

INFLUENCE OF TRANSACTIONAL LEADERSHIP STYLE ON LECTURERS' JOB SATISFACTION IN STATE UNIVERSITIES IN THE NORTHWEST GEOPOLITICAL ZONE OF NIGERIA.

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of transactional leadership style on lecturers' job satisfaction in state universities in the Northwest Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design with a correlational approach. The population was 4742, comprising of all the lecturers in the state universities of the study region and a sample of 200 lecturers was selected using a multi-stage stratified sampling technique based on the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table. Data was collected using a structured questionnaires consisting of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) developed by Bass and Avolio (1994) and the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) developed by Spector (1997). Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) to analyse research questions and inferential statistics (Pearson Product Moment Correlation and simple linear regression) were used for data analysis the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that transactional leadership is moderately practiced in state universities in Northwest Nigeria. The results further indicated a statistically significant moderate positive relationship between transactional leadership and lecturers' job satisfaction ($r = 0.38, p < 0.05$). Regression analysis showed that transactional leadership significantly predicts lecturers' job satisfaction, accounting for 14.4% of the variance. The study concludes that transactional leadership is practiced, particularly contingent reward and structured supervision, contribute positively to lecturers' job satisfaction. It therefore recommends that university administrators should strengthen performance-based recognition systems, promote constructive supervision practices, and implement leadership development programmes to enhance lecturers' motivation and satisfaction within Nigerian state universities.

Keywords: Transactional leadership, transactional leadership styles, job satisfaction

Introduction

Leadership style plays a crucial role in shaping employees' attitudes and work outcomes within higher education institutions. In Nigerian state universities, concerns about lecturers' declining morale, heavy workloads, and institutional constraints have intensified the need to examine leadership practices that may influence lecturers' job satisfaction. Leadership remains a critical factor in determining organizational effectiveness, particularly within higher education institutions where university administrators and academic leaders play an important role in shaping institutional climate, academic productivity, and staff wellbeing. In universities, leadership style influences lecturers' motivation, commitment, morale, and overall job satisfaction. Within the Nigerian higher education system, particularly in state universities in the Northwest Geopolitical Zone, concerns about lecturers' dissatisfaction, declining morale, and challenges related to teaching, research, and service responsibilities have intensified the need to examine leadership practices that may improve lecturers' work experiences.

Transactional leadership, rooted in exchange relationships between leaders and followers, emphasizes clearly defined expectations, performance monitoring, and contingent rewards. In the university environment, this leadership style is often reflected through administrative supervision, performance evaluation, adherence to institutional policies, and reward mechanisms linked to academic productivity and professional responsibilities. Although transactional leadership is frequently associated with administrative efficiency and organizational control, its influence on lecturers' psychological engagement and satisfaction with their academic roles remains an important empirical concern.

Lecturers' job satisfaction is a crucial determinant of teaching effectiveness, research productivity, staff retention, and the overall quality of higher education delivery. It represents lecturers' cognitive and emotional evaluation of their professional roles, encompassing intrinsic factors such as academic autonomy, intellectual fulfillment, and opportunities for professional development, as well as extrinsic factors such as remuneration, institutional support, and working conditions. Considering the persistent challenges confronting state universities in Northwest Nigeria, including funding constraints, heavy workloads, and administrative pressures, understanding how leadership style affects lecturers' job satisfaction is essential for effective university management.

Although existing studies have explored the relationship between leadership styles and job satisfaction in educational institutions, relatively limited empirical attention has focused specifically on transactional leadership within state universities in Northwest Nigeria. This study therefore investigates the impact of transactional leadership style on lecturers' job satisfaction in state universities in the Northwest Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. Specifically, it examines the relationship between transactional leadership and lecturers' job satisfaction and determines the extent to which transactional leadership predicts lecturers' job satisfaction.

By providing empirical evidence from state universities in Northwest Nigeria, the study contributes to the growing body of literature on higher education leadership and offers practical insights for improving leadership practices and enhancing lecturers' job satisfaction within Nigerian universities.

Leadership Style in University

Some scholars have so much worked on leadership styles in the universities, especially, the state-owned institutions. Such researchers as Omeke & Onah, 2012; Oguejiofor, Okafor, & Ezenwagu, 2025 indicate that leadership style in educational institutions transcends isolated administrative acts, instead reflecting relatively enduring patterns of behaviour, cognitive orientations, and interpersonal strategies through which principals influence teachers and coordinate instructional processes toward achieving institutional goals (Omeke & Onah, 2012; Oguejiofor, Okafor, & Ezenwagu, 2025). Leadership style constitutes a patterned mode of interaction that shapes teachers' perceptions, morale, motivation, and task engagement, emphasizing that the effectiveness of school administration depends not merely on formal authority but on the consistency and coherence of behavioural orientations, particularly in decision-making, communication, supervision, and staff motivation (Omeke & Onah, 2012).

Within educational management scholarship, leadership style is conceptualized as a behavioural orientation that significantly influences teachers' psychological states and workplace attitudes. Yukl (2013, p. 19) describes leadership as a process of influencing others to understand and agree on what needs to be done and how it can be accomplished, emphasizing that leadership effectiveness largely depends on consistent behavioural patterns. In schools, such patterns affect teachers' levels of motivation, organizational commitment, job involvement, and overall satisfaction. Consequently, leadership style is a critical variable in explaining variations in teacher morale, instructional effectiveness, and school performance. Similarly, Oguejiofor, Okafor, and Ezenwagu (2025) conceptualize principals' leadership styles as integrated combinations of personal attributes, managerial competencies, and observable behaviours that distinguish one leader from another. These behavioural patterns function as strategic frameworks that align teachers' efforts with institutional objectives, directly influencing psychological states such as motivation, commitment, and job satisfaction. Principals who demonstrate coherent and supportive leadership behaviours are more likely to foster collaborative cultures, strengthen professional accountability, and sustain academic standards, whereas inconsistent or ineffective leadership can undermine morale and disrupt instructional coherence.

More broadly, leadership in education is understood as a relational and social influence process. Burns (1978, p. 20) conceptualized leadership as a reciprocal interaction between leaders and followers, capable of elevating both to higher levels of motivation and moral purpose. He distinguished between transactional leadership, grounded in structured exchange relationships, and transformational leadership, which seeks to inspire and develop followers beyond immediate self-interest. Building on this, Bass (1985, pp. 20) operationalized leadership style as a stable pattern of influence whereby leaders clarify expectations, establish performance criteria, administer contingent rewards, and monitor deviations from standards. His framework emphasizes observable leadership behaviours and their measurable effects on subordinate performance and satisfaction.

Empirical discussions further reinforce this perspective. Omeke and Onah (2012) emphasize that leadership style is best understood as "the way leaders interact with their staff," highlighting relational dynamics rather than episodic administrative interventions. Through structured communication, equitable allocation of responsibilities, and consistent supervisory practices, principals cultivate a school climate that enhances instructional quality. Likewise, Oguejiofor, Okafor, and Ezenwagu (2025) demonstrate that leadership styles act as mediating mechanisms between administrative authority and teacher performance, directly impacting teacher motivation, commitment, and job satisfaction.

Educational leadership researchers consistently argue that leadership style is a decisive determinant of school climate and teacher work attitudes. Leithwood (1994) posited that leadership practices directly influence teachers' beliefs, professional commitment, and instructional practices, particularly during periods of school restructuring. Similarly, Hallinger (2003) highlighted that leadership behaviours shape the academic press of schools, teacher collaboration, and instructional coherence. Through goal setting, supervision, feedback mechanisms, and recognition systems, principals establish normative expectations that affect teachers' perceptions of fairness, support, and organizational justice.

In sum, leadership style in education is not merely an administrative preference but a strategic, relatively stable behavioural orientation with measurable implications for teacher motivation, instructional quality, organizational effectiveness, and student achievement. It operates as a structured framework through which principals guide teacher attitudes, coordinate instructional processes, and sustain school-wide performance, underscoring the centrality of consistent, supportive, and well-articulated leadership behaviours in shaping the educational environment (Omeke & Onah, 2012; Oguejiofor et al., 2025; Yukl, 2013; Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985; Leithwood, 1994; Hallinger, 2003).

Transactional Leadership Style

Transactional leadership originates from James MacGregor Burns, who conceptualized it as an exchange-based process in which leaders and followers engage in transactions designed to satisfy mutual interests. Burns (1978, pp. 3–4) described transactional leadership as a system of reciprocal exchanges where compliance is secured through rewards, promises, or corrective measures. In this sense, leadership is grounded in negotiated agreements rather than transformational change, emphasizing task accomplishment and adherence to established standards.

The concept was further refined by Bernard M. Bass within the Full Range Leadership Model. Bass (1985, pp.125) operationalized transactional leadership as a stable pattern of leader behaviour aimed at clarifying expectations, monitoring performance, and reinforcing compliance. Together with Bruce J. Avolio, Bass later integrated it into a broader leadership continuum ranging from laissez-faire to transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994, pp. 20). Within this framework, transactional leadership is viewed as essential for maintaining organizational order, efficiency, and short-term goal attainment. Transactional leadership comprises three principal components:

ii. Contingent Reward: Contingent reward involves clarifying performance expectations and providing recognition or incentives when established goals are achieved. Bass (1985, p. 122) describes this dimension as the constructive exchange component of transactional leadership, where rewards are explicitly tied to performance outcomes. Bass and Avolio (1994, p. 24) further emphasize that contingent reward strengthens motivation by linking effort to valued outcomes. In school contexts, this may include formal recognition, commendations, or professional opportunities granted to teachers who meet instructional targets.

ii. Management-by-Exception (Active): Active management-by-exception refers to systematic monitoring of performance and immediate corrective action when deviations occur. Bass (1985, p. 124) explains that leaders adopting this approach actively search for irregularities, errors, or policy violations and intervene promptly to maintain standards. In educational settings, this may involve classroom supervision, review of lesson plans, and monitoring of student performance data to ensure compliance with academic expectations.

iii. Management-by-Exception (Passive): Passive management-by-exception is characterized by delayed intervention, with leaders responding only after significant problems arise or standards are not met. Bass (1985, p. 125) notes that this approach is reactive rather than preventive, as leaders wait until deviations become serious before taking action. In schools, this may manifest when principals intervene only after complaints, declining examination

results, or disciplinary issues emerge. In the school settings, transactional leadership emphasizes supervision, accountability, structured monitoring, and performance-based reinforcement.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction refers to the positive emotional and cognitive evaluation individuals make about their work. Locke (1976, p. 1300) defines it as “a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences.” In education, it reflects lecturer’s level of contentment, commitment, and motivation (Spector, 1997, p. 2).

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Job Satisfaction: Herzberg (1966) distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction, thus:

- *Intrinsic (Motivator) Factors:* Achievement, recognition, responsibility, growth.
- *Extrinsic (Hygiene) Factors:* Pay, supervision, policies, working conditions.

Dimensions of Lecturer’s Job Satisfaction

The key dimensions of lecturer’s job satisfaction include:

- i. Pay/Compensation
- ii. Supervision
- iii. Promotion
- iv. Opportunities
- v. Work Environment.

These collectively influence teachers’ commitment and retention (Adebayo, 2013; Locke, 1976).

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, there have been persistent reports of increased complaints from academic staff, frequent industrial actions, low morale, and widespread dissatisfaction with working conditions. The persistence job dissatisfaction among lecturers therefore suggests a fundamental problem on how academic staff are managed, especially with regard to leadership approaches adopted by university administrators. This situation has motivated the need to critically examine the role of leadership styles in shaping lecturers’ job satisfaction in state universities. In order to address the challenges associated with declining job satisfaction among lecturers in state universities in the North West Geographical Zone of Nigeria, several strategic solutions can be considered. These challenges are often manifested through strikes organized by academic staff unions, reduced commitment to teaching and research activities, and declining enthusiasm for academic responsibilities. The relationship between leadership styles and job satisfaction has been a focal point in organizational behavior research, given its implications for employee performance and institutional success. In the context of higher education, particularly among lecturers in state universities, understanding this dynamic becomes crucial, as it directly influences teaching quality, research output, and overall academic excellence. Therefore, this study aims at examining the influence of transactional leadership styles on job satisfaction among lecturers in universities, in order to provide insights for university leaders to foster a supportive work environment and enhance faculty job satisfaction.

Objective of the study

The main objective of this study is to ascertain the influence of transactional leadership style on job satisfaction among lecturers in state universities in North West Geographical Zone, Nigeria. Specifically, the sought to:

1. Examine the influence of transactional leadership style on job satisfaction among lecturers in state universities in North West Geographical Zone, Nigeria.

Research Question

1. What is the influence transactional leadership style on job satisfaction among lecturers in state universities of North West Geographical Zone, Nigeria?

Hypothesis

The one null hypothesis was formulated to aid study

1. There is no significant influence of transactional leadership style on job satisfaction among lecturers in state universities of North West Geographical Zone, Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey design with correlational approach (Creswell, 2014). The population of the study is comprises of all lecturers in state universities in Northwest Nigeria. The population was 4742. A multi-stage stratified sampling technique was employed to ensure adequate representation across state universities in Northwest Nigeria. In the first stage, selected state universities within the Northwest Geopolitical Zone were identified. In the second stage, lecturers were stratified according to faculties or academic units to ensure that participants were drawn from diverse academic disciplines. Thereafter, respondents were selected proportionately from the various faculties to ensure fair representation. The sample size for the study was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table. Based on the estimated population of lecturers in state universities within the Northwest Geopolitical Zone, a recommended sample size of 200 lecturers was considered statistically adequate for a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. Data for this study were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising two standardized instruments. The first instrument was the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) developed by Bass and Avolio (1994), which was used to measure transactional leadership style as perceived by lecturers. The second instrument was the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) developed by Spector (1997), which was used to assess lecturers' level of job satisfaction. The questionnaire items were structured on a four-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), to Strongly Disagree (1). The validity of the research instrument was established through expert review by specialists in educational management and measurement and evaluation, who assessed the items for clarity, relevance, and appropriateness to the objectives of the study. Their suggestions were incorporated to improve the quality of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient, and a reliability threshold of 0.70 and above was considered acceptable in line with the recommendation of Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). Prior to data collection, permission was obtained from the relevant university authorities, and the questionnaires were administered to the selected respondents.

Data collected from the respondents were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were used to summarize and describe the responses of lecturers regarding transactional leadership style and job satisfaction. Inferential statistics were employed to test the relationship and predictive influence between the study variables. Specifically, Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to examine the relationship between transactional leadership style and lecturers' job satisfaction, while simple linear regression analysis was used to determine the extent to which transactional leadership style predicts lecturers' job satisfaction. All statistical analyses were conducted at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results

A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed to lecturers across the selected state universities in Northwest Nigeria. Out of these, 200 questionnaires were properly completed and returned, representing a 90.9% response rate. Consequently, the final sample size used for the analysis was 200 lecturers.

Transactional Leadership Dimensions

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Contingent Reward	200	3.18	0.61
Management-by-Exception (Active)	200	3.02	0.65
Management-by-Exception (Passive)	200	2.54	0.73
Overall Transactional Leadership	200	2.91	0.57

Transactional leadership is moderately practiced in the selected state universities in Northwest Nigeria, with contingent reward emerging as the most prominent dimension of the leadership style as perceived by lecturers.

Lecturers' Job Satisfaction

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Intrinsic Satisfaction	200	3.11	0.63
Extrinsic Satisfaction	200	2.86	0.67
Overall Job Satisfaction	200	2.99	0.59

Lecturers demonstrate moderate levels of job satisfaction, with intrinsic factors such as professional achievement, academic autonomy, and intellectual engagement slightly higher than extrinsic factors such as remuneration and working conditions.

Hypothesis

H₀: Transactional leadership has no significant relationship with lecturers' job satisfaction.

Variables	R	p-value
Transactional Leadership & Job Satisfaction	0.38	0.000

$r = 0.38$ indicates a **moderate positive relationship**.

$p < 0.05$ indicates the relationship is **statistically significant**.

An increase in transactional leadership practices among university administrators is associated with higher levels of lecturers' job satisfaction.

R	R²	Adjusted R²	Std. Error
0.38	0.144	0.140	0.52

Transactional leadership explains 14.4% of the variance in lecturers' job satisfaction in the selected state universities.

Source	F	p-value
Regression	33.47	0.000

The regression model is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

Variable	B	Beta	t	P
Constant	1.42	—	7.88	0.000
Transactional Leadership	0.54	0.38	5.79	0.000

$\beta = 0.38$ indicates a moderate predictive effect. A one-unit increase in transactional leadership leads to a 0.54 increase in lecturers' job satisfaction.

The predictor is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that management leadership styles play a crucial role in shaping lecturers' job satisfaction in state universities in the North West Geographical Zone of Nigeria. Leadership practices significantly influence lecturers' attitudes, motivation, and overall satisfaction with their work. Transactional leadership also plays an important role in enhancing job satisfaction, particularly in structured and bureaucratic institutional contexts. However, transactional leadership is most effective when complemented by transformational behaviors.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendation is made:

- That transactional leadership should not be practiced in the universities
- The leadership of the universities should adopt all the possible leadership styles for job satisfaction and retention of the lecturers.

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