

The Role of Transformational Leadership on Job Satisfaction and Employee Performance: Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

This study systematically reviews the relationship between transformational leadership, job satisfaction, and employee performance through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) of 22 peer-reviewed articles published between 2011 and 2025. Following identification, selection, and thematic synthesis, the review integrates theories, methods, and key findings from diverse organizational contexts, including banking, education, military, and service industries. The results show that transformational leadership positively and significantly influences both job satisfaction and employee performance. Inspirational motivation and individualized consideration are most effective in enhancing job satisfaction, while intellectual stimulation and idealized influence drive performance improvements. Several studies also highlight the moderating effects of organizational culture and performance measurement systems (KPI) in strengthening these relationships. Overall, the review confirms that transformational leadership is vital for fostering a motivated, productive, and high-performing workforce, offering both theoretical insights and practical guidance for organizations seeking to enhance employee engagement and performance.

Keywords: *Employee Performance, Job Satisfaction, Organizational Culture, Transformational Leadership.*

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1. | INTRODUCTION

Transformational leadership has become one of the most influential leadership approaches in the last two decades due to its ability to inspire positive change and improve organizational performance in a sustainable manner. This leadership model emphasizes long-term vision, developing the potential of subordinates, and empowering individuals to achieve common goals (Magasi, 2021). In modern organizations facing the challenges of globalization and digitalization, the role of transformational leadership has become increasingly important because it can foster employee morale, creativity, and commitment to the organization (Shafi et al., 2020). Transformational leaders do not only focus on work results, but also on the process of building trust, intrinsic motivation, and shared values that strengthen employee loyalty to the organization's vision (Khattak et al., 2020).

Job satisfaction is one of the psychological variables that plays an important role in bridging the relationship between leadership and performance. Employees who experience transformational leadership tend to have higher job satisfaction because they feel valued, listened to, and given opportunities to develop (Akdere & Egan, 2020). Transformation-oriented leadership not only encourages employees to achieve targets, but also creates a work environment that is conducive to psychological well-being (Miao et al., 2020). Research by Wojtczuk-Turek (2022) shows that transformational leaders are able to internalize organizational goals into employees' personal values, thereby increasing satisfaction and commitment to work.

In addition, the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance has been the focus of various empirical studies in various industrial sectors. According to Suryadi et al. (2024), transformational leadership style has a positive effect on performance improvement because it can stimulate motivation, commitment, and creativity in individuals at work. Transformational leaders also encourage innovation and adaptability among employees by setting an example, recognizing achievements, and supporting new initiatives (Gupta, 2025). In dynamic organizations, this leadership style has been proven to increase work efficiency and effectiveness through improved collaboration and shared goal orientation.

However, various studies show varying results regarding the effect of transformational leadership on employee performance and job satisfaction. Rafia & Sudiro (2020), Lai et al. (2020), and Mon et al. (2021) found that the effect of transformational leadership on performance can be mediated by job satisfaction and work engagement levels. Conversely, other studies show that this influence is insignificant because it is influenced by factors such as organizational structure, workload, and employee autonomy (Situmorang & Eardhani, 2022; Msuya & Kumar). These varying results indicate the need for a systematic review of previous research results to find a more consistent and in-depth pattern of relationships between these three variables.

This study aims to conduct a systematic literature review (SLR) on the relationship between transformational leadership, job satisfaction, and employee performance based on previous empirical studies published between 2011 and 2025. This approach allows researchers to identify research trends, theoretical gaps, and empirical contributions from various previous studies. Thus, the results of this study are expected to enrich the human resource management literature, reinforce the role of transformational leadership in improving employee satisfaction and performance, and provide strategic guidance for practitioners in developing leadership that is oriented towards value transformation and sustainable performance improvement.

2. | LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review outlines the foundational theories and empirical developments related to transformational leadership, job satisfaction, and employee performance. Transformational leadership is conceptualized as a leadership style emphasizing vision, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, which collectively influence followers' motivation and behavioral outcomes (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Khattak et al., 2020). Numerous studies have identified transformational leadership as a key antecedent to job satisfaction by fostering trust, meaning, and psychological empowerment among employees (Akdere & Egan, 2020; Choi et al., 2016).

Additionally, empirical findings show that employee performance is positively shaped by leaders who provide intellectual stimulation and role modeling, encouraging innovation and proactive work behavior (Islam et al., 2023; Suryadi et al., 2024). Job satisfaction is often positioned as a mediating variable linking leadership behavior to performance outcomes, consistent with social exchange theory and motivational models (Rawashdeh et al., 2020; Lai et al., 2020).

Despite strong theoretical support, some studies indicate variations in the magnitude of effects due to contextual factors such as organizational culture, workload, and autonomy (Situmorang & Wardhani, 2022; Msuya & Kumar, 2022). This creates a need for a systematic synthesis to map consistent patterns, contradictions, and theoretical gaps surrounding these variables. The systematic literature review in this study aims to integrate previous findings and offer a holistic understanding of the relationships among transformational leadership, job satisfaction, and employee performance.

3. | RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to thoroughly examine the relationship between transformational leadership, job satisfaction, and employee performance based on empirical findings from various scientific studies. This approach was chosen because it provides an integrated picture of the relationship patterns between concepts and identifies research gaps that have not been revealed in previous literature. The SLR was conducted by systematically reviewing, analyzing,

and synthesizing the results of previous studies to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the role of transformational leadership in improving employee satisfaction and performance. According to Kitchenham and Charters (2007), the SLR method aims to collect scientific evidence in a structured and transparent manner so that the results are academically accountable.

The research was conducted in three main steps, namely identification, selection, and thematic synthesis. In the identification stage, researchers collected articles from international scientific databases such as Scopus, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, and Google Scholar. The articles selected were peer-reviewed publications between 2011 and 2025 with the main keywords "transformational leadership," "job satisfaction," and "employee performance." In the selection stage, the researchers screened 22 articles that met the inclusion criteria, namely empirical studies that explained the direct and indirect relationships between the three variables. Articles that were conceptual, irrelevant, or lacked empirical data were excluded from the analysis. Next, in the synthesis stage, the researchers grouped the theories, methods, and main findings of each study thematically to find patterns of relationships and differences in results between studies.

Data analysis was conducted thematically by highlighting similarities, differences, and the direction of relationships between variables found in various studies. This thematic synthesis aims to identify the consistency of findings and factors that influence the effectiveness of transformational leadership in improving employee satisfaction and performance. The results of this analysis are expected to strengthen the theoretical basis of the relationship between variables and provide recommendations for future research and human resource management practices. The thematic approach is considered effective for integrating various research results and drawing conclusions that are representative of current scientific trends (Snyder, 2019).

4. | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study analyzes the relationship between transformational leadership, job satisfaction, and employee performance based on the results of a systematic review of 22 empirical articles published between 2011 and 2025. The synthesis results show that transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on various organizational outcomes, especially on affective aspects such as job satisfaction and productivity aspects such as employee performance. The dimensions of inspirational motivation and individualized consideration emerge as the most dominant factors in increasing job satisfaction, while intellectual stimulation and idealized influence play a greater role in improving employee performance. This relationship is also reinforced by the organizational culture context, performance measurement systems, and mediating factors such as empowerment and work motivation (Yousef, 2011; Choi et al., 2016; Rawashdeh et al., 2020; Salameh-Ayanian et al., 2025).

Most of the reviewed studies used a quantitative approach, while a small number combined mixed and qualitative methods. The quantitative approach was the dominant

choice because it allowed for testing relationships between variables with powerful inferential statistical analyses such as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and multiple regression. Meanwhile, qualitative and mixed-methods approaches are used to deepen the understanding of organizational contexts and leadership behavior in specific situations such as the military or public service sectors. The distribution of research designs based on the analyzed literature sources is presented in the table below.

Table 1. Research Design

No.	Design	Frequency	Source
1	Quantitative	20	Yousef (2011); Malik & Javed (2019); Khan et al. (2025); Contreras-Valdés et al. (2025); Islam et al. (2023); Wardani et al. (2023); Rawashdeh et al. (2020); Abu Hussein et al. (2024); Salameh-Ayanian et al. (2025); Rua & Araújo (2016); Al Draj & Al Saed (2023); Nguyen (2020); Görgens-Ekermans & Roux (2021); Suong (2020); Mulyani et al. (2023); Siagian et al. (2022); El Zein & Abdo (2024); Abelha et al. (2018); Choi et al. (2016)
2	Mixed-methods	1	Sulaiman et al. (2023)
3	Qualitative	1	Eslava-Zapata et al. (2022)

A total of 20 out of 22 articles (90.9%) used quantitative designs, indicating that transformational leadership studies are more often developed through empirical approaches based on survey data (Yousef, 2011; Malik & Javed, 2019; Khan et al., 2025; Contreras-Valdés et al., 2025; Islam et al., 2023). Only one study used a mixed method (Sulaiman et al., 2023) and one bibliometric-based qualitative study (Eslava-Zapata et al., 2022). The dominance of quantitative approaches indicates a scientific focus on measuring the validity of relationships between variables such as motivation, satisfaction, and performance. However, qualitative studies contribute to enriching the understanding of the social and cultural contexts underlying the effectiveness of transformational leadership. Thus, these results reflect a balance between analytical precision and contextual depth in the studies reviewed.

The studies analyzed show a diversity of units of analysis and organizational sectors, ranging from education and health to the military and tourism industry. This diversity shows that transformational leadership is not only a phenomenon relevant in the context of modern corporations, but also in public and social organizations. The distribution of units of analysis and sectoral contexts of the reviewed articles is presented in the table below.

Table 2. Units of Analysis & Sectoral Context

No.	Unit / Sector	Source
1	Cross-sector employees (individuals)	Yousef (2011); Malik & Javed (2019); Islam et al. (2023); Nguyen (2020); Mulyani et al. (2023); Abelha et al. (2018)
2	Healthcare (nursing/hospitals)	Choi et al. (2016)
3	Telecommunications	Rawashdeh et al. (2020)
4	Insurance	Abu Hussein et al. (2024)
5	Hospitality (GTL)	Khan et al. (2025)
6	Education (teachers/educational organizations)	Wardani et al. (2023); Contreras-Valdés et al. (2025)
7	Manufacturing	Islam et al. (2023)
8	SMEs	Suong (2020)
9	Military / MOOTW	Siagian et al. (2022); Sulaiman et al. (2023)
10	Tourism	El Zein & Abdo (2024)
11	NGO	Salameh-Ayanian et al. (2025)
12	Cultural foundation	Rua & Araújo (2016)
13	Cross-national bibliometrics	Eslava-Zapata et al. (2022)

The review results show that most studies use individual analysis units from various sectors such as education (Wardani et al., 2023; Contreras-Valdés et al., 2025), health (Choi et al., 2016), manufacturing (Islam et al., 2023), and telecommunications (Rawashdeh et al., 2020). The nursing context is prominent in the study by Choi et al. (2016), emphasizing the importance of empowerment as a mediator of the relationship between leadership and job satisfaction. On the other hand, the military sector (Siagian et al., 2022; Sulaiman et al., 2023) demonstrates the effectiveness of transformational leadership in improving soldier performance through discipline and public service motivation. Additionally, research in the tourism sector (El Zein & Abdo, 2024) and NGOs (Salameh-Ayanian et al., 2025) shows that this leadership style is also effective in crisis situations and social service-based organizations. Thus, transformational leadership has proven to be adaptive to various organizational contexts and work cultures.

The synthesis concerns the strength and direction of the relationship between transformational leadership and two main outcomes, namely job satisfaction and employee performance. This synthesis is based on 22 empirical articles that examine direct and indirect relationships in various sectors such as education, the military, and the service industry. A summary of the significant and insignificant results of each study is presented in the table below.

Table 3. Synthesis of the Influence of Transformational Leadership on Job Satisfaction and Employee Performance

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Significantly Influential	Not Significantly Influential	Source
Transformational Leadership	Job Satisfaction	11	0	Yousef (2011); Choi et al. (2016); Abelha et al. (2018); Malik & Javed (2019); Rawashdeh et al. (2020); Abu Hussein et al. (2024); Wardani et al. (2023); Khan et al. (2025); Salameh-Ayanian et al. (2025); El Zein & Abdo (2024); Mulyani et al. (2023)
	Employee Performance	8	0	Yousef (2011); Rawashdeh et al. (2020); Islam et al. (2023); Siagian et al. (2022); Sulaiman et al. (2023); Contreras-Valdés et al. (2025); El Zein & Abdo (2024); Salameh-Ayanian et al. (2025)

Based on the synthesis results, all studies (100%) show that transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction (Yousef, 2011; Choi et al., 2016; Abelha et al., 2018; Malik & Javed, 2019; Rawashdeh et al., 2020; Abu Hussein et al., 2024; Wardani et al., 2023; Khan et al., 2025; Salameh-Ayanian et al., 2025; El Zein & Abdo, 2024; Mulyani et al., 2023). These findings indicate that inspiring and attentive leadership characteristics can increase job satisfaction through feelings of being valued and intrinsically motivated. Individualized consideration and inspirational motivation have been proven to be the most influential dimensions in building employee psychological wellbeing.

Furthermore, eight studies show that transformational leadership also has a significant effect on employee performance (Yousef, 2011; Rawashdeh et al., 2020; Islam et al., 2023; Siagian et al., 2022; Sulaiman et al., 2023; Contreras-Valdés et al., 2025; El Zein & Abdo, 2024; Salameh-Ayanian et al., 2025). The dimensions of intellectual stimulation and idealized influence play a major role in driving innovation and performance improvement in the manufacturing, education, and military sectors. No insignificant relationships were found, reinforcing the conclusion that transformational leadership is a universal determinant of increased employee motivation, satisfaction, and work productivity in various organizational contexts.

Based on a systematic review of 22 articles, this discussion confirms that transformational leadership consistently improves both key outcomes of employee job satisfaction and performance across various organizational and national contexts. In the nonprofit sector operating in crisis situations, transformational leadership promotes higher satisfaction and performance than transactional styles, signaling the central role of vision, role modeling, and leader-follower relationships in conditions of uncertainty

(Salameh-Ayanian et al., 2025). In educational settings, its effects not only increase satisfaction but also reduce turnover intentions, reinforcing the argument that value orientation, moral exemplary behavior, and personal support can improve the work climate (Contreras-Valdés et al., 2025). In the telecommunications sector in developing countries, the influence pathway occurs both directly and through job satisfaction, revealing a social exchange mechanism that fosters commitment and high-achieving behavior (Rawashdeh et al., 2020).

The specific dimensions of transformational leadership work differently on each outcome. For job satisfaction, inspirational motivation and individualized consideration repeatedly appear dominant because they provide a sense of purpose and individual attention that improves workers' affective well-being (Yousef, 2011; Choi et al., 2016). Conversely, performance improvement is more closely related to intellectual stimulation and idealized influence, which encourage learning, creativity, and trust in the leader's capabilities and integrity (Islam et al., 2023; Salameh-Ayanian et al., 2025). Additional evidence emerges in Vietnamese small and medium-sized enterprises, where intellectual stimulation is the strongest driver of motivation, reinforcing the role of cognitive stimulation in driving performance behavior (Suong, 2020). Psychologically, the link between a leader's emotional intelligence competencies and the realm of transformational behavior explains why individual attention and inspiration work strongly on satisfaction, while exemplary influence resonates with perceptions of supervisor support and performance orientation (Görgens-Ekermans & Roux, 2021).

Mediation and moderation pathways provide a mechanistic understanding of these findings. Employee empowerment was found to mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction among healthcare workers, indicating that the delegation of autonomy and meaningful work is an important bridge between leadership influence and affective outcomes (Choi et al., 2016). In the context of pharmacy, empowerment also mediates some of the influence on satisfaction, with intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation being the main drivers, reinforcing the thesis that meaningful work design and cognitive challenges foster a sense of competence and satisfaction (Al Draij & Al Saed, 2023). In the telecommunications sector, satisfaction mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and performance, revealing a coherent motivational pathway from positive work experiences to high-achieving behavior (Rawashdeh et al., 2020). Contextual moderation was also detected: gender strengthened the transformational leadership–satisfaction link in Brazil, indicating differentiation in affective experiences between employee groups (Abelha, Carneiro, & Cavazotte, 2018). Perceptions of organizational politics tend to weaken the relationship between leadership and satisfaction, while organizational commitment strengthens it, illustrating the importance of a climate of fairness and engagement as foundational conditions (Malik & Javed, 2019).

The generality of these findings is expanded by the diversity of sectoral and geographical contexts. In Indonesian public organizations, transformational leadership strengthens organizational citizenship behavior through job satisfaction, marking its indirect contribution to service quality (Saluy et al., 2024). In military settings, transformational leadership and public service motivation simultaneously drive soldier performance, evidence that inspirational goals and a service ethos can be operationalized even in non-war operations that demand cross-functional coordination (Sulaiman et al., 2023). In broader military formations, the concept of organizational military behavior mediates the influence of transformational leadership on performance, confirming that the formation of extra-role norms and practices is an important channel for translating leadership energy into performance outcomes (Siagian et al., 2022). Meanwhile, in Lebanon's tourism industry, transformational leadership increases employee satisfaction and performance, but the path from satisfaction to organizational performance can be negative, suggesting complex dynamics of efficiency and service expectations at the institutional level (El Zein & Abdo, 2024).

Consistent findings on job satisfaction across all empirical studies examining this outcome report a significant positive effect, reinforcing the thesis that transformational leadership fulfills basic psychological needs for meaning, competence, and connectedness (Yousef, 2011; Abelha, Carneiro, & Cavazotte, 2018). Cross-sector evidence from insurance, education, green hospitality, and nonprofit organizations adds to the external validity that the practices of inspiration, individual attention, and affirmation of shared values are a universal recipe for work well-being (Abu Hussein et al., 2024; Wardani et al., 2023; Khan et al., 2025; Salameh-Ayanian et al., 2025). Within a framework of values and ethics, Islamic work ethic has been shown to strengthen leader–outcome relationships, indicating that moral values and transcendent goals reinforce social exchange mechanisms and collective identification (Yousef, 2011). At the same time, bibliometric mapping places emotional intelligence and transformational leadership as two large, interrelated clusters, underscoring that leaders' emotional competence is a performative prerequisite for effective transformational practices (Eslava-Zapata et al., 2022).

In addition, regarding employee performance, eight studies consistently report significant positive effects of transformational leadership, with direct and indirect pathways through motivation, empowerment, and extra-role behavior (Islam et al., 2023; Contreras-Valdés et al., 2025). Performance improves when tasks are designed to be challenging, leaders set an example, and the social work system encourages active participation, initiative, and continuous learning (Salameh-Ayanian et al., 2025; Sulaiman et al., 2023). An important nuance remains to be noted: in some contexts, job satisfaction is not always a strong link to macro-level organizational performance, so attention is needed to the alignment of individual–organizational goals and fair performance management so that affective energy is not reduced to comfort without productivity (El Zein & Abdo, 2024; Siagian et al., 2022). Overall, cross-method and

cross-sector evidence reinforces the conclusion that transformational leadership is a reliable strategic lever for increasing satisfaction and performance, with optimal effectiveness when accompanied by empowerment, shared values, and supportive organizational conditions.

5. | CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this systematic literature review confirms that transformational leadership consistently plays a role in improving employee job satisfaction and performance in various organizational contexts. Analysis of twenty-two articles reveals a consistent pattern: leaders' inspiring vision and individual attention increase workers' affective well-being, while intellectual stimulation and moral exemplarity encourage creativity, initiative, and high-achieving behavior. The consistency of findings across the education, health, military, manufacturing, hospitality, telecommunications, non-profit, and cultural sectors reinforces the external validity that transformational practices are a strategic lever for building a productive and high-value work environment.

At the mechanism level, this positive relationship works through several key channels. Employee empowerment, work motivation, and professional commitment serve as psychological bridges that channel the leader's influence toward satisfaction and performance. At the same time, reinforcing and inhibiting conditions at the organizational level also determine the magnitude of the effect, particularly organizational culture and performance measurement systems based on Key Performance Indicators that are aligned with values, goals, and expected behaviors. An important nuance also emerges: in certain contexts, job satisfaction does not always directly translate into higher organizational performance, so that alignment of individual and organizational goals, procedural justice, and challenging job design remain prerequisites for affective energy to go beyond mere comfort.

In practical terms, organizations that want to strengthen sustainable performance need to instill transformational leadership practices in a structured manner through the development of leaders' competencies in the dimensions of inspiration, exemplary behavior, intellectual stimulation, and individual attention, accompanied by a cultural architecture that supports learning, autonomy, and performance accountability. For the development of science, these results enrich the theoretical foundation of human resource management by clarifying the most impactful dimensions and the boundary conditions that moderate the relationship. Further research is recommended to examine measurable leadership intervention designs, test cross-level dynamics between satisfaction, extra-role behavior, and organizational performance, and explore the role of values and work ethics in strengthening the effectiveness of transformational leadership across cultures and organizational change cycles.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval and Originality Statement

Ethical approval was obtained for this study. The manuscript represents original work and has not been previously published, nor is it under consideration by another journal.

Data Disclosure Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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