



RESEARCH PAPER

Organizational Culture as a Moderator of Transformational Leadership Effectiveness in Public-Sector Universities

¹Ali Nisar, ²Muhammad Shoaib and ³Dr. Aurangzeb Zulfiqar Khan

1. MS HRM, Department of Management Sciences, Shifa Tameer e Millat University Islamabad
2. Ph. D Scholar, UIMS, PMAS-Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi, Punjab, Pakistan
3. Professor, Department of Project Management & Supply Chain Management, Bahria Business School, Bahria University, Islamabad, Pakistan

Corresponding Author: auranzebulfiqarkhan@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role of organizational culture in shaping the effectiveness of transformational leadership within public universities. Drawing upon transformational leadership theory and organizational culture literature, the study investigates whether organizational culture moderates the relationship between transformational leadership and two important faculty attitudes: job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Data was collected through a survey of 314 faculty members working in public sector universities in Islamabad and data was analyzed using PLS-SEM. The findings indicate that TL has significant positive effects on both JS and OCo among faculty members. Furthermore, OC is a significant moderator between TL and JS, suggesting that leadership behaviors are more effective in institutions characterized by supportive and collaborative cultures. However, the moderating effect of OC on the relationship between TL and OCo was not statistically significant. These findings highlight the importance of organizational context in understanding leadership effectiveness in higher education institutions. The study provides practical insights for university administrators seeking to strengthen faculty engagement by aligning leadership practices with supportive institutional cultures.

KEYWORDS Transformational Leadership, Organizational Culture, Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, Leadership Effectiveness

Introduction

The issue of leadership has become a major concern in the field of higher education as universities come under increased pressure to improve academic productivity and quality of teaching. Contrary to the old-fashioned bureaucratic organizations, universities are knowledge-driven institutions where faculty members have high levels of professional autonomy and are highly driven by intellectual and intrinsic motivations. Leadership in these settings cannot be described by the formal power arrangements but should be characterized by the capacity of leaders to inspire, motivate, and align the academic staff with the institutional objectives (Bolden, Petrov, and Gosling, 2019; Nguyen et al., 2020). Transformational leadership is one of the leadership styles that have largely been identified as befitting knowledge-based organizations since it focuses more on vision articulation, intellectual stimulation, and personalized support (Bass, 1985).

Transformational leadership theory is a theory that suggests that leaders can boost their follower's motivation and performance by projecting a common ground, inspiring creativity and facilitating personal growth (Bass and Avolio, 1994). Such leadership behaviors can have a significant impact in influencing faculty attitudes towards their work and institution in the educational institutions at higher levels. In the

existing literature, it is always shown that TL has a direct and affirmative connection with employee attitudes including JS and OCo (Khan et al., 2023; Mahmood, Kanwal, and Pervez, 2023). Job satisfaction is the evaluative reaction that an individual has concerning the working environment whereas organizational commitment is the level of psychological attachment that workers have towards their respective institutions (Herzberg, 1965; Meyer and Allen, 1991). The two attitudes are especially relevant in educational establishments where the level of interaction with the faculty and institutional loyalty is instrumental in the teaching efficiency, exploration, and teamwork behavior.

Despite the fact that positive relationships between transformational leadership and employee attitudes have been established in the leadership research literature, the apparent assumption that leadership functions in an identical way across organizational settings is an essential weakness in the available literature. In practice, the effectiveness of leadership tends to be dependent on the leadership's institutional context. The role of organizational culture in the interpretation and performance of leadership behaviors in institutions, which is described as holding values, norms, and expected behaviors that govern the behavior of organization members, is important (Schein, 2010; Denison, 1990). The culture in universities is especially powerful due to the fact the academic institutions tend to form strong rooted traditions, governmental frameworks, and professional standards that determine relationships between leaders and the faculty.

There is an increasing argument by scholars that organizational culture can be viewed as a contextual condition that enhances or limits the power of leadership. Leadership initiatives may be supported by a collaborative and supportive culture that enhances openness to change and group participation, and thwarted by inflexible or bureaucratic cultures (Hartnell, Ou, & Kinicki, 2011; Baltaretu et al., 2025). Faculty members in the higher education sectors often work within well defined cultural systems that have a collegiality mode of governance, disciplinary self-determination and institutional customs. Therefore, the attitudinal effects of leadership behaviors can have various results based on the current culture.

Although there is an increasing understanding of leadership and culture in the context of learning institutions, there is a void in research investigating them in an empirical manner, especially in developing countries. The literature is mainly divided into studies that consider immediate consequences of management on employee performance or those that consider the independent impact of organizational culture, but none of the studies have explored the interaction between the two forces to influence the faculty attitude (Khan et al., 2023). This interaction is relevant as leadership activities that are effective in one institutional setting might not be productive in a different setting with different cultural norms and expectations. Based on the research gap identified in the introduction.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Transformational Leadership and Job Satisfaction

Transformational leadership (TL) has been generally accepted as a visionary in knowledge-based organizations, higher learning institutions being one of them. The followers are motivated by transformational leaders through the articulation of a powerful vision, fostering intellectual stimulation, and giving personalized attention to the employees (Bass, 1985; Bass and Avolio, 1994). Such leadership behaviors allow

cultivating an environment of support that increases the intrinsic motivation and psychological involvement of employees (Bukhari et al., 2024; Nawaz et al., 2019).

Leadership is a component that is significant in influencing the attitudes of faculty to their work environment in academic settings. The faculty members tend to work with great professional freedom and their job satisfaction (JS) is based more on recognition, academic freedom and intellectual development (Javed et al., 2023; Khan et al., 2024). Transformational leaders play a role of creating such conditions by encouraging involvement in decision-making, innovative teaching, research projects, and by appreciating the efforts of the faculty. Consequently, transformational leadership has been linked to an increased degree of job satisfaction among academic faculty (Bukhari, 2024; Nguyen et al., 2020).

On the theoretical level, the Two-Factor Theory by Herzberg makes a significant contribution to explaining this relationship. Intrinsic motivational factors, which include recognition, achievement, and personal growth, are also very important in promoting job satisfaction (Herzberg, 1965). Transformational leadership behaviors have much in common with these motivators as they focus on encouragement, intellectual stimulation and professional development. This means that faculty members who experience transformational leadership behaviors will be more inclined to have an increased rate of job satisfaction. Resting on this argument, the hypothesis is as follows:

H1: Transformational leadership positively influences job satisfaction among faculty members.

Transformational Leadership and Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment (OC_o) describes the sense of psychological attachment that a person has to their organization and their readiness to be retained in the organization (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Organizational commitment in institutions of higher learning is used to determine the identification of the faculty members with organizational values as well as their desire to develop the institutions beyond the formal job requirements (Bukhari, 2025; Shafiq, 2023).

Transformational leadership is likely to enhance organizational commitment by instilling the feeling of common purpose and organizational identity within the institution. Transformational leaders facilitate the relationship between the personal goals of faculty members and the goals of the institution through inspirational motivation, and the articulation of the vision (Aurangzeb et al., 2025; Parveen, 2025). This bond is also enhanced by individualized consideration which shows concern for the professional development and well-being of the employees (Bass, 1985; Rana, 2015).

It has been empirically established that TL is a major predictor of OC_o in any sector, including educational institutions (Kausar et al., 2022; Almutairi, 2020; Khan et al., 2023b). Once the faculty members feel that it has leaders who are supportive and ethical, and who can inspire them, they tend to become more affectedly attached to their institution and show increased dedication to the organizational aims. Thus, the hypothesis is the following:

H2: Transformational leadership positively influences organizational commitment among faculty members.

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture (OC) is defined as a collective of mutual ideals, beliefs, norms, and the ways of behaviors according to which the members of the organization relate and do their work (Schein, 2010; Rizvi et al., 2023). Culture is what defines acceptable behavior by employees and how members in an organization can discern the leadership behaviors. University organizational culture may have some elements of tradition, collegial governance patterns, and disciplinary patterns that affect the way the institutions operate.

According to Denison (1990), organizational culture has been central to the process of determining the level of organizational effectiveness since it influences the attitude of the employees, motivation and expectations of the behavior of the employees (Kausar et al., 2021; Rehman et al., 2025). Culture in the learning institutions can affect faculty behavior towards leadership efforts, especially in enhancing collaboration, innovation and performance of the institution.

Since leadership behaviors are done in cultural contexts, their performance can differ based on the congruency between leadership practices and the existing organizational norms.

Organizational Culture as a Moderator

Recent leadership studies indicate that organizational culture can be one of the contextual factors that facilitate or diminish the effects of leadership behaviors on employee attitudes (Qamar et al., 2024; Qaralleh et al., 2025). Leadership programs will also have greater impact in the supportive and collaborative cultures as employees will be more willing to accept the leadership initiatives. On the other hand, bureaucratic or strict cultures can inhibit the effectiveness of leaders because they restrict the disposition of employees towards changes driven by leaders.

In universities, the OC may have a very strong bearing on the perception of leadership among the faculty (Kausar & Qayyum, 2018; Rasool et al., 2023). TL can have a definite influence on faculty attitudes by improving academic cultures that promote openness, collaboration and professional autonomy (Adil et al., 2023). Conversely, those institutions that have a high degree of rigidity in their administrative structures or those that are highly hierarchical in nature can undermine the power of leadership behaviors.

Past researchers have shown that the organizational culture can interact with leadership to influence the attitude of employees and performance outcomes (Hartnell et al., 2011; Baltaretu et al., 2025). But there is a lack of empirical work that have explored this interaction in higher education. The moderate effect of transformational leadership is significant to understand under which circumstances transformational leadership can be best applicable. Based on this, the hypotheses are as follows:

H3: OC moderates the relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction among faculty members.

H4: OC moderates the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment among faculty members.

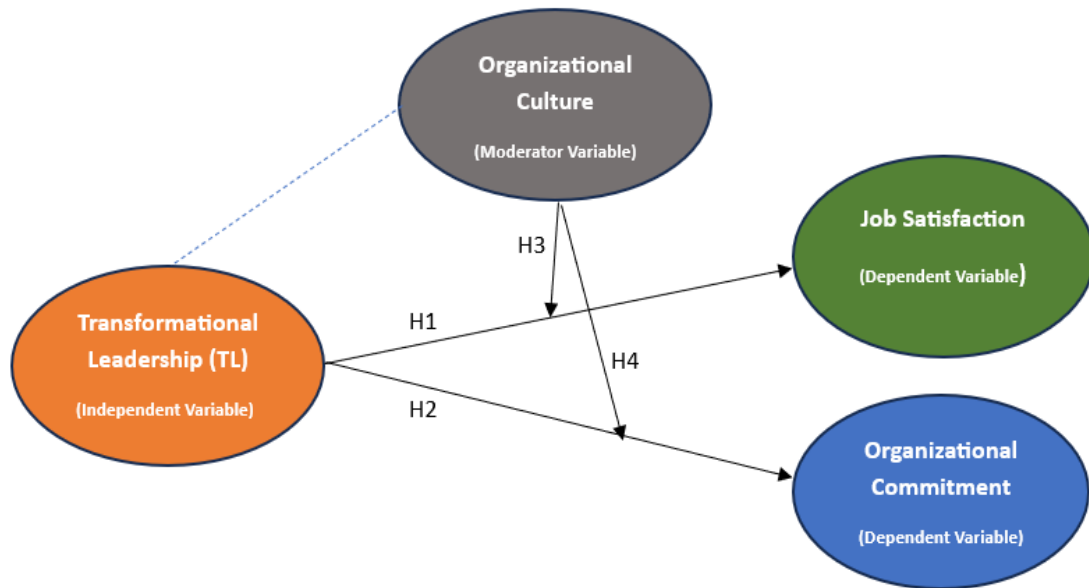


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Material and Methods

To examine the relationships between key variables, a quantitative cross-sectional design was implemented. The survey-based approach was deemed suitable since the constructs of interest are perceptual and attitudinal in nature and are best measured using standardized self-report measures. The research focused on public universities due to their structured administrative systems and strong reliance on faculty motivation, autonomy, and institutional culture.

During the period of data collection, there were six large public-sector universities operating in Islamabad. Nonetheless, four universities were sampled in this study; QAU, COMSATS, IIUI, and FUUAST. The sampling was done on the basis of accessibility, institutional readiness to join and diversity of the academic settings. The sample of usable responses among these universities was fairly even, with 27% of the total responses coming out of Quaid-i-Azam University, 25 % of the total responses coming out of COMSATS, 24% of the total responses coming out of International Islamic University, and 24% of the total responses coming out of Federal Urdu University, which provided sufficient institutional representation.

The population of interest was the full-time faculty members, such as lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors, and professors. The purposive sampling method was used since the research needed to have respondents who had adequate knowledge and experience in order to assess leadership practices and organizational conditions in an effective way. The faculty members that had at least two years of teaching experience were also considered to ensure that they can respond with informed answers as they may have built meaningful relationships with the leadership and the culture of the institutions.

There were 450 questionnaires that were distributed in the selected universities. The sample size was also calculated according to the suggestions of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) which suggests sufficient sample sizes in the

consideration of model complexity and also non-response possibility. To increase response rates and reduce biases in data collection, a combination of online (Google Forms) and on-site distribution was used to collect the data. By assuring respondents of their privacy and confidentiality, the response rate became more reliable, and response bias was less likely to occur. Participation in the survey was open to them without any limitations.

Out of the distributed questionnaires, 338 responses were received, yielding a response rate of approximately 75%. After screening for incomplete and inconsistent responses, 314 valid questionnaires were retained for final analysis. This sample size exceeds commonly recommended thresholds for PLS-SEM, including the "10-times rule," and is sufficient for testing both direct and moderating effects in the proposed model.

Data analysis was conducted using PLS-SEM following a two-step approach. The measurement model was first assessed for reliability and validity using indicator loadings, composite reliability, average variance extracted, and HTMT ratios. Subsequently, the structural model was evaluated to test the hypothesized relationships. Moderation was examined using the product indicator approach, and bootstrapping was applied to assess the statistical significance of path coefficients and interaction effects. All constructs were measured through the established multi-items scales adopted from the previous research with sound validity to guarantee reliability and content validity. The scale of transformational leadership was based on the items that were derived from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire framework, which was developed by Bass (1985), and it identifies the dimensions of TL, such as such as inspiring motivation, cognitive challenge, exemplary influence, and tailored support. JS was determined grounded on the questionnaire items based on Herzberg's motivational system, which were based on the perceptions of the members of the faculty about their workplace, appreciation, and professional satisfaction (Herzberg, 1965). Items in the organizational model of commitment developed by Meyer and Allen (1991), the model conceptualizes OCo as the reliance and loyalty of employees to the institution where they work. The measure of organizational culture was based on items that reflected shared organizational values, norms, and expectations of behavior in line with the conceptualization set by Schein (2010) of organizational culture. The measurement of all items was performed on a 5-point Likert scale of strong disagree to strong agree.

PLS-SEM is especially suitable in cases where the main goal is to develop the theory and in models that involve moderating relationships. The review was conducted according to the two common steps that are usually undertaken in SEM research. The measurement model was first tested to determine the reliability and validity of the constructs. The indicator loadings, composite reliability and AVE were analyzed to verify internal consistency and convergent validity, whereas discriminant validity was determined with the help of the heterotraitmonotrait (HTMT) ratio.

After that, the structural model was tested to test the hypothesized relationships. To establish how TL directly impacts job satisfaction and organizational commitment, path coefficients were resolved. In order to test the moderating effect of organizational culture, the interaction term between transformational leadership and organizational culture was developed on the basis of the product indicator approach in the PLS framework. Multiresample bootstrapping was employed to estimate the implication of path coefficients and interaction effects. Moderation analysis enabled the research to

identify how the OC reinforces TL in affecting the attitude of the faculty in the public university.

Results and Discussion

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics (N = 314)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	186	59.2%
	Female	128	40.8%
Age	20-30 years	35	11.1%
	31-40 years	110	35.0%
	41-50 years	114	36.3%
	Above 50	55	17.5%
Qualification	Graduation	26	8.3%
	Masters	129	41.1%
	MS/MPhil	108	34.4%
	PhD	36	11.5%
	Professional degree	15	4.8%
City	Islamabad	314	100.0%
Designation	Lecturer	74	23.6%
	Assistant Professor	118	37.6%
	Associate Professor	96	30.6%
	Professor	26	8.3%

The demographic characteristics of the participants are shown in Table 1. The sample was mostly composed of male faculty members (59.2%), though the number of female respondents also constituted a large part of the sample (40.8%). The majority of the respondents were aged between 31-50 years, which showed that the sample was mainly made up of mid-career academics who had extensive work experience. Assistant professors were the most represented group (37.6%), then associate professors (30.6%) and lecturers (23.6%). The sample was also indicative of good academic qualification whereby the percentage of respondents who had postgraduate degrees was high

Measurement Model

Table 2
Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Transformational Leadership (TL)	0.956	0.962	0.731
Job Satisfaction (JS)	0.959	0.965	0.758
Organizational Commitment (OCo)	0.958	0.964	0.742
Organizational Culture (OC)	0.961	0.967	0.786

The findings show that alpha of all the constructs is above the acceptable level of 0.70, which shows high internal consistency. Composite reliability scores are 0.962 and 0.967 indicating good construct reliability. Convergent validity is also achieved because the values of AVE of all the concepts are greater than 0.50, which means that each of the constructs captures over half of the variance of its indicators.

Table 3
Discriminant Validity (HTMT Ratios)

Construct	TL	JS	OC	OC
Transformational Leadership	–			
Job Satisfaction	0.78	–		
Organizational Commitment	0.69	0.72	–	
Organizational Culture	0.65	0.70	0.68	–

The Heterotraitmonotrait (HTMT) ratio was used to measure discriminant validity. The values of all HTMT are lower than the suggested value of 0.85, which proves that the constructs are empirically different.

Structural Model Results

After confirming the adequacy of the measurement model, the structural model was evaluated to examine the direct relationships among the constructs.

Table 4
Direct Path Coefficients

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	TL \rightarrow JS	0.694	8.078	0.000	Supported
H2	TL \rightarrow OCo	0.245	3.206	0.001	Supported

The findings show that TL affirms JS with a high and statistically significant value ($\beta = 0.694$, $p < .001$). This observation indicates that faculty members who view their leaders as conversational report less of satisfaction with their working conditions. TL and OCo show a positive and statistically significant relationship ($\beta = .245$, $p = .001$). This finding has shown that transformational leadership helps to enhance the psychological attachment of the faculty members towards their institutions.

Table 5
Moderating Effects

Hypothesis	Interaction Path	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
H3	TL \times OC \rightarrow JS	0.118	2.021	0.044	Supported
H4	TL \times OC \rightarrow OCo	0.042	0.913	0.362	Not Supported



Figure 2. Interaction of OC on the relationship between TL and JS.

As depicted in the *Figure 2*, the slope of high OC is steeper as compared to the slope of low OC.

Particularly, in the context of high organizational culture, positive changes in TL are linked to significantly greater JS among faculty members. On the contrary, the positive effect of TL on JS is even smaller in case of weak or less supportive OC. The results of this interaction effect offer a graphical reinforcement of the statistical moderation findings in Table 5. These results confirm Hypothesis H3.

Table 6
Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses	Relationship	Result
H1	Transformational Leadership → Job Satisfaction	Supported
H2	Transformational Leadership → Organizational Commitment	Supported
H3	Organizational Culture moderates TL → Job Satisfaction	Supported
H4	Organizational Culture moderates TL → Organizational Commitment	Not Supported

The results support the model, partially. Transformational leadership substantially shapes both JS and OCo. However, OC strengthens the effect of TL only on JS, while its moderating influence on organizational commitment is not supported.

Discussion

This paper investigates whether the OC can influence the effectiveness of TL in public universities by mediating its impact on the JS and OCo of the faculty members. The findings prove this phenomenon which confirms previous studies of leadership in the field of higher education and knowledge-intensive organizations (Nguyen et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2023). TL behaviors that include inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration seem to have a significant role in influencing positive faculty attitudes towards their jobs and organization.

The findings also indicate that the beneficial effect of the TL on faculty JS is more pronounced in the universities that have supportive OCs. This observation places this finding consistent with the organizational culture paradigm, which postulates that organizational institutions share values and norms that shape the way in which employees make sense of leadership behaviors and organizational initiatives (Schein, 2010; Denison, 1990). Transformational leadership behaviors can be adopted and internalized by the members of the faculty in an environment where institutional culture promotes openness, collaboration and professional autonomy. Therefore, the leadership programs that focus on encouraging and assisting the faculty members can produce more attitudinal results when they are aligned with the existing cultural values.

The outcome is also in line with empirical research that indicates the interactive nature of organizational culture in leadership outcomes. According to Hartnell, Ou, and Kinicki (2011), it is the organizational culture that gives the context in which leadership behaviors are understood and implemented. In the same spirit, the existing studies in the higher education sector show that leadership practices are more effective when they are in tandem with institutional culture and professional standards (Bolden et al., 2019; Baltaretu et al., 2025). Findings of the present thus support the perception that leadership effectiveness cannot be entirely comprehended in the absence of the larger cultural setup of the organization.

Even though the relationship between TL and OCo was significant, the degree to which the relationship was effective was not found to rely on the organizational culture at the time. This observation implies that the commitment of faculty to their institution might also be affected by factors other than the immediate cultural environment. The organizational commitment is frequently theorized as a comparatively stable psychological bond, which is formed following a period of experiences within the organization via accumulation (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Therefore, though leadership behaviors might have an immediate effect on the level of commitment, the cultural conditions might not have a considerable effect on the same relationship within the short run.

Earlier studies also reported that organizational commitment depends on a set of individual experiences, career patterns, and institutional identification instead of situational dynamics of leadership (Almutairi, 2020; Rehman et al., 2013). Faculty in an academic setting typically construct a sense of commitment via extended participation in the governance of the institution, research participation, and identity building. Consequently, commitment can be quite consistent despite the fact that organizational culture may differ among institutions. This lack of a major moderating role thus reflects the potential that commitment is a stronger relationship with the institution that may not be so contextually dependent as attitudinal responses that are more immediate, like job satisfaction.

On the whole, these results highlight the need to distinguish the dissimilar attitudinal consequences in the study of leadership effectiveness in higher education. Job satisfaction seems to be more contextually sensitive to organizational conditions, and organizational commitment might represent institutional attachment over the longer-term and be affected by larger career and professional processes. This study offers a more refined view of leadership and institutional context interaction in influencing faculty attitudes because it indicates that organizational culture lessens leadership influence on satisfaction but not on commitment.

Conclusion

This paper examined how the impact of OC moderates the correlation between TL and faculty attitudes at the universities. The results show that TL has a definite effect on JS as well as OCo of the faculty members. Nevertheless, the OC enhances the association between TL and JS but has no substantial moderating impact on organizational commitment. These findings demonstrate how the work environment is key factor in determining the efficiency of leadership in academia. The study offers opportunities to leaders and administrators' behaviors and their impact on institutional culture in order to improve faculty engagement and institutional performance.

Recommendations

Following recommendations are specified to university administrators and policy makers who want to enhance faculty attitudes and institutional effectiveness. First, the university leadership needs to both embrace the transformational leadership practices that focus on the aspects of inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and personalized support of the faculty members. The results show that transformational leadership would be able to substantively increase JS and dedication of the staff in the organization. Academic leaders must focus on encouraging participation in decision making, compensation of faculty and provision of career development. These kinds of leadership practices can enhance the motivation of the faculty and the general academic environment.

Second, university administrations must be especially keen on establishing positive organizational cultures that promote co-operation, trust, and open communication. This research shows that the OC enhances the correlation between TL and JS. This indicates that leadership programs are better when they run in institutional cultures where cooperation, innovativeness, and academic independence are valued. Collegial relations, shared governance and academic engagement are some of these areas that should be encouraged by institutions through cultural values that endorse them.

Third, training on TL competencies should be introduced to the academic administrators through leadership development programs. Department heads, deans and senior administrators are very important in the development of faculty experiences in universities. Leadership training programs that focus on motivational leadership styles, mentoring, and communication skills can also help academic leaders to have a positive influence on faculty attitudes.

Fourth, the universities must be able to develop institutional policies that support the positive organizational culture. Faculty views of fairness and institutional support can be reinforced through policies that promote transparency, participatory governance, and professional recognition. These measures would assist universities in providing an environment in which leadership practices have a higher chance of achieving positive results.

Lastly, institutional reforms ought to be designed with an eye to the link between guidance and workplace that higher education policy-makers are required to take into account. Desirable outcomes might not be achieved through the leadership strategies unless they are reinforced with institutional cultures that facilitate collaboration, innovativeness, and academic excellence. Consequently, the improvement of the university performance should be facilitated by targeting both leadership and culture change within the institutions.

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations must be considered even though there are contributions. The first one is that the given cross-sectional design restricts the possibility of making causal conclusions regarding the relations between leadership, organizational culture, and faculty attitudes. It might also be possible to use longitudinal forms of research in the future to investigate the changes in leadership and cultural relationships over time.

Second, the research was also based on self-report survey data based on the faculty members and this could create common method bias. In future studies, multi-source data, e.g., the rating of leaders by administrators or objective measures of faculty activity, may be used to enhance validity of results.

Third, the study was restricted to a small geographic region of which public universities are located, which might hinder generalization of the findings. The results in future researches ought to be the investigations of the relationships of similarities in the context of the private universities or in various locational settings in order to conclude whether the institutional forms and the cultural attributes have different leadership results.

Finally, other mediating and moderating variables, such as psychological empowerment, academic identity, or institutional trust, can be studied in future to understand more about the processes through which leadership influences faculty attitudes and performance in higher education.

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