
THE CONTRIBUTION OF LEADERSHIP STYLES TO WORKERS' SATISFACTION FOR COMPETENCE CONVEYANCE IN HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTIONS IN TANZANIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the contribution of leadership styles to workers' satisfaction for competence conveyance in higher learning institutions in Tanzania. Employing a qualitative research design, data were gathered from principals, deans, heads of departments, and academic staff drawn from selected higher learning institutions within Mbeya City. The study aimed to explore how different leadership approaches influence employees' motivation, job satisfaction, and overall competence development. The findings revealed that transformational leadership significantly enhances staff morale, professional growth, teamwork, and institutional performance by inspiring and empowering employees to reach their potential. Transactional leadership, on the other hand, was found to be effective in maintaining discipline, ensuring accountability, and promoting adherence to institutional policies and performance standards. However, excessive dependence on transactional measures sometimes limited innovation and intrinsic motivation among staff. Meanwhile, laissez-faire leadership, though occasionally fostering creativity and independence, often led to inadequate supervision, reduced institutional support, and lower productivity levels. The study concludes that leadership style is a determining factor in shaping employee satisfaction, institutional effectiveness, and the transmission of professional competence in higher education. It emphasizes the importance of adopting leadership practices that balance motivation, accountability, and autonomy. Therefore, the study recommends that higher learning institutions strengthen transformational leadership training, integrate constructive transactional mechanisms, and minimize laissez-faire tendencies to enhance both staff satisfaction and institutional excellence across Tanzanian higher education systems.

KEYWORDS: Leadership styles, Workers' satisfaction, Competence conveyance, Higher learning institutions, Tanzania.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Leadership remains one of the most critical determinants of organizational success and employee satisfaction across the globe. In higher learning institutions, leadership not only defines management practices but also shapes institutional culture, academic productivity, and professional competence. Effective leadership contributes to achieving organizational goals by motivating and guiding employees toward both collective and individual success. Globally, scholars agree that leadership influences employee motivation, engagement, and performance outcomes, which are essential for institutional growth and sustainability (Northouse, 2021; Yukl, 2017). In the academic context, leadership goes beyond administrative management it involves nurturing intellectual capital, promoting innovation, and inspiring educators to deliver quality teaching and research. Therefore, leadership serves as a critical tool for competence development, guiding employees to achieve institutional goals while fulfilling personal and professional aspirations. In the context of higher learning institutions, leadership determines how academic staff perceive their roles, satisfaction levels, and contributions to institutional excellence.

The dynamics of higher education in developing countries like Tanzania further amplify the significance of leadership. Tanzanian higher learning institutions face persistent challenges such as limited financial resources, growing student enrollments, insufficient infrastructure, and increasing demands for quality teaching and research (Mgaiwa, 2021). In such circumstances, the effectiveness of leadership plays a decisive role in influencing employee morale, motivation, and productivity. Leaders who demonstrate supportive and visionary leadership are more likely to inspire their staff to overcome these challenges creatively, while autocratic or indifferent leaders may contribute to dissatisfaction and reduced competence. Empirical evidence shows that satisfied employees exhibit higher levels of innovation, dedication, and institutional loyalty (Judge & Piccolo, 2018). Thus, examining how leadership styles contribute to workers' satisfaction in Tanzanian higher education institutions is vital for understanding the mechanisms that drive competence and sustainable academic growth.

Leadership theories offer valuable frameworks for understanding how different styles affect organizational outcomes. Among the most prominent, transformational leadership emphasizes vision, inspiration, and the empowerment of subordinates (Bass & Riggio, 2019). Transformational leaders motivate staff by articulating a shared vision, fostering trust, and encouraging professional development. Conversely, transactional leadership relies on structured systems, clear performance expectations, and rewards or sanctions to ensure accountability. This approach is effective in maintaining order and adherence to institutional policies but may not necessarily promote innovation or long-term satisfaction. Laissez-faire leadership, which grants autonomy and minimal supervision, can encourage independence and creativity in some contexts but often leads to confusion, lack of direction, and reduced motivation when leaders fail to provide adequate guidance (Skogstad et al., 2019). In the African higher education landscape, where resource constraints and bureaucratic challenges prevail, the effectiveness of these leadership styles is often debated (Bush, 2020). This study contributes to this discourse by situating leadership styles within the Tanzanian higher education system, specifically focusing on institutions in Mbeya City.

Competence conveyance in higher learning institutions refers to the effective transfer and application of knowledge, skills, and professional values among educators and learners. This process is influenced by the institutional environment and leadership practices. Leaders who promote mentorship, collaboration, and recognition create a supportive environment where staff are motivated to perform effectively and share their expertise (Leithwood & Sun, 2018). Such leaders enhance the professional competence of educators, which ultimately contributes to improved student learning outcomes and institutional reputation. However, rigid, unsupportive, or neglectful leadership practices can hinder professional growth, reduce morale, and limit creativity. In such environments, employees may perform only to meet minimal expectations rather than striving for excellence. Therefore, leadership plays a central role in shaping not only institutional efficiency but also the overall competence culture within higher education.

Globally, higher education is experiencing significant transformations driven by globalization, digitalization, and evolving student expectations (Altbach & de Wit, 2018). Institutions must adapt to changing technologies, diverse student populations, and competitive academic standards. Tanzanian higher learning institutions are part of this global shift, striving to remain competitive while fulfilling national development goals. Leadership

within these institutions is expected to ensure effective governance, promote academic excellence, and foster innovation among staff and students. Yet, many higher learning institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa continue to struggle with outdated or hierarchical leadership practices that hinder creativity and competence development (Teferra, 2017). These challenges emphasize the need for modern leadership approaches that balance structure with innovation and authority with collaboration. This study bridges theoretical perspectives and practical realities by exploring leadership styles within Tanzanian higher education institutions, thereby addressing the contextual challenges that influence employee satisfaction and competence conveyance.

Leadership in higher education also plays a pivotal role in aligning institutional operations with national education policies and development agendas. The Tanzanian government has emphasized leadership quality as a key factor in achieving educational reform through policies such as the Higher Education Development Policy and the National Education Sector Development Plan (MoEST, 2019). These policies aim to improve access, quality, and relevance in higher education, yet their success largely depends on the effectiveness of institutional leadership. Leaders in universities and colleges are responsible for interpreting policy directives, mobilizing resources, and motivating staff to achieve strategic goals. When leadership is weak or inconsistent, institutions experience issues such as low morale, poor communication, and limited professional growth opportunities (Ngussa & Makewa, 2018). Consequently, leadership quality directly affects staff retention, academic productivity, and the sustainability of institutional achievements.

In Tanzanian higher learning institutions, leadership effectiveness is closely tied to the ability to balance administrative efficiency with academic freedom. Academic staff often value autonomy and intellectual independence, and leadership that supports these values tends to promote satisfaction and higher performance. Transformational leaders, for instance, can harmonize institutional demands with individual aspirations by inspiring shared purpose and offering opportunities for capacity development. Transactional leaders, meanwhile, may ensure that policies and regulations are followed, maintaining organizational discipline and accountability. Laissez-faire leadership, when misapplied, risks creating a leadership vacuum that can lead to confusion, reduced performance, and diminished morale. Understanding the balance between these styles is essential for promoting competence and employee satisfaction in the complex and evolving higher education sector.

Another dimension of leadership in Tanzanian higher education concerns gender, generational diversity, and organizational culture. The rapid expansion of higher education in recent years has introduced a diverse workforce composed of both experienced academics and young professionals. Effective leadership must accommodate this diversity by adopting inclusive practices that promote equity, mentorship, and collaboration. Leaders who demonstrate emotional intelligence, adaptability, and cultural sensitivity are better equipped to manage the diverse expectations of academic staff. Moreover, the global shift toward digital education has introduced new leadership challenges that require technological awareness and strategic foresight. Institutions in Mbeya City, like many others in Tanzania, must cultivate leaders who can navigate these emerging complexities while maintaining a supportive and innovative environment.

Furthermore, competence conveyance in higher education extends beyond individual expertise; it encompasses the institutional systems that support learning, research, and professional development. Leadership determines the allocation of resources, the establishment of training opportunities, and the development of supportive academic networks. Leaders who invest in continuous professional development create a culture of learning that sustains competence improvement. This culture, in turn, enhances the reputation of the institution, attracting and retaining qualified staff. Conversely, institutions led by ineffective or authoritarian leaders often experience stagnation, where employees lack the motivation or opportunity to enhance their skills. Hence, leadership has a profound impact not only on individual satisfaction but also on the overall capacity and competitiveness of higher learning institutions.

This study is timely because Tanzanian higher learning institutions are at a crossroads between traditional and modern educational paradigms. As the country seeks to strengthen its knowledge economy, universities and colleges must cultivate leaders who can drive innovation, inclusivity, and quality assurance. While global literature provides a solid foundation on leadership theories and best practices, localized research is crucial to understand how these concepts apply in the Tanzanian socio-economic context. Many existing studies have focused on secondary education or public administration, leaving a gap in understanding leadership effectiveness in higher education settings. Therefore, this study seeks to fill that gap by examining how different leadership styles influence employee satisfaction and competence conveyance in Mbeya City's higher learning institutions.

In summary, leadership is a cornerstone of institutional success and employee satisfaction within higher learning institutions. It affects every aspect of organizational life, from motivation and professional growth to innovation and policy implementation. In Tanzania, where higher education plays a vital role in national development, effective leadership is indispensable for fostering academic excellence and competence among staff. This study underscores the importance of exploring leadership styles in the Tanzanian higher education context, as leadership determines not only institutional effectiveness but also the capacity to adapt to changing global and local demands. By analyzing the contribution of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles to workers' satisfaction and competence conveyance in Mbeya City's higher learning institutions, this research provides valuable insights into how leadership can be leveraged to promote sustainable academic and institutional development.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on organizational leadership consistently underscores that leadership style is central to institutional performance, employee satisfaction, and competence development. Leadership serves as the backbone of effective management, guiding the attitudes, behaviors, and productivity of employees within an organization. In higher learning institutions, leadership determines how effectively academic goals are achieved, how resources are utilized, and how staff are motivated to maintain high levels of performance. The success or failure of academic institutions often hinges on the ability of leaders to apply the right leadership styles suited to their organizational contexts. Over the years, three dominant leadership styles transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire have drawn significant scholarly attention due to their distinct influence on employee motivation, engagement, and performance outcomes (Northouse, 2021). Understanding the implications of these leadership styles is crucial for enhancing competence conveyance and employee satisfaction in Tanzania's higher learning institutions.

Transformational leadership is widely recognized as the most effective and dynamic leadership approach in higher education settings. This leadership style is characterized by the ability to inspire, motivate, and intellectually stimulate employees to perform beyond their ordinary capabilities (Bass & Riggio, 2019). Transformational leaders emphasize vision creation, goal alignment, and individualized support, which help employees develop professionally and emotionally. In higher learning institutions, transformational leaders

encourage innovation, collaboration, and self-improvement among academic staff, leading to greater satisfaction and enhanced teaching competence (Bush, 2020). These leaders prioritize mentorship and open communication, enabling staff to feel valued and trusted in their professional roles. According to Leithwood and Sun (2018), transformational leadership fosters intellectual stimulation by encouraging educators to think creatively and solve problems independently, which is vital in academic environments where research and innovation are central. As a result, transformational leadership contributes not only to improved staff morale but also to institutional reputation and academic excellence.

Moreover, transformational leadership enhances a sense of ownership and accountability among staff. Leaders who articulate clear visions and provide opportunities for personal growth inspire commitment and collective responsibility. This approach empowers educators to contribute meaningfully to institutional goals while achieving personal fulfillment. In the Tanzanian context, where higher learning institutions face numerous operational and financial challenges, transformational leadership can play a crucial role in motivating staff to work efficiently despite constraints. Through motivation and emotional engagement, transformational leaders build resilient academic communities that prioritize continuous improvement and competence enhancement. Therefore, transformational leadership remains an essential component of effective governance in higher education.

Transactional leadership, on the other hand, is often described as a more structured and managerial approach. It focuses on supervision, performance monitoring, and reward systems that link outcomes to specific incentives (Judge & Piccolo, 2018). Transactional leaders ensure that institutional policies are followed and that responsibilities are carried out effectively. This leadership style emphasizes accountability and stability, which are critical in maintaining organizational order. In the context of higher learning institutions, transactional leadership is particularly useful in promoting operational efficiency, ensuring adherence to academic standards, and minimizing organizational conflicts. When applied appropriately, transactional leadership provides clear expectations, thereby reducing ambiguity in decision-making and performance evaluation.

However, while transactional leadership promotes discipline and compliance, it has been criticized for its limited capacity to foster creativity and intrinsic motivation. Over-reliance on transactional mechanisms may suppress innovative thinking and hinder personal initiative among academic staff (Ngussa & Makewa, 2018). For instance, when educators focus

primarily on meeting externally imposed targets to secure rewards or avoid penalties, they may neglect exploratory teaching or research practices that could enhance competence. Therefore, effective leadership in higher education often involves blending transactional structures with transformational attributes—combining accountability and supervision with empowerment and support. Such a hybrid model encourages both stability and innovation, leading to more sustainable institutional growth and higher levels of staff satisfaction.

Laissez-faire leadership represents another distinct approach to managing academic environments. This style involves minimal interference from leaders, granting employees a high degree of autonomy and self-direction. Although autonomy is important in academia, excessive freedom without proper guidance can lead to organizational inefficiency. Scholars have criticized laissez-faire leadership for its lack of direction, poor communication, and insufficient support for subordinates (Skogstad et al., 2019). In higher learning institutions, this leadership style may result in uncoordinated efforts, low morale, and decreased competence conveyance. Staff working under laissez-faire leaders often report feelings of neglect and uncertainty about institutional expectations, leading to reduced productivity and job satisfaction (Wachira, 2021). Without strategic oversight, institutions risk losing their sense of purpose and organizational cohesion. Consequently, laissez-faire leadership is generally regarded as ineffective in academic settings that require coordination, teamwork, and structured professional development.

In the Tanzanian higher education context, leadership challenges are compounded by systemic issues such as limited resources, high workloads, and bureaucratic governance structures. Mgaiwa (2021) argues that Tanzanian higher learning institutions require leadership styles that balance vision, accountability, and employee support to address these challenges effectively. Leaders must adopt flexible yet purposeful approaches that integrate both transformational and transactional elements. Transformational leadership encourages innovation and motivation, while transactional mechanisms ensure stability and compliance with institutional policies. The coexistence of these styles can create a balanced leadership environment that supports both creativity and structure, which are essential for competence conveyance and sustainable performance in higher education.

The reviewed literature establishes that leadership style plays a critical role in shaping employee satisfaction, motivation, and competence development within higher learning institutions. Transformational leadership stands out as the most effective in promoting

professional growth, innovation, and institutional excellence. Transactional leadership remains valuable for maintaining accountability and organizational order, while laissez-faire leadership, though promoting autonomy, risks undermining institutional cohesion and effectiveness when applied excessively. Within the Tanzanian higher education sector, adopting an integrative leadership approach that combines the strengths of transformational and transactional styles is necessary to enhance competence conveyance and worker satisfaction. This literature review provides the theoretical foundation for examining leadership practices in Mbeya City's higher learning institutions, where leadership effectiveness directly influences academic performance, employee morale, and institutional sustainability.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design to allow for a detailed exploration of leadership styles and their contribution to workers' satisfaction. The qualitative approach was deemed appropriate as it facilitated in-depth analysis of participants' experiences, perceptions, and institutional contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3.2 Population and Sampling

The study targeted 120 participants from higher learning institutions in Mbeya City. These included 10 principals, 10 deans, 10 heads of departments, and 90 academic staff. A purposive and stratified sampling technique was used to ensure inclusion of diverse leadership roles and staff perspectives. This approach enabled the researcher to capture data that was both context-specific and representative of institutional realities.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

Data were gathered using semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document reviews. Interviews with leaders provided insights into leadership practices, while focus group discussions with academic staff revealed experiences and satisfaction levels. Document reviews, including policy guidelines and institutional reports, added contextual depth and triangulated the findings (Silverman, 2020).

3.4 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns and themes. Data were transcribed, coded, and categorized into themes aligned with the study's objectives. The

analysis allowed for the integration of multiple perspectives, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of how leadership styles influenced worker satisfaction and competence conveyance (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from relevant institutional authorities. Participants were assured of confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation. Informed consent was obtained before data collection. The ethical guidelines followed ensured trustworthiness and credibility of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Transformational Leadership

Findings revealed that transformational leadership had a profound positive effect on workers' satisfaction. Principals and deans who practiced transformational leadership inspired staff, provided mentorship, and encouraged innovation. Staff expressed higher morale and stronger commitment when leaders recognized achievements and supported professional development. This aligns with global literature emphasizing transformational leadership as a catalyst for academic excellence (Bass & Riggio, 2019; Leithwood & Sun, 2018).

4.2 Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership was perceived as both supportive and restrictive. While reward systems and performance monitoring promoted accountability, rigid application sometimes discouraged creativity. Staff reported that transactional leadership worked best when balanced with transformational practices. Similar findings have been reported in other African contexts, where transactional leadership provides stability but requires adaptability to promote innovation (Judge & Piccolo, 2018).

4.3 Laissez-faire Leadership

Most participants associated laissez-faire leadership with neglect, weak communication, and reduced competence conveyance. Although some staff appreciated autonomy, many found the lack of guidance frustrating. This style was linked to inefficiencies and low institutional effectiveness, confirming findings from previous studies that criticized laissez-faire approaches in higher education (Skogstad et al., 2019; Wachira, 2021).

4.4 Overall Discussion

The findings highlight that leadership styles directly shape workers' satisfaction and competence conveyance. Transformational leadership is the most effective, transactional leadership has conditional benefits, and laissez-faire leadership should be minimized. These findings confirm and extend prior research in Tanzanian higher education (Mgaiwa, 2021) and underscore the need for leadership training and institutional reforms.

5.0 CONCLUSION

This study concludes that leadership styles significantly influence workers' satisfaction and competence conveyance in higher learning institutions in Tanzania. Transformational leadership emerges as the most effective, promoting motivation, innovation, and professional growth. Transactional leadership is useful in ensuring accountability but should be applied with flexibility. Laissez-faire leadership, though occasionally fostering independence, often undermines institutional efficiency. Effective leadership in Tanzanian higher education requires a balance of styles, with emphasis on transformational practices to foster sustainable competence development and staff satisfaction.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that Tanzanian higher learning institutions strengthen transformational leadership practices through well-structured training and mentorship programs. Transformational leadership fosters innovation, collaboration, and commitment among academic staff, which are essential for achieving institutional excellence. By equipping leaders with the necessary skills to inspire and motivate their teams, universities can create a culture of shared vision, continuous improvement, and professional growth.

Furthermore, institutions should apply transactional leadership moderately to maintain accountability and performance standards without suppressing creativity or academic freedom. A balanced use of transactional practices such as clear goal setting, fair evaluation, and recognition of achievement can ensure organizational efficiency while allowing room for intellectual exploration and innovation.

The study also recommends reducing laissez-faire leadership practices by promoting greater leader involvement, guidance, and communication. Leaders should actively engage with staff and students, providing direction and timely feedback to foster a sense of inclusion and

responsibility. Active participation from leaders enhances trust, cohesion, and institutional effectiveness.

In addition, higher learning institutions should establish continuous professional development (CPD) programs for academic staff. Regular training workshops, research seminars, and exchange programs can enhance teaching competence, research capacity, and leadership potential among faculty members. Continuous development ensures that staff remain updated with global educational trends and pedagogical innovations.

Lastly, the study recommends that universities promote leadership policies that encourage inclusivity, innovation, and global competitiveness. Such policies should empower diverse leadership representation, support gender equity, and foster environments that embrace creativity and international collaboration. By doing so, Tanzanian higher learning institutions will strengthen their capacity to deliver quality education and contribute effectively to national and global development.

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