader trust, and employee satisfaction to advance knowledge. Additionally, it examines how transactional leadership, leader trust, and employee satisfaction are linked.

The study makes significant literary contributions. First, following Ulrich and Dulebohn (2015), it expands social exchange theory by investigating organisational climate's mediating role in transactional leadership, leader trust, and employee satisfaction. It also examines how transactional leadership and leader trust affect employee happiness.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Employee evaluations of transformational and transactional leadership influence organisational economic performance, according to previous studies. Leadership style mediates the relationship between performance and group cohesion, which is important in banking (Carless, Mann, & Wearing, 1995). In computer-mediated environments, transformational leadership affects team members' innovative productivity and employee creativity and performance (Sosik, Avolio, & Kahai, 1997).

Many definitions of organisational empowerment have been developed and modified over the years (Bilal & Zia-ur Rehman, 2017; Leslie, Holzhall, & Holland, 1998). A comprehensive literature analysis reveals two main views on corporate empowerment: relational and psychological. Previous research has viewed relational organisational empowerment as a top-down, mechanistic process (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Transformational leaders are like charismatic leaders but may inspire transformation, innovation, and business acumen (Seltzer & Bass, 1990). Research on transformative leadership has grown in focus on its effects and mechanisms (Judge & Bono, 2000). The conceptualisation and separation of transformational and transactional leadership has provided a framework for understanding these constructs and guiding future study (Judge & Bono, 2000).

Instead, transactional leadership emphasises completing established commitments through reciprocal exchange. It emphasises long-term goals, administrative monitoring, and performance control (Bass & Bass Bernard, 1985).

Social Exchange Theory, developed by Dean Jr., Brandes, & Dharwadkar (1998), studies social structures and power distribution in partnerships. This theory holds that social exchanges involve power and resource imbalances. Some actors' control over resources affects these transactions, often resulting in subordinate relationships where social obligations, or "debts," are established and discharged based on power dynamics.

Employment involves social, economic, and organisational interactions (Aryee, Budhwar, & Chen, 2002). According to Blau (2017), social exchanges are "voluntary actions" that a corporation does to treat its personnel with the expectation of reciprocation. Personal commitments, appreciation, and faith in the organisation affect these exchanges and their future advantages (Haas & Deseran, 1981; Kaluza, Boer, Buengeler, & van Dick, 2020). Eisenberger, Fasolo, and Davis-LaMastro (1990) stated that organisations promote social exchange by caring for employees' interests and happiness, recognising their contributions. Social exchange theory suggests that employees will return this favour with positive work behaviours (Aryee et al., 2002; Haas & Deseran, 1981). Staff work harder and are less likely to leave due to this reciprocal relationship.

These theories support Gouldner's (1960) claim that social interactions are governed by a general rule of reciprocity, where people depend on one other through the division of labour. This rule is an obligation to the "donor" of a benefit until the favour is repaid, wrote Gouldner (1960). According to Gouldner's approach and past research, obtaining advantages creates a sense of indebtedness that motivates reciprocal behaviour in social and organisational connections.

Researchers have shown that managers are educated to empower workers and boost teamwork. Quality, excellent service, cost-effective solutions, and productivity achieve this (Bass, 1999; Sejera, 2018). Leaders in numerous European and Asian companies, often create social relationships with employees to boost their effectiveness, especially as consumer demands rise. Leadership that inspires employee trust and commitment involves interpersonal skills and cross-cultural awareness.

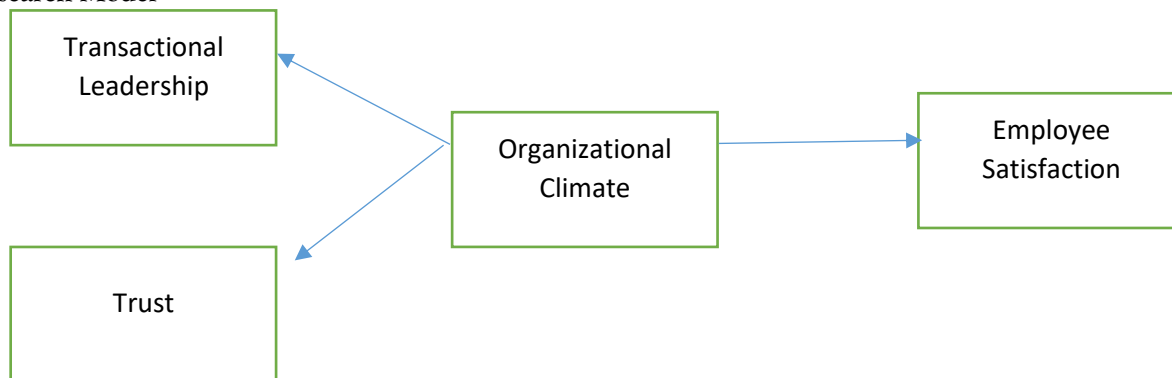
Organisational relationships are the "glue" that binds employees and leaders (Coleridge-Smith et al., 2006; Leung, 2020). Strengthening these ties requires trust and loyalty. Effective workplace interactions keep leaders and followers connected. Transformational leadership improves employee satisfaction, dedication, and productivity more than transactional leadership.

In the hospitality and service industries, good leadership styles can improve manager and organisation performance (Erkutlu, 2008). The "Big Five" personality qualities have also been widely examined in relation to leadership, revealing how personality affects leadership effectiveness (Paulhus & Williams, 2002).

**H1-a:** Transactional leadership boosts employee satisfaction.

**H1-b:** Leader trust boosts employee satisfaction.

### Research Model



Many HR practices and models focus on employee outcomes, but researchers are increasingly seeing organisational atmosphere as a key explanatory component (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). Organisational climate is how employees view and react to their workplace (Burton, Lauridsen, & Obel, 2004). The relatively steady environment people experience in an organisation influences their behaviour. Organisational traits including trust, support, recognition, rewards, equity, morale, and fairness describe these qualities (Burton et al., 2004). According to Poole (1985), organisational climate is quantitative, but organisational culture is qualitative (Turnipseed, 1988). Furthermore, organisational climate is "those aspects of the social environment that organisational members actively experience" (Denison, 1996). Trust is most generally defined as "a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another" (Reichers, Wanous, & Austin, 1997). A more common definition is "the willingness of one party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other party will perform a particular action important to the trustor, regardless of the ability to monitor or control that other party" (Hofstede & Bond, 1988). People define culture as "an interactive aggregate of shared characteristics that influence a group's response to its environment." Different cultures affect leadership and innovation, hence organisational climate affects employee satisfaction.

Transactional leadership and leader trust boost employee inventiveness. As the study of leadership grows, meta-analyses have shown how leadership styles and behaviours affect employee satisfaction and health (Kuoppala, Lamminpää, Liira, & Vainio, 2008). Psychological capital also involves fulfilment and leadership (Avey, Luthans, & Mhatre, 2008).

Despite growing awareness, transactional leadership, leader trust, and employee happiness have not been adequately studied. According to Luthans, Avey, & Patera (2008), "transactional leadership" and "trust in leader" (or simply leadership) are fundamental constructs that evaluate the relationship between followers and leaders and their effects on health and satisfaction. This research helps leaders understand and encourage employee satisfaction.

Based on the preceding arguments, we claim that organisational climate positively mediates transactional leadership, leader trust, and employee satisfaction. We propose that organisational atmosphere improves employee satisfaction. We therefore hypothesise:

**H2-a:** Organisational climate positively mediates transactional leadership and employee satisfaction.

**H2-b:** Organisational climate positively mediates leader trust and employee contentment.

### Measures

**Leadership:** The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) "is considered the best-validated measure of transformational and transactional leadership" (Ozaralli, 2003) and is the most extensively used scale for measuring transformational leadership theory (Kirkbride, 2006). However, others have criticised the MLQ conceptual framework (Charbonneau, 2004; Northouse, 1997; Yukl, 1999). Transactional leadership is measured by the MLQ's subscales for Contingent Reward, Active Management by Exception, Passive Management by Exception, and Laissez-faire. The laissez-faire subscale measures leadershiplessness. These subscales had 0.85 Cronbach's alpha dependability.

**Trust:** This study used Boru (2001)'s ten-item scale to measure leader trust. A study of Turkish society was used to establish the scale to assess reliability. Boru defined nine leader trust factors: self-confidence,

benevolence, compatibility, honesty, kindness, openness, consistency, knowledge, and avoiding gossip. Examples are "The leader is self-confident," "The leader has the necessary knowledge and skills related to the job," "The leader helps me when I need it," "The leader keeps his/her promises," & "The leader has a negative attitude towards life" (reverse rated). A 6-point Likert scale (from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6)) was used to score how each item applied to their leader. This scale had 0.79 Cronbach's alpha dependability.

**Organizational Climate:**Based on the School Organisational Health Questionnaire, the organisational climate scale measures organisational characteristics seen in most organisations (Neal, Griffin, & Hart, 2000). This instrument has been frequently used to assess organisational climate in private and public sector organisations (Hart & Gorne, 1997) and has high discriminant validity from organisational stresses (Hart & Russ, 1996). Employees rated their agreement with workplace remarks. Examples are "My work objectives are always well defined," "There is good communication between groups in this workplace," & "This workplace has a clearly stated set of goals and objectives." A 6-point Likert scale ("strongly disagree" to "strongly agree") was used to collect data. The Cronbach's alpha reliability was 0.81.

**Satisfaction:**This study measured satisfaction using Berkman's (1971) eight-item scale. On a 5-point Likert scale, respondents assessed their feelings (1 = never, 5 = often). Items include "on top of the world" and "bored" (reverse coded). This scale had 0.84 Cronbach's alpha dependability.

## Methodology

### Sampling Procedure

Employee data were collected to examine how Transactional Leadership and Trust in Leader affect employee happiness in India. Leaders and followers provided data. A few days gap between surveys improved research efficacy and relationship understanding.

The initial survey went to 550 employees, and 430 returned it. Three hundred twenty two of 440 survey respondents returned a second survey. The 390 individuals who had returned both questionnaires were sent the third survey, which they all completed. Four to five weeks were spent on surveys.

## RESULT ANALYSIS:

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), a popular statistical method, was utilised to analyse the data and test the hypotheses. The measurement model was developed using confirmatory factor analysis to describe the observed variables as measurable latent variables (e.g., independent or dependent) and an estimation error term. Each hidden variable could have significant relationships with all others.

Next, we adjusted the estimating model to match the theoretical framework. This method systematically analysed estimating model goodness of fit and derived predicted outcomes. We used bootstrap and confidence intervals to test intervention hypotheses. Bootstrapping was used to validate the mediation effect since it accurately calculated confidence intervals, especially for non-zero mediation impacts.

To confirm the uniqueness of all constructs in this investigation, CFA was used. Table 1 shows good model fit with IFI = 0.93, TLI = 0.91, CFI = 0.93, and RMSEA = 0.05. CFA results showed good discriminant validity and no common method bias. Table 2 shows construct correlations, descriptive statistics, and reliability estimates.

**Table 1: Model Fit Indices**

Fit Index	Value
IFI	0.93
TLI	0.91
CFI	0.93
RMSEA	0.05

**Table 2: Correlation**

SEM using AMOS 21 was used to analyse the hypotheses using Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) two-step analytical technique. All latent variables could significantly relate. To test intervention hypotheses, bootstrapping with confidence intervals was used. Bootstrapping was used to confirm the mediation effect since it accurately estimates confidence intervals for non-zero mediation effects.

Each exam's results are in Table 3. The unconstrained multiple-factor model fit better than the specific factor model. The direct path model shows that Leadership (L) and Trust (TR) increase contentment. In H1a and H1b, L and TR strongly correlate with pleasure, with considerable evidence ( $b = 0.34$ ,  $p < 0.001$  and  $b = 0.45$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

H2a predicts that organisational environment mediates L, TR, and employee satisfaction (WB) in Table 4. Indirect effects were analysed using bootstrapping with bias-corrected confidence intervals. All indirect effects were supported, including  $L \rightarrow OC \rightarrow WB$  (indirect impact = 0.17, CI 95%, [0.03, 0.34],  $p < 0.001$ ) and  $TrR \rightarrow OC \rightarrow WB$  (indirect effect = 0.15, CI 95%, [0.05, 0.35],  $p < 0.0$  Table 3 lists direct and indirect impacts.

SEM using AMOS 16 was used to analyse the hypotheses using Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) two-step analytical technique. All latent variables could significantly relate. To test intervention hypotheses, bootstrapping with confidence intervals was used. Bootstrapping was used to confirm the mediation effect since it accurately estimates confidence intervals for non-zero mediation effects.

Each exam's results are in Table 3. The unconstrained multiple-factor model fit better than the specific factor model. Transactional Leadership (TL) and Trust in Leader (TrL) increase satisfaction, according to the direct path model. Results for H1a and H1b show a positive correlation between TL and TrL and satisfaction ( $b = 0.34$ ,  $p < 0.001$  and  $b = 0.45$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , respectively).

H2a predicts that organisational environment mediates TL, TrL, and employee satisfaction (WB) in Table 4. Indirect effects were analysed using bootstrapping with bias-corrected confidence intervals. All indirect effects were supported, including  $TL \rightarrow OC \rightarrow WB$  (indirect effect = 0.13, CI 95%, [0.03, 0.34],  $p < 0.001$ ) and  $TrL \rightarrow OC \rightarrow WB$  (0.05, 0.35,  $p < 0.01$ ). Table 3 lists direct and indirect impacts.

**Table 3: Direct Relationships and Hypothesis Testing Results**

Hypothesis	Path	Standardized Path Coefficient (b)	p-value
H1a	$L \rightarrow \text{Satisfaction}$	0.34	$p < 0.001$
H1b	$TR \rightarrow \text{Satisfaction}$	0.45	$p < 0.001$

**Table 4: Indirect Effects for Mediation Analysis**

Hypothesis	Path	Indirect Effect	Confidence Interval (95%)	p-value
H2a	$L \rightarrow OC \rightarrow WB$	0.13	[0.03, 0.34]	$p < 0.001$
H2b	$TR \rightarrow OC \rightarrow WB$	0.15	[0.05, 0.35]	$p < 0.01$

**Notes:** N = 384;  $p > 0.001$ ,  $p > 0.01$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ; L = Leadership; TR = Trust; OC = Organizational Climate; WB = Satisfaction; LL = Lower Limit; UL = Upper Limit; CI = Confidence Interval

## DISCUSSION:

Our findings show that Transactional Leadership (TL) and Trust in Leader (TrL) affect employee satisfaction through organisational climate, both directly and indirectly, through social exchange theory. Results show that organisational climate partially mediates the dark triad, organisational cynicism, and burnout. Our study shows that Transactional Leadership and Trust in Leader significantly predict employee satisfaction and promote a favourable organisational atmosphere, which boosts satisfaction.

According to Kant, Skogstad, Torsheim, & Einarsen (2013), gloomy leadership harms employees' personal lives and workplace satisfaction, resulting in bad behaviour. Our work provides further evidence that burnout is associated with the dark triad. Notably, this study lacked control factors.

The results support Ma and Jiang (2018) and Gilbert and Kelloway (2018) findings that transactional leadership boosts innovation and employee satisfaction. Similarly, Samad, Muchiri, and Shahid (2021) found a significant relationship between transformational leadership and employee satisfaction and job satisfaction, suggesting that such leaders lead to higher job satisfaction, improved mental health, and lower turnover intentions.

This study sought to illuminate the effects of the dark triad on cynical employees and extend social exchange theory. Organisational cynicism shows employees' dissatisfaction with their workplaces. Our study shows that Transactional Leadership, Trust in Leader, and organisational atmosphere boost

employee satisfaction and creativity. The direct relationship between transactional leadership, trust in leader, and employee satisfaction was examined, as well as the mediation effect of organisational climate. The direct relationship results support transactional leadership and leader trust being positively connected to satisfaction. Organisational climate mediates also matters. Our research advances academically by establishing organisational climate as a mediating factor between Transactional Leadership, Trust in Leader, and employee satisfaction. We found that transactional leaders, who are seen as highly transformative, may give employees greater recognition, which is more strongly linked to pleasure. Recognition and social significance provided by leaders may explain these outcomes, or transactional leaders' autonomy-building social environment may inspire employees to regard external variables as more independent than controlled. Transactional Leadership and Trust in Leader studies should be valid for non-offender samples to help researchers who don't have access to expert samples. We found that Transactional Leadership and Trust in Leader improved employee organisational climate and satisfaction in India.

#### **Implications:**

This study has theoretical and practical ramifications. It analyses how Transactional Leadership and Trust in Leader can harm organisational atmosphere and employee satisfaction in India. Organisations struggle to find Transactional Leaders who build trust. Such leaders can greatly affect employee behaviour and satisfaction.

Organisations should carefully examine potential leaders during hiring. Even if organisations find leaders with these traits, they must create a happy workplace to boost employee satisfaction. The industries can learn from this study's empirical findings. The research is limited to a specific industry, but the findings can be applied to other industries in India and other nations to better understand leadership's impact on employee satisfaction.

#### **LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

The use of self-reported data limits our study. Self-report research is susceptible to technique variance, which could compromise findings (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). All responders were volunteers, thus self-selection bias is possible. First, as the current study is a time-lag study, future research should be longitudinal to acquire deeper insights. Second, future research could examine factors including perceived supervisory culture, organisational support, emotional intelligence, and social support that may affect findings.

We acknowledge the possibility of common technique bias because numerous constructs were studied using a comparable source and measurement point (Spector, 2006). However, confirmatory factor analyses showed that organisational climate and dependent variables had sufficient discriminant validity. Thus, we assume common-method bias is unlikely to alter important findings.

Future research should include non-dispositional affective controls such deviant behaviour to broaden the study. Alternative data collection methods like observational methods could replace self-reports.

Despite these constraints, our study sheds light on exchange interactions in the business, particularly management methods and employee responses. This topic is empirically understudied (Uhl-Bien & Maslyn, 2003). We also addressed Ferlie, Hartley, and Martin (2003) concerns about quantitative data analysis in management research and used theoretically driven research questions. This research also includes an extensive survey to generalise Gould-Williams and Davies (2005) findings. It shows that trust, involvement, and fair rewards shape employee attitudes and satisfaction.

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