The Impact of Leadership Styles on Employee's Job Satisfaction (A Case Study of Afghan Telecom)

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles on employee job satisfaction within Afghan Telecom. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using SPSS version 26, employing descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis. The findings reveal that transformational leadership has the most substantial positive influence on employee job satisfaction, as it fosters trust, motivation, and individualized consideration, creating a supportive work environment. Transactional leadership demonstrates a moderate positive impact, primarily through structured systems and reward mechanisms, though it lacks a focus on long-term employee development. Conversely, laissez-faire leadership exhibits a weak negative association with job satisfaction, as the absence of direction and feedback leads to role ambiguity and dissatisfaction. These findings underscore the critical role of transformational leadership in enhancing employee satisfaction and retention, particularly in the complex organizational and socio-economic context of Afghan Telecom.

Keywords: Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership. Laissez-Faire Leadership and Job Satisfaction

1. Introduction

Leadership is a key determinant of organizational success, having a profound impact on employee morale, productivity, and overall job satisfaction (Northouse, 2021). In today's fast-paced and competitive business environment, organizations must adopt effective leadership practices to guide teams, foster innovation, and maintain high levels of employee engagement. Job satisfaction plays a crucial role in this process, as satisfied employees tend to be more productive, motivated, and committed to their organizations. This interconnected relationship has fueled increasing academic interest in the role of leadership styles in shaping employee satisfaction, particularly in diverse and dynamic work environments.

Leadership styles including transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership are crucial in how leaders manage, communicate, and motivate their teams (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Transformational leadership emphasizes inspiring employees to exceed their individual goals for the collective benefit of the organization, fostering a positive and collaborative work culture. Transactional leadership, based on rewards and punishments, focuses on task completion and compliance, but it may not always lead to sustained employee satisfaction. Laissez-faire leadership, characterized by minimal direct supervision, allows employees greater autonomy but can lead to a lack of direction and accountability. Each leadership style offers distinct advantages and challenges, with its impact on job satisfaction influenced by organizational context and workforce dynamics.

Despite considerable research on leadership styles and their effects on employee satisfaction, much of the existing literature has focused on developed economies, often neglecting the complexities of developing countries like Afghanistan. In many of these regions,

including Afghanistan, socio-political instability and traditional hierarchical structures shape leadership practices and organizational dynamics. While Western contexts tend to favor participative and transformational leadership for improving employee satisfaction, these approaches may face challenges when applied in regions with limited resources and unique cultural contexts. This study aims to address this gap by exploring how transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles influence employee satisfaction in Afghan Telecom, one of Afghanistan's leading telecom companies.

By focusing on the Afghan context, this research seeks to provide valuable insights into how leadership behaviors can be adapted to enhance employee satisfaction and organizational performance in a complex and evolving environment. The findings of this study will contribute to both the theoretical understanding of leadership in developing economies and the practical application of leadership strategies to improve employee engagement and commitment in organizations facing similar challenges.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership is widely acknowledged as a pivotal factor in organizational effectiveness, particularly in influencing job satisfaction, which, in turn, impacts overall employee performance. While leadership styles may differ across cultural and organizational contexts, empirical research consistently emphasizes the importance of transformational and transactional leadership in shaping employee satisfaction outcomes. Laissez-faire leadership, often perceived as less effective, also plays a noteworthy role in influencing organizational success.

Transformational leadership is primarily characterized by its focus on innovation, empowerment, and the development of a vision that aligns with the goals of the organization. Bass (1985) introduced

transformational leadership as a model that fosters high levels of motivation, employee engagement, and job satisfaction. This leadership style works by emotionally engaging employees through individualized attention, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation. Employees who work under transformational leaders typically report higher levels of satisfaction due to opportunities for personal growth, recognition, and a deeper connection to the organization's mission (García-Morales et al., 2012). Studies across sectors such as education and healthcare have demonstrated that transformational leadership significantly enhances job satisfaction by fostering a culture of trust, openness, and mutual respect (Shahzad et al., 2015).

Conversely, transactional leadership revolves around exchanges between leaders and employees, such as offering rewards for goal achievement or implementing corrective actions for mistakes. Bass (1990) found that transactional leadership can positively impact job satisfaction in environments where clear expectations and structured rewards are essential. However, its effectiveness is often context-dependent. In environments that demand creativity or intrinsic motivation, transactional leadership may be less effective, as it primarily focuses on extrinsic rewards and goal achievement (Spector, 2012). A study by Iqbal et al. (2021) revealed a moderate positive relationship between transactional leadership and job satisfaction in the banking sector, suggesting that while transactional leadership helps maintain order and efficiency, it may be limited in fostering long-term job satisfaction unless supplemented by opportunities for personal growth.

Laissez-faire leadership, characterized by a passive approach and the avoidance of decision-making, is generally associated with negative effects on job satisfaction. Skogstad et al. (2007) found that employees

under laissez-faire leaders tend to experience lower job satisfaction due to a lack of guidance, feedback, and support. Tuan (2017) further substantiated this, demonstrating that employees in the service industry who report to laissez-faire leaders are more likely to feel neglected, resulting in higher turnover rates and dissatisfaction. The detrimental impact of laissez-faire leadership on job satisfaction can be attributed to its failure to address employees' developmental needs and provide the motivation necessary for sustained organizational performance.

In Afghanistan, where political instability and economic challenges significantly influence organizational dynamics, leadership styles take on an even greater importance in shaping employee job satisfaction. Afghanistan's collectivist culture (Hofstede, 2001), which emphasizes shared goals and strong interpersonal relationships, is likely to benefit from transformational leadership. Leaders who focus on employee development and team cohesion are better positioned to foster job satisfaction within Afghan organizations. For instance, in state-owned enterprises like Afghan Telecom, transformational leadership is particularly valuable in navigating socio-economic challenges (Basir & Ghazanfar, 2019).

Considering Afghanistan's unique challenges, including political instability, security concerns, and economic limitations, transformational leadership proves especially valuable in volatile environments. Transformational leaders' ability to adapt, engage employees with a compelling vision, and align their efforts with the organization's goals is crucial for fostering job satisfaction, improving employee retention, and enhancing organizational performance.

Empirical studies on the relationship between leadership styles and job satisfaction in Afghanistan are limited, though they are progressively increasing. This report presents a selection of relevant

domestic and international research that contributes to the development of this area of study.

Mohammad, Rahimi, and Sultani (2021), conducted an empirical study to examine the relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction among employees working in Afghan NGOs. Using a quantitative approach, the researchers collected data through surveys distributed to 150 employees, with a response rate of 82%. The findings revealed a significant positive correlation between transformational leadership and job satisfaction, highlighting the importance of mentoring and fostering innovation in challenging socio-political environments.

Farhadi and Sultani (2022), explored the impact of leadership styles on job satisfaction in Afghanistan's private sector. The study employed a structured questionnaire and surveyed 120 employees from small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The results demonstrated that transformational leadership had a significant positive effect on job satisfaction by promoting trust and innovation, whereas laissez-faire leadership showed no significant impact.

Ahmadi and Rahimi (2022), investigated the effects of leadership styles on job satisfaction in the telecommunications sector of Afghanistan. The study adopted a quantitative approach, collecting data from 130 employees of Afghan Telecom. Findings indicated that transformational leadership significantly enhanced job satisfaction and employee engagement, while laissez-faire leadership had a negligible effect.

Iqbal, Khan, and Adeel (2021), examined the effect of leadership styles (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) on employee job satisfaction in Pakistan's banking sector. A survey with 27 Likert-scale items was distributed to 150 employees, achieving a response rate of 81%. The study found that transformational leadership had the most

significant positive impact on job satisfaction, followed by transactional leadership, whereas laissez-faire leadership had a minimal influence.

Nadeem, Hussain, and Zafar (2022), conducted a study in South Asian developing economies to assess the role of transformational leadership in enhancing job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Using a sample of 200 employees from various industries, the researchers found transformational leadership to significantly improve job satisfaction by fostering employee empowerment and trust in dynamic organizational environments.

Khan and Malik (2023), investigated the relationship between leadership styles and job satisfaction in the education sector of Pakistan. The study surveyed 180 employees from educational institutions using a standardized questionnaire. The results indicated that transformational leadership had the highest positive impact on job satisfaction, emphasizing the importance of vision-sharing and effective communication, while transactional leadership showed moderate effects.

Limited research exists on how leadership styles impact employee satisfaction in Afghanistan's telecommunications sector, particularly Afghan Telecom, considering its unique cultural, organizational, and socio-political context. This study addresses this gap. Based on the reviewed studies, the present research aims to test the following hypothesizes:

H1: Transformational leadership has a positive impact on employee job satisfaction in Afghan Telecom.

H2: Transactional leadership has a positive impact on employee job satisfaction in Afghan Telecom.

H3: Laissez-faire leadership has a negative impact on employee job satisfaction in Afghan Telecom.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research methodology to examine the impact of leadership styles on employee job satisfaction at Afghan Telecom. A structured questionnaire was used as the primary data collection instrument. The target population comprised 1,046 office-based employees of Afghan Telecom in Kabul province, as reported by the Human Resources department in December 2024.

The sample size was determined using Cochran's formula for random sampling, resulting in a sample of 282 employees. This sample size was chosen to ensure statistical validity and representativeness of the target population, considering the organization's diverse age group, gender, departments, job positions, and levels of experience. A convenience sampling technique was employed to ensure that the data accurately reflects the varied perspectives of employees from different organizational units. The data collection process involved administering a structured questionnaire, which was divided into two sections. The first section collected demographic data, such as age, education, job position, length of service, and departmental affiliation. The second section focused on evaluating employees' perceptions of various leadership styles [transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire] and their corresponding effects on job satisfaction. A Likert scale, ranging from "very satisfied" to " very dissatisfied," was utilized to capture the employees' responses, providing a mix of both quantitative and qualitative data.

The data were analyzed using SPSS version 26.0. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize the sample's demographic characteristics. Correlation analysis was used to assess the relationships between leadership styles and job satisfaction. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha to ensure internal consistency, while validity testing ensured the accuracy and relevance of the constructs

being measured. Finally, hypothesis testing was performed using multiple regression analysis to determine the significant effects of leadership styles on employee job satisfaction.

This methodology provided a robust and systematic approach to exploring the complex relationship between leadership styles and job satisfaction, offering valuable insights into how leadership influences employee attitudes in Afghan Telecom.

4. RESULTS

This section provides an in-depth analysis of the demographic and biographical characteristics of the respondents.

Table 1: Demographic Analysis

Variables		Frequency	Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Gender	Male	276	92	98
	Female	6	2	100.0
Age Group	18-25 years	62	22	22.0
	26-33 years	121	43	62.5
	34-41 years	86	31	92.3
	42-49 years	9	3	95.0
	50 years and above	4	1.0	100.0
Job Grade	1-3	10	4	10.0
	4-6	126	45	44.8
	7-8	108	38	76.3
	9	38	13	100.0
Departmental Distribution	Technical	62	22	12.5
	Sales and Marketing	27	10	45.3
	Customer Service	106	38	68.3
	Finance	69	24	88.5
	HR	58	20	100.0
Length of Service	1 - 2 Years	75	27	27.0
	3-5 Years	124	44	41.5
	5 - 10 and above	56	20	84.0
	Less than 1 Years	27	9	100.0

The demographic analysis of the respondents reveals a significant gender disparity, with a predominance of male participants (98%), while female representation is minimal at 2%. Age-wise, the largest proportion of respondents, 43%, falls within the 26–33-year range, followed by 31% in the 34–41-year category. Smaller segments are represented in older age groups, with 3% between 42–49 years and 1% aged 50 or more. The organizational composition further illustrates that 83% of respondents occupy grades 4–6 and 7–8, reflecting a workforce predominantly in intermediate-level roles, which are central to the operational and strategic functions of the organization. Departmental distribution highlights the Sales and Marketing division as the largest at 38%, followed by Customer Service (24%) and Finance (20%), with smaller representations in Technical (10%) and Human Resources (8%). In terms of tenure, the majority (44%) have 3–5 years of experience, suggesting a relatively balanced mix of experienced and newer employees. This demographic profile provides essential context for the subsequent analysis, aiding in the interpretation of the study's findings within the organizational setting.

4.1. Validity Test

Validity is essential for ensuring that the research instruments measure the intended constructs accurately. In this study, the draft questionnaire was reviewed by professors and subject-matter experts to assess its relevance and clarity. Feedback was incorporated to refine the instrument, ensuring it effectively captures the impact of leadership styles on employee job satisfaction. This expert review process enhanced the validity of the questionnaire, ensuring its credibility for data collection.

4.2. Reliability Test

A relatively high degree of internal consistency among the variables was indicated by Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (α) value of 0.875 and

0.909 obtained from the reliability analysis of the leadership styles and job satisfaction. This result indicates that all assertions of the study's variables show good reliability. As a result, it is established that the variables being examined possess continuous measuring characteristics.

Table 2: Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Leadership styles	.875	33
Job satisfaction	.909	20

Source: Primary Data, processed with SPSS Version 26

4.3. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics are foundational for understanding the basic features of a dataset and are often used in the initial stages of data analysis to identify patterns or trends. Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics for transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles, including the mean, standard error, and sample size for each. These statistics offer a summary of the data distribution for each leadership style.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics

Description	N	Mean	S.D
Re-examines critical assumptions to questions when they are appropriate	282	3.70	1.382
Talks about his/her most important values and beliefs	282	3.63	1.214
Seeks differing perspectives when solving problems	282	3.68	1.221
Talks optimistically about the future	282	3.64	1.188
Instills pride in me for being associated with him/her	282	3.58	1.125
Talks enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished	282	3.75	1.078
Stresses the importance of having a strong sense of purpose	282	3.78	1.065

Spends time teaching and coaching	282	3.75	1.169
Treats me as an individual rather than just a member of the group	282	3.74	1.075
Demonstrates that problems must reoccur before taking action	282	3.80	1.092
Considers the moral and ethical consequences of decisions	282	3.80	1.037
Articulates a compelling vision of the future	282	3.71	1.133
Avoids making decisions	282	3.63	1.025
Directs my attention towards failures to meet standards	282	3.66	1.088
Suggests new ways of doing things	282	3.64	1.165
Emphasizes the importance of having a collective sense of the mission	282	3.71	1.069
Expresses satisfaction when I meet expectations	282	3.73	1.045
Gets me to do more than I am normally expected to do	282	3.78	1.091
Transformational		3.81	1.149
Provides me with assistance in exchange for my efforts	282	3.52	1.466
Fails to interfere until problems become serious	282	3.45	1.283
Focuses attention on mistakes and deviations from standards	282	3.60	1.251
Is specific about who is responsible for reaching performance targets	282	3.66	1.131
Waits for things to go wrong before taking action	282	3.69	1.111
Makes clear what one can expect to receive when performance goals are achieved	282	3.80	1.097
Goes beyond self-interest for the group	282	3.79	1.109
Acts in ways that builds my respect for him/her	282	3.42	1.087
Displays a sense of power and confidence	282	3.65	1.122
Gets me to look at problems from different angles	282	3.67	1.122
Uses methods of leadership that are satisfying	282	3.37	1.177
Transactional		3.59	1.206
Avoids getting involved when important issues arise	282	3.17	.971
Is absent when needed	282	3.95	.945
Helps me to develop my strengths	282	3.87	1.083
Expresses confidence that goals will be achieved	282	3.75	1.053
Laissez-faire		3.79	1.031
I am able to keep busy all the time	282	3.57	1.504
I am given the opportunity to work alone on the job	282	3.44	1.296
I am given the opportunity to do different things	282	3.55	1.237

I am given the chance to be somebody in the community	282	3.70	1.161
My manager handles his team professionally	282	3.60	1.131
My manager is competent in making decisions	282	3.65	1.141
I am able to perform tasks that don't go against my conscience	282	3.77	1.098
My job provides for steady growth.	282	3.63	1.234
I am given the chance to do things for other people	282	3.78	1.089
I am given the chance to tell people what to do	282	3.93	1.008
I am given the chance to do something that makes use of my abilities	282	3.86	.984
My company implements policies with ease and efficiency	282	3.94	1.067
My pay coincides with the amount of work I do	282	3.80	1.056
I have opportunity for advancement in this job	282	3.67	1.108
I have the freedom to use my own judgment	282	3.73	1.042
I am given the opportunity of trying my own methods of doing the job	282	3.86	1.024
My job is subjected to conducive working conditions	282	3.80	1.068
My co-workers get along with each other	282	3.78	1.113
My manager gets on well with me	282	3.80	1.118
I receive praise for doing a good job	282	3.91	1.071
Employee Job Satisfaction		3.75	1.068

Source: Primary Data, processed with SPSS version 26

The results from Tables 3 reveal employees' perceptions of leadership styles within the organization. Transformational leadership received the highest mean score of 3.81, with employees generally agreeing on its ethical focus, though less on instilling pride. Transactional leadership showed moderate agreement (mean = 3.59), with strong support for clear rewards but less agreement on leader intervention. Laissez-faire leadership had a mean of 3.79, with employees noting leaders' absence and non-involvement. Job satisfaction was moderate (mean = 3.75), with employees feeling valued but not overwhelmingly satisfied. Transformational leadership emerged as the dominant style.

4.4. Correlation Analysis

The given value of Table 4 shows that transformational leadership strongly correlates with job satisfaction (0.781, p = 0.032), transactional leadership shows a weak correlation (0.107, p = 0.001), and laissez-faire leadership has a moderate correlation (0.281, p = 0.000). The model is significant at the 0.01 level (99% confidence), with transformational leadership being the most effective in improving job satisfaction.

Table 4: Correlations

		Employee's job Satisfaction	Transformation	Transaction	Laissez-faire
Employee's job Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	1	. 781**	.107*	.281**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.032	.001	.000
	N	282	282	282	282
Transformation	Pearson Correlation	781**	1	.391**	.299**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.032		.000	.000
	N	282	282	282	282
Transaction	Pearson Correlation	.107*	.391**	1	.269**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000		.000
	N	282	282	282	282
Laissez-faire	Pearson Correlation	.281**	.299**	.269**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	282	282	282	282

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4.5. Regression Analysis

The regression model shows a weak positive correlation (R = 0.327) between leadership styles and employee job satisfaction, indicating a modest relationship. The R Square value of 0.107 suggests that leadership styles explain 10.7% of the variance in job satisfaction, with the remaining 89.3% attributed to other factors. The Adjusted R Square of 0.096 indicates the explanatory power of leadership styles, while the Standard Error of the Estimate (0.61943) reflects a moderate prediction error.

Table 5: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.327ᵃ	.107	.096	.61943

a. Predictors: (Constant), Transformational Transactional, laissez-fair

Source: Primary Data, processed with SPSS version 26

4.6. Hypothesis Testing

The findings presented in Table 6 provide empirical support for the proposed hypotheses regarding the impact of leadership styles on employee job satisfaction. Specifically, transformational leadership was found to have a significant positive effect on job satisfaction (t = 2.155, p < 0.05), thereby supporting Hypothesis 1 (H1). Similarly, transactional leadership was shown to significantly and positively influence job satisfaction (t = 3.464, p < 0.05), supporting Hypothesis 2 (H2). In contrast, laissez-faire leadership exhibited a weak but statistically significant negative impact on job satisfaction (t = -2.05, p = 0.045), leading to the acceptance of Hypothesis 3 (H3).

Table 6: Hypothesis Testing

No	Hypothesis	Beta Value	Sig.	Results
H1	Transformation	0.107	0.032	Accepted
H2	Transactional	0.171	0.001	Accepted
H3	Laissez-faire	-0.15	.045	Accepted

5. DISCUSSION

This study examined the impact of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles on employee job satisfaction at Afghan Telecom. The findings indicate that transformational leadership has the strongest positive influence on job satisfaction. By fostering trust, emotional support, and a shared sense of purpose, transformational leaders enhance motivation and engagement. This leadership style is particularly effective in Afghanistan's socio-economic context, where it instills optimism and stability in employees, leading to higher satisfaction.

Transactional leadership also positively influences job satisfaction, though to a lesser degree. Its structured approach, emphasizing clear expectations and reward systems, provides employees with clarity and short-term motivation. However, its focus on external rewards limits its ability to nurture creativity and long-term engagement, reducing its overall effectiveness.

Laissez-faire leadership, in contrast, has a weak or negative impact. Employees reported dissatisfaction due to a lack of guidance and accountability. In Afghanistan's collectivist culture, where proactive leadership is valued, laissez-faire practices fail to meet employees' expectations for direction and recognition.

6. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This study presents significant theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it extends the application of Full-Range Leadership

Theory (Bass & Avolio, 1994) to Afghanistan, a developing country with a distinct cultural context. The research confirms the universal effectiveness of transformational leadership in enhancing employee satisfaction while emphasizing the contextual relevance of transactional leadership for task-focused and structured work environments. Moreover, it addresses a key research gap by exploring the intersection of leadership styles and cultural dynamics in a non-Western organizational setting.

Practically, the findings underscore the need for Afghan Telecom to prioritize leadership development programs that emphasize transformational competencies, such as emotional intelligence, vision articulation, and employee empowerment. A balanced leadership approach that integrates transactional practices, such as performance rewards and task monitoring, is also essential for operational stability. Leaders should actively avoid laissez-faire approaches by providing clear guidance and accountability. Effective leadership practices can enhance employee satisfaction, reduce turnover, and strengthen organizational performance, thereby aligning leadership strategies with policies that foster innovation and employee well-being.

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