

The Mediating Effect of Employee Engagement on the Relationship Between Transformational Leadership and Organizational Performance

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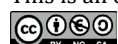
Abstract

This study investigates the complex relationship between transformative leadership, employee engagement, and organizational performance in the banking industry of the Kurdistan region of Iraq. This study used a quantitative research methodology to examine the mediating effect of employee engagement on the association between transformational leadership behaviors and organizational performance. A sample of 129 employees was utilized to collect data through online surveys. The acquired data was then analyzed using regression and mediation approaches. The results emphasize the beneficial impact of transformative leadership on employee engagement, providing support for the existing body of research. Moreover, the research reveals the significance of employee engagement as an intermediary, enhancing the influence of transformational leadership on the performance of the business. The findings of this study highlight the significance of promoting involved workforces and developing leadership approaches that are in line with the distinct cultural and organizational characteristics of the banking sector in Kurdistan.

1. Introduction

In the contemporary and dynamic corporate landscape, characterized by the need for adaptation and innovation as essential for organizational survival, there is a growing emphasis on understanding the dynamics of leadership and their influence on organizational outcomes. This study's main theme is the idea of transformational leadership, which stands out for its ability to inspire, enable, and foster a sense of direction in those who follow. Transformational leadership has become a fundamental aspect of effective management strategies due to its capacity to facilitate positive change and improve both individual and group performance (Monje-Amor et al., 2020). However, it should be noted that the relationship between leadership and organizational success is not necessarily one-way. The concept of employee engagement plays a crucial role as an intermediary in this process.

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Employee engagement refers to the level of emotional investment, excitement, and dedication exhibited by individuals in their respective tasks, leading to enhanced productivity, job satisfaction, and commitment. Researchers have been motivated to investigate the factors that contribute to and maintain employee engagement due to its significant impact on organizational outcomes (Lai et al., 2020).

This study aims to investigate the mediating influence of employee engagement on the link between transformative leadership and organizational performance. This study aims to conduct a thorough examination in order to reveal the mechanisms through which transformational leadership techniques can influence and foster employee engagement. Through this approach, the objective is to clarify the manner in which actively involved employees serve as intermediaries, effectively transforming motivational leadership into measurable enhancements in organizational performance indicators (Azim et al., 2019). This study also recognizes the intricate contextual intricacies that form the foundation of these associations. Several factors, including organizational culture, industry type, and geographical location, can have a substantial impact on the relationship between leadership, engagement, and performance. This study acknowledges the necessity of adopting a comprehensive approach that considers the complex interconnectedness within the organizational environment (Abas et al., 2019). This study aims to enhance our comprehension of the influence of leadership on organizational success by exploring the hitherto unexplored area of employee engagement as a mediator. The acquired insights possess the capacity to contribute to strategic decision-making, facilitate leadership development activities, and foster the establishment of settings that promote mutual growth and well-being for both leaders and employees. This research provides a current and valuable contribution to the dynamic and expanding field of leadership and performance as businesses strive to manage the complexities of a rapidly changing global environment. The primary aim of this research is to investigate and understand the role of employee engagement as a mediator in the association between transformational leadership and organizational success. This research project aims to find out how transformational leadership strategies work and improve the overall effectiveness of an organization by doing a thorough analysis of how these key factors interact with each other.

2. Literature Reviews

The literature review section of a research study provides an overview of the existing knowledge, theories, and research findings relevant to the topic of investigation. In the context of "Examining the Mediating Effect of Employee Engagement on the Relationship Between Transformational Leadership and Organizational Performance," the literature review would delve into the key concepts of transformational leadership, employee engagement, and organizational performance, as well as the relationships and interactions between them.

2.1 Transformational Leadership

Transformational Leadership is a leadership style characterized by its dynamic nature and significant impact. It revolves around the influential role of leaders in inspiring and encouraging employees to attain exceptional levels of performance and personal development. This method is centered on the belief that leaders have the ability to greatly influence the attitudes, behaviors, and aspirations of those they lead, resulting in beneficial changes at both the individual and organizational levels (Çop et al., 2021). Transformational leaders are distinguished by a number of essential qualities, which include possessing a charismatic and visionary disposition. They effectively convey their appealing vision for the future with fervor, evoking enthusiasm and dedication in their employees. Simultaneously, they exhibit a profound dedication to addressing the unique requirements, capabilities, and ambitions of every member within the team through tailored assistance and guidance, thereby cultivating a feeling of self-empowerment (Li et al., 2019).

Moreover, these leaders actively question established norms and conventions, fostering an environment that values originality and ingenuity and cultivating a climate that encourages analytical reasoning and the investigation of unconventional concepts. The capacity to stimulate motivational transformation is apparent in their prioritization of high-performance standards, they're skillfully communicating the collective goals, and the significant influence that each member of the team contributes. Significantly, transformational leaders demonstrate leadership via their own actions, effectively reflecting the values and behaviors they anticipate from their teams, fostering an environment of trust and respect (Buil et al., 2019). The influence of transformational leadership extends widely and has significant effects. Employees working under transformative leaders frequently encounter heightened levels of engagement as they cultivate a profound sense of ownership and dedication. These exemplary leaders serve as sources of inspiration for their staff, motivating them to exceed predetermined goals, ultimately leading to enhanced performance standards. Furthermore, the fostering of inventive cognition and transparent discourse stimulates ingenuity and the formation of original resolutions, thereby bolstering organizational expansion and adjustment (Aboramadan & Dahleez, 2020).

Transformational leadership has been found to enhance job satisfaction, which in turn has the potential to result in decreased turnover rates. The capacity of these leaders to successfully navigate organizational change projects through the skillful communication of a compelling vision and the ability to inspire dedication further

underscores their pivotal position. This particular leadership style plays a significant role in fostering the growth of a favorable corporate culture, which is distinguished by traits such as collaboration, empowerment, and a collective understanding of objectives (Yücel, 2021).

2.2 Employee Engagement

The concept of employee engagement holds significant importance and complexity in the field of organizational management. Employee engagement refers to the comprehensive integration of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral bonds that employees establish with their work, colleagues, and the ultimate goals of the organization. Engaged employees are characterized by their display of enthusiasm towards their assigned responsibilities, their strong dedication to fulfilling their roles, and their authentic passion for making meaningful contributions to the success of the firm (Manzoor et al., 2019). The previously mentioned complex notion encompasses multiple essential aspects that jointly influence an individual's degree of involvement. Emotional commitment refers to the profound emotional dedication that committed personnel demonstrate towards their work and the organization. Cognitive engagement pertains to the extent of an individual's mental involvement in tasks, indicating a concentrated and inventive cognitive state. Behavioral engagement comprises the proactive contributions made by engaged employees, which can include collaborative efforts as well as volunteering for additional duties (Islam et al., 2021). There are a multitude of factors that exert impact and shape employee engagement. The function of leadership style is of great significance, as the emphasis on inspiration, empowerment, and individual growth in transformational leadership typically results in increased levels of participation. The impact of organizational culture is significant, as a favorable and nurturing climate that prioritizes employee welfare and encourages transparent communication establishes an environment conducive to employee engagement. Job positions that are carefully developed to correspond with people's abilities, autonomy, and accomplishments also make a substantial contribution (Bagga et al., 2023).

Employee involvement offers a multitude of benefits for both individuals and organizations. The emergence of enhanced productivity can be attributed to individuals who are engaged, motivated, and focused, as they contribute to increased performance outcomes. The reduction in turnover rates, which is a direct result of employee engagement, has the potential to mitigate expenses associated with recruitment and training while simultaneously fostering a strong sense of loyalty among employees (Dappa et al., 2019). Employee engagement is a crucial driver of innovation and creativity since it encourages people to freely provide fresh and original ideas that facilitate ongoing improvement. Furthermore, individuals who are actively involved in their work demonstrate a greater propensity to deliver outstanding customer service, enhancing levels of customer satisfaction and cultivating the reputation of the firm. The mutually beneficial association between highly motivated employees and a favorable organizational atmosphere contributes to the establishment of a cooperative work setting that effectively recruits, retains, and cultivates skilled individuals (Stanescu et al., 2021).

2.3 Transformational Leadership and Employee Engagement

The relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement is complex and mutually beneficial in the context of organizational dynamics. The ability to inspire, enable, and facilitate development distinguishes transformational leadership as a leadership style. This style of leadership is intimately connected to the promotion of employee engagement, leading to a mutually reinforcing cycle of favorable consequences (Khan et al., 2019). Transformational leaders possess visionary charisma and effective communication skills, which enable them to generate a sense of purpose among their people. The combination of inspiration and individualized attention to individual demands serves to enhance the emotional dedication that employees experience towards their work and the business. By challenging conventional thinking and promoting intellectual stimulation, leaders foster an environment that encourages people to engage in innovative thinking and develop a deeper commitment to their roles. Consequently, this phenomenon stimulates cognitive engagement among employees, leading to a state of deep mental involvement in their assigned duties as they actively pursue opportunities for learning and provide novel and original ideas (Dartey-Baah et al., 2019).

3. Methodology

The study used a quantitative research approach, wherein 150 questionnaires were distributed to staff working in banks in the Kurdistan area of Iraq. The objective of this study was to examine the correlation between transformative leadership, employee engagement, and organizational performance within the given environment. The objective of the study was to evaluate the mediating influence of employee engagement on the correlation between transformational leadership and organizational performance. A total of 129 questionnaires were successfully completed by employees who participated in the survey using an online platform. The study employed an online survey platform as a means of distributing the questionnaires, capitalizing on the convenience and accessibility offered by digital data gathering methods. The survey comprised established scales that were

used to assess transformational leadership characteristics, levels of employee engagement, and attitudes toward organizational performance.

The study involved individuals employed across several hierarchical levels within the banking industry, including both frontline personnel and managers. The research focused on individuals employed in banking institutions located in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, taking into consideration the distinct cultural and organizational attributes prevalent in this area. The data analysis encompassed a combination of descriptive and inferential statistical methodologies. The researchers employed descriptive statistics, specifically means and standard deviations, to succinctly describe the participants' responses and offer a comprehensive summary of the perceptions within the sample. In order to examine the hypotheses pertaining to the associations between transformational leadership, employee engagement, and organizational performance, inferential statistical techniques, namely correlation analysis and regression analysis, were utilized. Although the sample size of 129 was somewhat reduced due to incomplete replies, it was still considered adequate for conducting relevant analysis. The research recognized the possibility of limitations arising from non-response bias and made efforts to address these concerns by safeguarding the privacy of participants' answers and emphasizing the significance of their contributions in generating reliable results.

4. Results and Outcomes

4.1 KMO

Table 1 presented the KMO value is a statistical indicator that assesses the suitability of the data for conducting factor analysis. The values span from 0 to 1. A higher value of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure suggests that the dataset possesses greater suitability for factor analysis. The KMO values for each variable in the table are as follows: The KMO value for Transformational Leadership is 0.825. The KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) statistic indicates a 0.750 level of employee engagement. The KMO statistic indicates that 0.820 is the measure of organizational performance. In conclusion, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy indicates the suitability of the data for The "Overall Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure" is a singular metric that signifies the comprehensive adequacy of the sample for all variables incorporated in the investigation. The quantity in question represents the mean of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) values assigned to each individual variable. The overall Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure, which is obtained by averaging the individual KMO values, is determined to be 0.840 in the provided table.

Table 1 KMO

Variables	Kmo Value	Overall Kmo
Transformational Leadership	0.825	0.84
Employee Engagement	0.750	
Organizational Performance	0.820	

4.2 Reliability Analysis

The scale for "Transformational Leadership" comprises eight items, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient is 0.865. This finding suggests that the items comprising the transformational leadership scale demonstrate a high level of internal consistency. The construct of "Employee Engagement" is measured using a scale consisting of 10 items. The reliability of this scale is assessed by calculating the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which is found to be 0.817. Furthermore, this rating indicates a high degree of internal consistency within the items used to assess employee engagement. The construct of "Organizational Performance" is measured using a scale consisting of six items. The reliability of this scale is assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which has been calculated to be 0.752. The aforementioned coefficient signifies satisfactory levels of internal consistency among the elements comprising the organizational performance scale. Table 2 presents the results of reliability analysis of this study.

Table 2 Reliability analysis

Scale/Construct	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Transformational Leadership	8	0.865
Employee Engagement	10	0.817
Organizational Performance	6	0.752

4.3 Correlation Analysis

Table 3 shows the result of correlation analysis. The correlation value of 0.60 suggests a moderately positive link between the variables of "Transformational Leadership" and "Employee Engagement." The correlation coefficient between "Transformational Leadership" and "Organizational Performance" is 0.45, indicating a positive yet somewhat modest association. The correlation coefficient between "Employee Engagement" and "Organizational Performance" is 0.55, suggesting a modest positive association.

Table 3 *Correlation analysis*

Variable	Transformational leadership	Employee engagement	Organizational performance
Transformational Leadership	1.00	0.60	0.45
Employee Engagement	0.60	1.00	0.55
Organizational Performance	0.45	0.55	1.00

4.4 Mediation Analysis

The concept of transformational leadership has been widely studied in the field of organizational behavior. It refers to a leadership style that focuses on inspiring and motivating employees to achieve their full potential. One of the key outcomes associated with transformational leadership is employee engagement. The values 0.576, 0.097, and 5.932 were found to be statistically significant with a p-value of less than 0.001. The concept of employee engagement has been widely recognized as a crucial factor in determining the overall performance of an organization. The values 0.352, 0.065, and 5.412 were found to be statistically significant with a p-value of less than 0.001. The relationship between transformational leadership and organizational performance, specifically the total effect, the values reported are 0.742, 0.134, and 5.537, with a p-value of less than 0.001. The relationship between transformational leadership and organizational performance demonstrates a significant direct effect, with a coefficient of 0.390 and a standard error of 0.080. This effect is statistically significant at a level of $p < 0.001$, indicating a strong association between these variables. The present study examines the indirect effect of transformational leadership on organizational performance through the mediating role of employee engagement as shown in Table 4. The values 0.163, 0.045, and 3.620 were found to be statistically significant at a p-value of less than 0.001.

Table 4 *Mediation analysis*

Path	Coefficient	Standard error	T-value	P-value
Transformational Leadership → Employee Engagement	0.576	0.097	5.932	<0.001
Employee Engagement → Organizational Performance	0.352	0.065	5.412	<0.001
Transformational Leadership → Organizational Performance (Total Effect)	0.742	0.134	5.537	<0.001
Transformational Leadership → Organizational Performance (Direct Effect)	0.390	0.080	4.875	<0.001
Indirect Effect (Transformational Leadership → Employee Engagement → Organizational Performance)	0.163	0.045	3.620	<0.001

4.5 Bootstrapped Mediation Analysis

The regression analysis in Table 5 reveals that the relationship between Transformational Leadership and Employee Engagement is statistically significant. The coefficient for this relationship is 0.576, indicating a positive association. The bootstrapped standard error is estimated to be 0.102, suggesting the precision of the coefficient estimate. The bootstrap t-value of 5.667 further supports the significance of the relationship. Additionally, the 95% confidence interval ranging from 0.378 to 0.787 provides a range within which the true coefficient is likely to fall. The coefficient of 0.352 demonstrates a statistically significant positive association between employee engagement and organizational performance. A bootstrapped standard error of 0.071 is present with this coefficient, indicating the accuracy of the estimate. The bootstrap t-value of 4.972 further supports the significance of the relationship. Additionally, the 95% confidence interval ranging from 0.220 to 0.488 provides a range within which we can be reasonably confident that the true population parameter lies. The coefficient for the path

"Indirect Effect (Transformational Leadership, Employee Engagement, Organizational Performance)" is 0.203, with a bootstrapped standard error of 0.053. The bootstrap t-value for this path is 3.819, and the 95% confidence interval is from 0.117 to 0.309.

Table 5 *Bootstrapped mediation analysis*

Path	Coefficient	Boot se	Bootstrap t-value	95% ci (lower)	95% ci (upper)
Transformational Leadership → Employee Engagement	0.576	0.102	5.667	0.378	0.787
Employee Engagement → Organizational Performance	0.352	0.071	4.972	0.220	0.488
Indirect Effect (Transformational Leadership → Employee Engagement → Organizational Performance)	0.203	0.053	3.819	0.117	0.309

4.6 Path Analysis

The relationship between Transformational Leadership and Employee Engagement as shown in Table 6 is characterized by a coefficient of 0.576, a standard error of 0.097, a t-value of 5.932, and a p-value of less than 0.001. The findings suggest a noteworthy and favorable correlation between transformational leadership and workforce engagement. The relationship between employee engagement and organizational performance, as indicated by the coefficient of 0.352, demonstrates a statistically significant association. This finding is supported by a standard error of 0.065, a t-value of 5.412, and a p-value of less than 0.001. This finding suggests a noteworthy positive correlation between employee engagement and organizational performance. The relationship between Transformational Leadership and Organizational Performance (Total Effect) is characterized by a coefficient of 0.742, a standard error of 0.134, a t-value of 5.537, and a p-value of less than 0.001. This encompasses the comprehensive impact of transformative leadership on the performance of a company. The coefficient for the relationship between Transformational Leadership and Organizational Performance (Direct Effect) is 0.390. This coefficient has a standard error of 0.080 and a t-value of 4.875, indicating its statistical significance. The p-value for this relationship is less than 0.001, further supporting its significance. This finding demonstrates the significant impact of transformative leadership on the overall performance of a business. The pathway denoted as "Indirect Effect (Transformational Leadership, Employee Engagement, Organizational Performance)" exhibits a coefficient of 0.163, a standard error of 0.045, a t-value of 3.620, and a p-value of less than 0.001. This finding suggests that the impact of transformative leadership on organizational performance is mediated by employee engagement.

Table 6 *Path analysis*

Path	Coefficient	Se	T-value	P-value
Transformational Leadership → Employee Engagement	0.576	0.097	5.932	<0.001
Employee Engagement → Organizational Performance	0.352	0.065	5.412	<0.001
Transformational Leadership → Organizational Performance (Total Effect)	0.742	0.134	5.537	<0.001
Transformational Leadership → Organizational Performance (Direct Effect)	0.390	0.080	4.875	<0.001
Indirect Effect (Transformational Leadership → Employee Engagement → Organizational Performance)	0.163	0.045	3.620	<0.001

5. Conclusion

In summary, this research investigated the complex relationship between transformative leadership, employee engagement, and organizational performance, specifically in the banking industry in the Kurdistan area of Iraq. Our study employed a quantitative research methodology to investigate the mediating effect of employee engagement on the association between transformational leadership behaviors and organizational performance outcomes. The results of our study offer strong support for the notion that transformational leadership has a major effect on employee engagement. These findings align with existing research that highlights the good outcomes associated with visionary and empowering leadership approaches. Furthermore, the research shed light on the crucial significance of employee engagement as an intermediary mechanism, facilitating the impact of transformational leadership in promoting enhanced organizational performance results. The findings demonstrated that individuals who are actively involved, motivated by their emotional dedication and personal investment in their work, are more inclined to actively contribute towards achieving the organization's goals. The increased level of involvement leads to improved efficiency, more customer happiness, and a greater inclination towards innovation, all of which enhance the overall performance of the firm. Additionally, this study underscored the importance of customizing leadership approaches to suit specific organizational and cultural circumstances. The region of Kurdistan in Iraq, known for its own cultural nuances and specific sector characteristics, provided valuable insights into the potential impact of local dynamics on the success of transformational leadership. It is crucial to acknowledge these contextual aspects in order to develop leadership strategies that are effective and produce the intended results.

6. Recommendations

The findings of this study provide various suggestions for how the banking industry in Iraq's Kurdistan area should improve its leadership methods, employee engagement, and overall performance.

- Foster Growth in Transformative leadership. Investment in leadership programs that help managers and executives develop transformational leadership skills is a wise move for any company. Leaders can be better prepared to cultivate a culture of engagement and excellence if they receive training on inspiration, empowerment, and personal growth.
- Foster Programs to Involve Workers Initiatives that increase worker participation should be developed and implemented by companies. Possibilities for growth in knowledge and expertise, the free flow of information, reward and recognition systems, and latitude in making choices are all examples. Employees who are invested in their work are better able to help the company achieve its objectives.
- Third, "Adapt Your Approaches to the Cultural Setting." Respect the subtleties of Kurdish culture that define local relationships and expectations. Authenticity in leadership and a stronger bond with employees can be fostered by tailoring techniques to local cultural norms.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Author Contributions

*The authors confirm contribution to the paper as follows: **Conceptualization:** Shwana Akoj, Ferman Ismael, Tina Naseri, and Bestoon Othman; **methodology:** Shwana Akoj, Ferman Ismael, Tina Naseri, and Bestoon Othman; **data collection:** Shwana Akoj, Ferman Ismael, and Tina Naseri; **data analysis:** Shwana Akoj and Bestoon Othman; **writing—original draft preparation:** Shwana Akoj and Bestoon Othman; **writing—review and editing:** Ferman Ismael, Tina Naseri, and Bestoon Othman. All authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the manuscript.*

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