

Innovations

The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction in the Link between Transactional Leadership Style and Service Quality in the Public Sectors of Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia

Destaw Amare Lakew*

Department of Public Policy and Leadership, Amhara Management Institute, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia

Dr. Matebe Tefere Gedifew

Associate Professor at Department of Educational Planning and Management, Bahir Dar University, BahirDar, Ethiopia

Abstract: *This study attempted to examine the relationship among transactional leadership style, job satisfaction and service quality. The quantitative research approach and correlational design were used in this study. The study also involved 354 respondents in the data collection endeavor. Close-ended multifactor leadership questionnaire, job satisfaction survey and service performance (SERVPREF) instruments were employed to gather data. In the case of data analysis, PLS-SEM was used. Hence, the path analysis result demonstrated that transactional leadership style has a positive and significant influence on both job satisfaction and service quality directly. Moreover, job satisfaction also exhibited a positive relationship with service quality. Besides, job satisfaction mediates the relationship between transactional leadership and service quality partially. Therefore, to become effective in service quality practice directly or through job satisfaction, leaders in public organizations are recommended to utilize transactional leadership appropriately.*

Key Words: *Job satisfaction, Public sector, Service quality, Transactional leadership, PLS-SEM*

1. Introduction

The aim of this inquiry is to examine the possible relationship among transactional leadership, job satisfaction and service quality in the public sectors of Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia. The study was motivated by the researchers' practical experience for public sectors and their exposure of lack of service quality practice in these institutions. Hence, conducting this research will have the following

benefits. First, public sector leaders and employees might learn about the effects of job satisfaction and transactional leadership on service quality in order to pinpoint the areas in which service delivery needs to be improved. Second, the findings of this study would have also significance to the academics to use it as a basis for future research. Third, the findings and recommendations of the study would have importance to policymakers by drawing their attention to some of the points that will need corrective measures regarding the issues.

Service quality delivery is, therefore, a critical issue for many organizations today as they struggle to offer goods and services in an environment of intense competition, constant change and global standards. Regarding this, Milana (2018) contended that public organizations tried to transform their service offers by adapting and reconciling to the continuous changes. Zabri et al. (2016) also argued that service quality is crucial in public institutions to implement policies in the public interest in accordance with established standards. In addition, the authors again argued that the significance of service quality to public institutions is usually affected by changes in technology, skills, work ethics and honesty in both internal and external environments. The writers supplemented that the demand for quality service in public institutions always be at the forefront in order for the institutions to survive and to become competitive. Moreover, Aladwan (2016) stated that the service in the public institutions should be continuously improved to satisfy the customers.

However, according to Yosef (2011), despite its importance, there are various difficulties in the effective implementation of the service in public institutions of Ethiopia. Among the many difficulties, the author mentioned scarcity of resources, development level of technologies, communication revolution, management problems and employee dissatisfaction as examples. According to him, addressing these problems will, therefore, require to immediately reform Ethiopia's public sector work structures. As a result, the Ethiopian public sector has taken steps to address the above mentioned problems. Concerned about this, Tegene (2008) presented civil service reform as one of the implemented initiatives. The author explained that the reform is a continuation of the structural and economic reform process established in 1992. As to the author, the reform involves five main sub-programs. These are service delivery and service quality, budget management and control, personnel management, principal management system, and ethics and legal reform. Consequently, the public service reform program since 1994 has used reform tools such as business process reengineering, balanced score card and development groups to improve service quality and reduce customer dissatisfaction (Zerihun & Melesse, 2014).

According to Tegene (2008), though the above efforts were made to improve service quality, public organizations in Ethiopia are yet plagued by bureaucracy, delay, favoritism and nepotism, which reduce both consumer and employees' satisfaction. According to Milana (2018), there is a growing understanding of the difficulty of improving organizational performance, productivity and service quality without satisfied employees. This means that public sector enterprises can improve their ability to provide quality services by paying more attention to satisfying their human power. According to other researchers (e.g. Milana & Maldaon, 2015), human power should be considered as the supreme valued resource of an organization to achieve corporate goals. They continued that the key factor in the growth and success of any organization is human capital. Again, the authors argued that even if companies had the best facilities or technologies, they could not change the environment or succeed in competitions if their employees lacked the necessary skills and efficiency. As a result, among the many determining factors of service quality, this study only focused on employees' job satisfaction and leadership problems.

Hence, as to Armstrong (2006), people's attitudes and feelings about employment determine job satisfaction. He explained that having a constructive or positive attitude towards one's work and workplace means job satisfaction. On the contrary, a negative or unfavorable attitude towards one's work indicates job dissatisfaction. In addition, Alghamdi (2016) noted in his research that employees' satisfaction is a key factor in determining the level of service provided by an organization. The connection between job satisfaction and service quality has received a lot of attention recently (Milana, 2018). Milana also stated that for an organization to provide quality service, employees' satisfaction must be considered. Yee et al. (2008) also found that the provision of high-quality services in institutions is significantly impacted by staff satisfaction. Additional studies in this field have also exposed that job satisfaction affects service quality positively (e.g. Ghayas & Hussain, 2015).

Furthermore, public institution leadership plays a crucial role among the many elements affecting the quality of services (Pahi et al., 2020). In this regard, Ojokuku et al. (2012) explained that whether or not individuals are motivated and committed to work on the way of achieving institutional objectives is significantly determined by the practice of the leadership styles in a given organization. Thus, a leadership style that addressed by this study is transactional leadership. This is because of the commonly implementation of it in the study region. Concerning this, Zervas and David (2013) assert that transactional leaders employ future rewards or penalties to influence their staff members. Again, academics contend that transactional leadership style provides a number of benefits for the organization (e.g. Alan,

2013).The author further contend that there are several advantages of transactional leadership.He mentioned that the leadership style clarifies team members' roles and responsibilities; the leadership evaluates team members' performance; and employees who are motivated by outside rewards, for instance, compensation, frequently flourish in the workplace under the management of the transactional leader. Other academics conversely contended that transactional leadership has a drawback in that team members can only do little to enhance their job contentment, which depresses employee morale and increases turnover in the workplace (Zervas& David, 2013).

However,as to a study by Zerihun and Melesse (2014), despite the need and support for positive changes, there were significant execution problems with regard to service efficacy, efficiency, and leadership practice in the public institutions of Ethiopia. There is also insufficient conceptual understanding and application of the mediating role of job satisfaction on the link between transactional leadership style and service quality by using leader-member exchange theory as a guiding frame in a single study. Empirically, it is not well known how exactly transactional leadership and job satisfaction affect service quality in public institutions of Ethiopia.

As a result, the primeintent of this article is to examine the correlations among transactional leadership, job satisfaction and service quality with the interest of improving knowledge gap inthe literature concerning public sectors by applying the leader-member exchange theory as a guiding framework.Again, the practical intent of this research is to come up with findings that would be utilized to solve problems arising from work environment. It is also very important for public sectors to gain information on the determining factors of transactional leadership and job satisfaction towards service quality so as to identify the areas that need improvement in service delivery in order to attain competitive advantage in this fast changing world.

2. Literature Review

Job satisfaction is among the variables that influence in an organization's efficiency and success. According to the new managerial model, employees should be thought of as human brains with their own needs, wants, and personal desires (Tatar, 2020). For instance, according to Aziri (2011) a happy employee is a successful employee, and a successful employee is a satisfied employee. The writer added that satisfied workers are more inclined to work hard and give superior service. Besides, employees who are happy with their jobs have more possibility to participate in their institutions and more likely to give high-quality services (Ariani, 2015). Again, the author explained that employees that are pleased will deliver individualized

services which will satisfy customers. Other authors also added that members of staff satisfaction is a necessity for great service quality, since pleased personnel are more committed to continual quality improvement (Mohsin&Lockyer, 2010). Kim and Han (2013) also discovered that job satisfaction had a partial impact on service quality. Moreover, according to studies, transactional leaders have the ability to increase employees' commitment because they place a strong emphasis on contingent benefits, which are essential in encouraging staff to produce better services (Nguni et al., 2006).As to empirical data by Walumbwa et al. (2008), transactional leaders' use of contingent rewards can drastically alter the behavior of their workforce, which in turn improves the organization's service environment.Although transactional leadership is frequently thought to have influenced a number of desired employee behaviors and outcomes in the workplace, the above authors claim that the impacts of transactional leadership on subordinates' service quality are rarely covered in the research.

Furthermore, various studies have been conducted to scrutinize the correlation between leadership styles and job satisfaction. One of these studies was conducted by Rizi et al. (2013) among physical education employees. The results of their research publicized that there was a strong relationship between leadership style sub-variables and factors of job satisfaction. As to this study result is concerned, job satisfaction was positively related to transactional leadership. Befekadu and Peter (2021) in their investigation also found a substantial association between transactional leadership style and employees' job satisfaction. In addition, Ohunakin et al. (2016) examined in their study the link between transactional leadership and job satisfaction. The findings demonstrated a constructive and substantial correlation between the two.

However, as far as the researchers' knowledge is concerned, there were no prior studies on the mediating effect of employee's job satisfaction on the connection between transactional leadership style and service quality in public institutions. Regarding this, Zehir et al. (2011) recommended that future researchers who attempt to examine the effect of leadership styles on institutional service quality shall look into the mediating influence of job satisfaction. Therefore, in this study we suggested to test job satisfaction as a mediator between transactional leadership and service quality. To attain this aim, in line with the literatures reviewed above, this study used leader-member exchange theory as its theoretical framework. The premise of the leader-member exchange theory is that followers are divided into two groups by their leaders: an in-group and an out-group. That means members of the in-group have higher status, more benefits, and more consideration. Besides, these individuals are given some leeway in their jobs by their leader. On the other hand,

out-group members are those who are not part of the leader's inner circle, and are subject to formal rules and procedures, and get less attention and few benefits (Lunenburg, 2010).

3. Hypotheses of the Study

In is study, the following four hypotheses were formulated. The theoretical and empirical evidences reviewed in the above were served as the foundation for the development of these hypotheses.

H₁: There is a significant positive effect of job satisfaction on service quality in public sectors of Amhara Regional State

H₂: There is a significant positive effect of transactional leadership on service quality in public sectors of Amhara Regional State.

H₃: There is a significant positive effect of transactional leadership on job satisfaction in public sectors of Amhara Regional State.

H₄: Job satisfaction mediates significantly the effect of transactional leadership on service quality in public institutions of Amhara Regional State.

Based on the aforementioned reviews and hypotheses, the following self-developed conceptual model was utilized to indicate the interaction among transactional leadership, job satisfaction, and service quality as shown in figure 1 below.

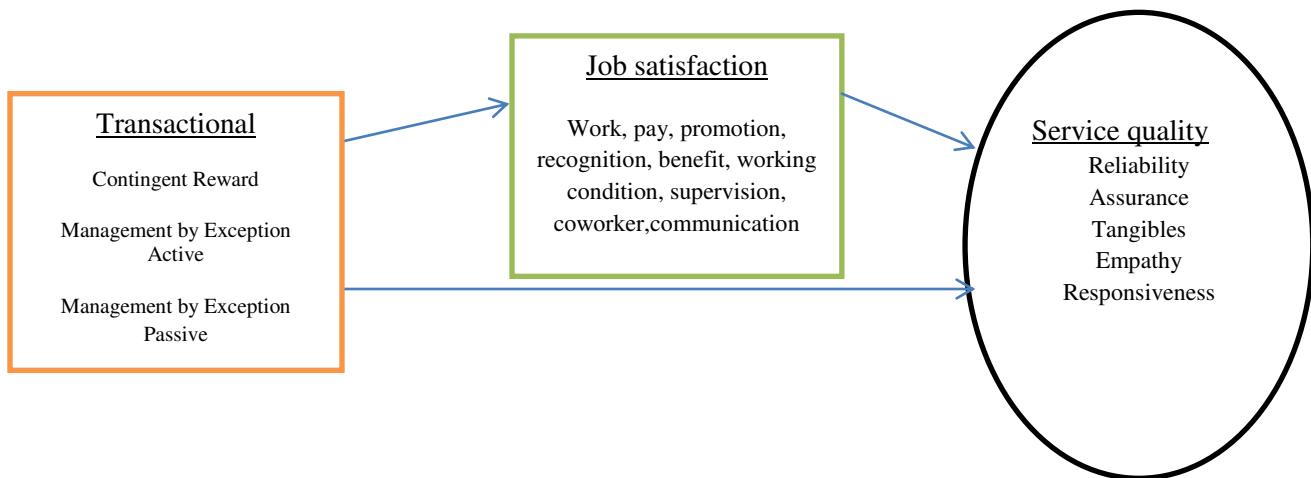


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

4. Research Methodology

The quantitative technique is an ideal for this study that goes in line with post positivist research paradigm since it allows for the examination of the relationship between numerical measures and constructs (Howell, 2010). It also helps the investigators to examine the magnitude of the predictor variables on the influence of the predicted variables (Creswell, 2014). As to him, in quantitative investigations, researchers advance the relationship among variables and pose this in terms of questions or hypotheses. Thus, to test the associations among the study variables, a correlational design was employed with cross-sectional survey method that helps to collect data from participants in a single period of time.

The population of this study includes public institutions' employees and leaders who are found in Amhara Regional State from which the sample was drawn. That means the study was focused on employees and leaders who are working in public organizations of Amhara Regional State. The sources to the population of this study are the public sectors' human resource department staff lists.

Hence, to make the sample areas and sample size representative and manageable, multi-stage random sampling technique that allowed using two or more probability sampling techniques in a combination was employed. Hence, to determine the sample, the sampling procedures used were: first, the researchers tried to group zones of the region into four clusters based on their geographical proximity. Then, by applying a lottery method simple random sampling technique, one zone from each cluster and four zones in sum were selected. In a similar manner, one district from each determined zone and a total of four districts were nominated by using a lottery method simple random sampling following the hierarchy. Lastly, sample employees and leaders from these districts were chosen through a stratified random sampling technique.

Thus, as the aggregate number of the population of the research is greater than 200 and not exactly known, the sample to this study was determined by applying Cochran (1963) sample size determination equation. By using this formula, an acceptable sample size computed was 354.

With permission gained from the concerned bodies, data were collected using close-ended questionnaires of 12 items of MLQ to measure transactional leadership, 36 items of JSS to measure job satisfaction and 22 items of SERVPERF to measure service quality that developed by Bass and Avolio (1994), Spector (1997) and Cronin and Taylor (1992) respectively.

Regarding the reliability of the instruments, the researchers made a reliability test. As a result, the Cronbach alpha value was found to be 0.807, 0.833 and 0.922, for transactional, job satisfaction and service quality consecutively which showed more than acceptable level of reliability output.

Besides, the connections of the variables under investigation as well as the mediating function of job satisfaction were assessed using partial least squares structural equation model (PLS-SEM) analysis through smart PLS4 software. Hence, the study analyzed indicator loading, construct reliability, convergent and discriminant validity tests under the measurement model assessment part. For the structural model, the evaluation was taken into account, the significant level of p-value, the significant level of effect size and the coefficient of determination.

5. Results and Discussions

In the study, 354 survey questionnaires were distributed to employees. From the distributed questionnaires, the properly filled in and used for the analysis were accounted for 327 (92%). However, 11 or (3%) of the questionnaires were partially filled and rejected. Again, 16 or (5%) of the distributed questionnaires were not returned.

5.1 Measurement Model Evaluation

Convergent validity, internal consistency, discriminant validity, and multicollinearity tests were conducted using the PLS algorithm to see whether the observed variables behave as theoretically predicted. Thus, measures of service quality, job satisfaction, and transactional leadership were assessed here below.

Table 1. Convergent Validity Analysis

Constructs	Indicators	λ	CA	CR	AVE	VIF
Job satisfaction	JSBEN	0.837	0.869	0.875	0.658	2.645
	JSCOM	0.746				2.546
	JSCOW	0.853				2.709
	JSSUP	0.772				2.661
	JSWOR	0.842				2.634
Service quality	Assurance	0.711	0.816	0.820	0.577	1.626
	Empathy	0.731				1.576
	Reliability	0.800				2.325
	Responsive	0.750				1.633
	Tangible	0.802				2.367
Transactional	CR	0.824	0.638	0.685	0.576	1.297
	MEA	0.823				1.333
	MEP	0.608				1.180

To accept the model's analysis result, the item's factor loading should be at least 0.70 (Bontis&Serenko, 2007). However, as to Falk and Miller (1992) cited in Duarte andRaposo (2010) manifest variables with loadings more than 0.55 kept acceptable.As a result, the model was modified andexclude four job satisfaction indicators of (JSPAY, JSPRO, JSWC, and JSCR) that were found to have factor loadings smaller than 0.55. Following that, a retest was administered, and as indicated in Table 1 above every item satisfied the criterion ($\lambda >0.55$). Furthermore, convergent validity, as explained by Hair et al. (2006), characterizes the magnitude that items genuinely represent the intended latent construct and correlate with other measures of the same latent construct. Consequently, it is confirmed using the average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability. Items become substantially significant in assessing their respective constructs where the composite reliability

values are at least 0.70 and the AVE is at least 0.50 (Hair et al., 2010). In respect to this, McCrae et al. (2011) argued that the composite reliability of each construct is used to evaluate its internal consistency. Hence, every construct's composite reliability that ranges (0.685-0.874) for this study was nearly equivalent to or greater than the recommended 0.70 criteria, as indicated in Table 1 above. AVE of a variable quantifies the difference between the variation it extracts from its indicators and the variation brought about by measurement error. Thus, the findings in Table 1 above showed that every AVE value was greater than 0.50. This displayed that the measurement model used in this study met the convergent validity requirements.

Besides, the magnitude of one latent construct's difference from other latent constructs is discriminant validity (Duarte & Raposo, 2010). This study employed three evaluation criteria—item cross-loadings on various variables, Fornell-Larcker, and Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio approaches—to ascertain discriminant validity. A description of each of these analyses can be found in the section below. The first criterion used to test the discriminant validity is cross-loadings. In this instance, a discriminant validity is ascertained by contrasting the indicator loadings with the cross loadings (Chin, 1998). In Table 2 below, the indicator loadings are thus compared to other reflecting indicators. As per the outcome, there was enough discriminant validity to support further research, as all indicator loadings were greater than cross-loadings.

Table 2.Discriminant validity–Cross loadings

Item	Job satisfaction	Service quality	Transactional
BEN	0.837	0.515	0.426
COM	0.746	0.395	0.374
COW	0.853	0.517	0.391
SUP	0.772	0.493	0.421
WOR	0.842	0.530	0.470
Assurance	0.404	0.711	0.465
Empathy	0.400	0.731	0.460
Reliability	0.545	0.800	0.400
Responsive	0.428	0.750	0.363
Tangible	0.518	0.802	0.329
CR	0.484	0.435	0.824
MEA	0.426	0.458	0.824
MEP	0.200	0.286	0.608

Bold shows factor loadings on their intended constructs

Additionally, the results of the Heterotrait-Monotrait and Fornell-Larcker ratio approaches are displayed in Table 3 below. To establish discriminant validity, each construct's square root of the AVE must be higher than its correlation score with every other construct (Fornell&Larcker, 1981). Fornell and Larcker recommended using AVE with a score of 0.50 or above in this case as a general criterion for evaluating discriminant validity. In order to achieve proper discriminant validity, they also advise that the square root of AVE should be higher than the correlations between latent components. Accordingly, Table 3 below depicts the average variance extracted-diagonal values (0.759, 0.811, and 0.760) as well as the link between the constructs in the off-diagonal. The results support the discriminant validity test since they reveal that the AVE's square root values (shown diagonally) were greater than their associations with other constructs (represented by the off-diagonal numbers). As per, Henseler et al. (2015), using the HTMT ratio is advisable to measure discriminant validity. As per them, the HTMT value above 0.90 indicates no discriminant validity because of the ideas' logical resemblance. The results of the current investigation presented in Table 3, indicate that all of the constructs are conceptually and practically distinct from one another with HTMT scores of less than 0.90.

Table 3.Discriminant validity-Fornell-Larcker and HTMT Ratio criterions

	Transactional	Job satisfaction	Service quality		
Fornell–Larcker					
Transactional	0.759				
Job satisfaction	0.515	0.811			
Service quality	0.530	0.608	0.760		
Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio Criterion					
Transactional					
Job satisfaction	0.649				
Service quality	0.717	0.714			

Bold indicates AVE's square root.

Moreover,by examining the variance explained (R^2) and cross-validated communality (Q^2), the model's predictive potential was determined.The R^2 statistic,

which displays the variance in the endogenous variable that is explained by the exogenous variables, can be used to evaluate the structural model's quality. According to Falk and Miller (1992), an appropriate minimum R-squared value is 0.10. Again,utilizing the Blindfolding process to produce cross-validate communality is another criterion for evaluating the model's quality. According to the threshold given by Fornell and Cha (1994), the model will be predictive if the cross-community value is determined to be greater than zero; otherwise, it failed to determine whether the model is predictive.

Table 4. Variance Explained and Cross-validated communality

Endogenous variables	R-square	R-square adjusted	Q ² predict	RMSE	MAE
Job satisfaction	0.266	0.263	0.254	0.872	0.649
	0.433	0.430	0.268	0.862	0.656
Service quality					

Based on the results reported in Table 4 above, the R² for job satisfaction and service quality respectively, was discovered to be 0.266 and 0.433. The result showed that transactional leadership dimensions accounted 26.6% of the variation in job satisfaction. Moreover, the result illustrated that job satisfaction and transactional leadership together accounted 43.3% of the variation in service quality. The effect size (f²), which assesses a specific exogenous construct's influence on the endogenous construct, was also evaluated. According to Cohen's (1993) criteria, which defined 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 as small, medium, and large effects respectively of the external constructs on the endogenous construct, the results exhibited that both transactional leadership and job satisfaction have medium impacts on service quality with f² value of (0.113 and 0.269) respectively. Besides, transactional leadership has a large effect on service quality with f² value (0.362).

The cross-validated communalities of the latent variables of job satisfaction and service quality were also 0.254 and 0.268, respectively, as shown in Table 4 above. These values are greater than zero, indicating that the model meets the requirements outlined by Fornell and Cha (1994) and has sufficient predictive validity.

5.2 Assessment of Structural Model

After the measurement model was validated, the structural model was computed to test the conceptual model, which addresses the direct and indirect links that consisted of four different theoretically motivated assumptions. As advised by Hair et al. (2022), measures such as t-value, path coefficients (hypotheses tests), and p-values were calculated using the PLS Bootstrapping technique. In this section, the bootstrapping method was applied with a sample size of 5000 to determine the significance of the associations (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). Hence, the study findings are displayed in Table 6 below.

Table 5. Path coefficients for direct and indirect effects

Hypotheses	Relationship	Path coefficient	t	P	CI	
					2.5%	97.5%
H₁	job satisfaction -> service quality	0.456	9.294	0.000	0.346	0.542
H₂	Transactional -> service quality	0.295	5.926	0.000	0.197	0.394
H₃	Transactional -> job satisfaction	0.515	11.452	0.000	0.431	0.604
H₄	Indirect effect transactional->Job satisfaction-> Service quality	0.235	8.086	0.000	0.180	0.296

The results in the model showed that job satisfaction had a substantial influence on service quality ($\beta = 0.456$, $t = 9.294$, $p < 0.001$), which aided to accept the proposed hypothesis (H1). As a result, this finding signifies that job satisfaction significantly predicts service quality. The finding of this study is, therefore, supported by earlier research conducted on the subject (e.g., Aziri, 2011). In this context, Aziri (2011)

asserted that a successful employee is one who is happy at work and is therefore content with his/her job. The author also said that happy staffs are better likely to put a lot of effort and deliver superior services through corporate citizenship behavior. Therefore, happy workers are more likely to contribute to their companies. Still other authors went on to say that when workers are happy in their jobs, they are more likely to offer high-quality services (Yoon & Suh, 2003).

Additionally, the predicted path association between transactional leadership and service quality was significant at ($\beta = 0.295$, $t = 5.926$, $p < 0.001$). Regarding this, researches also demonstrated that transactional leadership has a favorable impact on employee service quality (e.g., Nguni et al., 2006). Besides, writers like Donkor et al. (2021) discovered a positive correlation between transactional leadership and employee service quality, which is consistent with the findings of this study.

Furthermore, the predicted path relationship between transactional leadership and job satisfaction at ($\beta = 0.249$, $t = 3.644$, $p < 0.001$) was statistically significant, supporting the hypothesis that there is a statistically significant relationship between transactional leadership and job satisfaction. Therefore, transactions with rewards or penalties could serve as a foundation for motivation. As a result, writers claim that transactional leadership may have a long-term effect on satisfaction and productivity (Befekadu & Peter, 2021). According to a study by Ohunakin et al. (2016), transactional leadership increases job satisfaction by regulating job worth or equality and addressing desired needs at work. Others, however, asserted that it might not always be successful (Bass & Riggio, 2005). This result is also in line with the leader-member exchange theory, which is used as a theoretical framework for this study. As to this theory, members of the in-group have gained higher status, more benefits, and consideration from their leaders. On the other hand, out-group members are those who are not part of the leader's inner circle, are subject to formal rules and procedures, and get less attention and few benefits (Lunenburg, 2010).

For the indirect effect, this study looked at the role job satisfaction played in mediating the link between transactional leadership style and service quality. The finding supported hypothesis (H4) by showing that job satisfaction at ($\beta = 0.235$, $t = 8.086$, $p < 0.001$) explained a considerable variation in the link between transactional leadership and service quality. Thus, this result demonstrated that job satisfaction partly mediates the relationship between transactional leadership and service quality. To the researchers' knowledge, however, not studies yet have looked at whether job satisfaction among employees mediates the link between transactional leadership style and service quality in Ethiopia. Despite this, the findings of this research demonstrated that transactional leadership style had a sizable indirect impact on service quality through employee job satisfaction.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

This analysis shows that job satisfaction has a partial mediation influence on the link between transactional leadership style and service quality. Thus, one can deduce from the PLS-SEM results of this work that for both direct and indirect path relations, transactional leadership significantly affects both job satisfaction and service quality positively. That means, the more transactional leadership is used, the greater will be the job satisfaction and service quality in public sectors. As a result, the contributions of transactional leadership should, therefore, be taken into consideration by leaders in order to provide quality service in the public sectors. As a result, organizations aiming toward improving their employees' service practice based on their job satisfaction are recommended to focus on their leadership behavior.

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