



When Leadership Transforms, Engagement Follows: The Mediating Role of Psychological Well-Being among Administrative Staff in Ghanaian Higher Education

**Faustina Kwofie¹, Vera Rosemary Ankoma-Sey², Nathaniel Quansah^{3*}, Adriana
Apagya-Quayson⁴, Philip Aikins⁵**

University of Cape Coast, Ghana¹

University of Cape Coast, Ghana²

University of Cape Coast, Ghana³

University of Cape Coast, Ghana⁴

Nazarbayev University, Kazakhstan⁵

Corresponding Email: nquansah002@stu.ucc.edu.gh*

Received: 12-04-2022

Reviewed: 09-05-2025

Accepted: 26-06-2025

Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between transformational leadership (TL), psychological well-being (PWB), and work engagement (WE) with a specific focus on the mediating role of psychological well-being. Anchored in an explanatory research design, the study involved 104 administrative staff members from the University of Cape Coast (UCC). Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and inferential methods, particularly mediation analysis. Correlation results revealed a moderately significant positive relationship between TL and EPW, as well as between TL and WE. Furthermore, EPW was found to significantly mediate the link between TL and WE, highlighting its critical role in fostering employee engagement. This implies that for higher education institutions, improving leadership alone is not enough; there must also be efforts to create a healthier work milieu where staff members feel valued, less stressed, and more satisfied. Both important theoretical and practical implications have been discussed.

Keywords: transformational leadership (TL), employee psychological well-being (PWB), work engagement (WE), Ghanaian Higher Education (GHE)

Introduction

Organisational climate is often referred to as employees' collective perceptions of their organisation by several studies (Kuenzi & Schminke, 2019; Schneider, 2015). Among the signs that a constructive work milieu exists in an institution are the perception and attitude of employees, involvement in decision making, psychological safety of the work milieu, respect and inclusive leaders, co-workers as trustworthy, fair, and open to diversity, and policies

When Leadership Transforms, Engagement Follows: The Mediating Role of Psychological Well-Being Among Administrative Staff in Ghanaian Higher Education

making as interpersonally and procedurally just. An organisation finds it extremely challenging to operate its activities in a highly dynamic and uncertain global environment if it only depends heavily on the skills of its personnel (Duarte et al., 2015). A company will suffer if it faces management difficulties in certain areas, including the management of the workplace environment itself, the capacity to enhance performance in organisational competition, globalisation, and public expectations, all of which impact an organisation's ability to lead itself (Akdere, 2006).

In the view of Agyemang and Ofei (2013), one of the critical concepts in the domain of positive psychology, which plays a fundamental role in the sustainable progression of institutional development and change, is WE. A positive fulfilment and a work-related state of mind, characterised by absorption, dedication, and vigour, is termed WE. For more than two decades, work engagement has gradually become a forefront area of management research and practice (Saks, 2019). This is a result of the issue of employee performance, high employee turnover, and turnover intentions (Liu & Liu, 2021). Decuypere and Schaufeli (2020) explained that one of the variables that affects WE is leadership. Decuypere and Schaufeli (2020), however, added that managers must understand the kind of leadership that affects people's psychological domains, employee loyalty to the organisation, and PWB.

The question that arises with the surge in the use of the leadership model concept in diverse institutions is about the most suitable leadership style and how it influences institutional variables. Manoppo (2021) revealed that TL strongly decreases turnover rates, which increases overall satisfaction, commitment, and organisational performance. According to Bass (1985), TL is a vital element in serving as role models for innovation, creative behaviours, and Intellectual stimulation. Transformational leaders portray leadership as supporting and encouraging desirable behaviours by followers. Bass (1985) further identified four dimensions of TL (i.e., individualised consideration (IC), idealised influence (II), intellectual stimulation (IS), and inspirational motivation (IM). IC involves attending to each employee's unique needs and providing personalised support and mentorship. Idealised influence refers to the leader serving as a role model, earning respect through integrity and ethical behaviour. Intellectual stimulation encourages employees to think critically, challenge norms, and innovate without fear of failure. Lastly, inspirational motivation is demonstrated when leaders set high vision, expectations, and inspire a shared sense of purpose among team members.

Management theorists have recently revealed a growing interest in TL, particularly the part that managerial styles play in the effective stimulation of WE (Hunter et al., 2013; Lord et al., 2017; Posadzińska et al., 2020). Recent studies have demonstrated a link between various styles of leadership and employees' overall well-being (Harrell-Cook, Levitt, & Grimm, 2017; Huertas-Valdivia et al., 2018). WE, which measures eudaimonic well-being, was generally seen to be consistently low (Harrell-Cook, Levitt, & Grimm, 2017). Concerning hedonic well-being, Huertas-Valdivia et al. (2018) reported lower job satisfaction. They added that lower job satisfaction influenced employee psychological well-being. Findings from both studies concur with our observation that workers tend to be absent from work due to lower WE and job satisfaction, which affects organisational productivity.

At the University of Cape Coast, administrative staff are crucial in ensuring the operational and efficient process of academic and non-academic functions. Their duties typically include managing student records, facilitating admissions and registration processes, coordinating departmental activities, providing logistical and clerical support to faculty, managing communication within and outside the institution, and ensuring compliance with institutional policies and national educational regulations (Cloete et al., 2015). With the implementation of the Double-Track Senior High School (Free SHS) policy, there has been a significant increase in student enrollment at the tertiary level, placing immense pressure on existing administrative systems and personnel. This surge has resulted in heavier workloads, increased responsibilities, and heightened stress levels for administrative staff, who are now expected to serve a larger and more diverse student population without a corresponding increase in resources or staff numbers. Administrative staff often face demanding work conditions that, if persistent, may result in adverse emotional and psychological effects (Giorgi et al., 2017). When such stressors are not effectively identified and managed, they can negatively impact employees' overall well-being. Research on leadership behaviours in organisational settings highlights their significant role in shaping the psychological experiences of service-oriented employees. Specifically, when leaders neglect employee concerns, shy away from responsibility, and fail to maintain open communication, these behaviours have been linked to poorer mental health among staff (Skakon et al., 2010). In contrast, academic staff and faculty in higher education institutions have reported a higher quality of life when their leaders offer motivation, intellectual engagement, personal support, and demonstrate idealised leadership qualities.

Despite the well-established link between TL and WE (Kark, Van Dijk, & Vashdi, 2018; Kim & Cruz, 2022; Puni, Mohammed, & Asamoah, 2018), other studies also suggest that some studies have identified contexts where this leadership style may have unintended negative and indistinct effects (Jiang et al., 2017; Li & Yuanm, 2017). In the hospitality industry, Li and Yuan (2017) explained that TLs may encounter poor-quality leaders; leaders exchange with hotel employees due to traits such as being boastful and absorbed in power and superiority. Conversely, Jiang et al. (2017) suggest that when leaders focus too much on individual development, it may disturb shared knowledge, constructive feedback, and alignment of a common goal among team members. Although works by Jiang et al. (2017) and Li & Yuan (2017) were conducted in a non-educational context, they provide useful information on how TL affects WE. The above claim suggests possible variables likely to mediate the relationship between TL and WE. Ghadi, Fernando, and Caputi (2013) suggest that the connection between TL and WE can be better understood by incorporating additional mediating or moderating variables. Zhu et al. (2009) highlight that when transformational leaders show genuine concern for individual employees, it promotes positive relationships and a sense of institutional belonging. This sense of ownership can enhance WE, especially when employees experience higher PWB, as they are more likely to view the organisation as a long-term fit (Dai et al., 2021). Collectively, these studies point to PWB as a key mediating factor in the relationship between TL and WE.

The theory of Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model better explains how PWB acts as a mediator between TL and WE. According to the JD-R model, every job has specific demands

When Leadership Transforms, Engagement Follows: The Mediating Role of Psychological Well-Being Among Administrative Staff in Ghanaian Higher Education

(e.g., workload, emotional stress) and resources (e.g., leadership support, autonomy, and feedback). TL acts as a crucial job resource by reducing stress, offering meaningful goals, and providing emotional and developmental support. These resources help administrative staff cope with work demands and foster a sense of psychological security and fulfilment. As a result, administrative staff experience enhanced PWB, feeling mentally healthy, optimistic, and resilient in the face of challenges. Psychological well-being, in turn, plays a mediating role by serving as a psychological mechanism through which leadership influences behaviour. When administrative staff are psychologically well, they are more likely to experience positive emotions, higher levels of self-esteem, and a strong sense of purpose, all of which contribute to higher work engagement. Engaged administrators are characterised by energy, dedication, and absorption in their tasks.

In the context of higher education, staff members with high well-being are more likely to exceed their job descriptions, collaborate effectively with others, and remain committed to institutional goals. This makes psychological well-being not only a desirable outcome but also a strategic link between leadership behaviour and employee performance. Conducting this study is therefore timely and essential, as it aims to explore how TL can enhance PW and WE among administrative staff amidst these growing demands. Understanding this relationship is critical to sustaining the effectiveness, motivation, and retention of these essential personnel within Ghana's higher education system. In the Ghanaian context, recent studies have broadly examined the connection between transformational leadership and employee well-being (Baffour-Awuah & Agyei, 2020; Issahaku, Nkyi, & Dramanu, 2020). Although there is substantial research on transformational leadership, employee psychological well-being, and work engagement, limited attention has been given to the mediating role of PWB in the link between TL and WE. This study addresses the theoretical gap highlighted by earlier researchers (Ghadi et al., 2013; Zhu et al., 2009), who emphasise the importance of exploring potential mediators in this relationship. The study specifically sought to examine whether PWB will mediate the relationship between TL and WE.

Literature Review

Leader-Member Exchange Theory

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory emphasises the influence leaders have on employees through the quality of the relationships they build with them (Liden & Maslyn, 1998). High-quality LMX relationships are typically marked by mutual trust, loyalty, and respect. One of the central ideas of the theory is that leaders form varying levels of relationship quality with different subordinates, a pattern consistently observed across numerous workgroups (Liden & Graen, 1980). The theory is grounded in social exchange principles, where high-quality relationships involve the mutual exchange of valuable resources. In such relationships, leaders offer support, development opportunities, mentoring, and other benefits, while employees respond with loyalty, commitment, and discretionary effort (Liden & Maslyn, 1998). These reciprocal exchanges often result in positive behaviours toward the leader and, at times, the broader organisation. For example, Dulac et al. (2008) found that psychological

contract violations mediated the relationship between LMX quality and outcomes like trust and intentions to leave the organisation.

Conceptual Framework

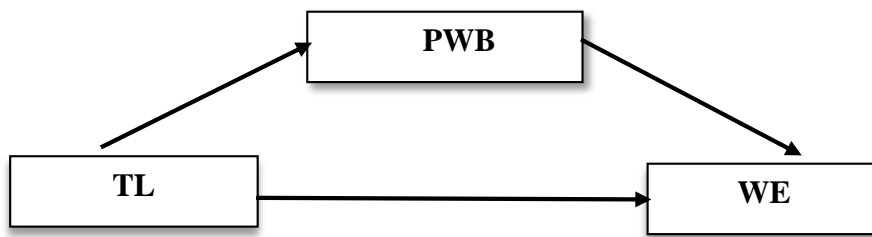


Figure 1: Conceptual framework on the association between TL, PWB, and WE

Based on the framework, the study hypothesises a positive relationship between TL and WE. A positive relationship between TL and PWB was found. PWB well-being accounted for the link between TL and WE.

Research Method

Design

This study adopted a cross-sectional, explanatory research design. Explanatory research is intended to identify causes, explore causal relationships between variables, examine the outcomes of social phenomena, and predict how these phenomena may vary in relation to other factors. This design was selected to explore the relationships among TL, PWB, and WE. As noted by Babbie (2016), cross-sectional surveys involve examining a sample from a larger population to provide a quantitative overview of trends, perceptions, or behaviours at a specific point in time. According to Neuman et al. (2018), this approach enables researchers to investigate both small and large populations by analysing the frequency, distribution, and interconnections of variables. Given the goal of understanding a large population through a representative sample within a limited timeframe and with constrained resources, the cross-sectional explanatory design was deemed the most appropriate for this study.

Participants

Participants for this study comprised administrative staff at the University of Cape Coast (UCC). The accessible population for the study were senior administrative staff. The total number of senior staff members was 500 (Human Resource Office - UCC). Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample estimation table was used to select 217 senior staff members from a population of 500. However, after administering the questionnaire, there was a return rate of 104 (48%). This is because the senior staff were on strike at the time for data collection. Among the respondents, 39.4% were females, whereas 60.6% were males. Most of the respondents (33.7%) were between 35 and 39 years, 24.0% were between 30 to 34 years, and 1.1% were between the ages of 55-59 years.

When Leadership Transforms, Engagement Follows: The Mediating Role of Psychological Well-Being Among Administrative Staff in Ghanaian Higher Education

Instrument

To measure the study variables, established instruments were adopted. PWB was assessed using a 9-item scale developed by Telef (2013) in Turkish. WE was measured using the 7-item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-3) developed by Schaufeli et al. (2017). TL was evaluated with the 19-item Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) created by Bass and Avolio (1997). A four-point Likert scale was used for all items, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree), to capture respondents' levels of agreement.

Reliability of instruments

Reliability refers to the consistency or stability of a measuring instrument (Jackson, 2011). A reliability test was performed to check for internal consistency on the pre-tested questionnaire using the Bland and Altman (1997) alpha score, which states that an alpha score closer to 1 indicates a greater correlation between items and that 0.7 or 0.8 is adequate for most social science applications. The McDonald's Omega estimation for internal consistency was used for the psychological well-being scale and the multifactor leadership scale. Cronbach's alpha was used to estimate the internal consistency of items for the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-3). Cronbach's alpha was employed to assess the internal consistency of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-3), as the scale met the necessary assumptions for its application. These assumptions include unidimensionality, meaning all items measure a single underlying construct; normal distribution of the items, continuity of the data, and uncorrelated error terms. The reliability coefficients obtained for the study instruments were satisfactory: .81 for the PWB Scale (9 items), .79 for the UWES-3, and .89 for the TL Scale (19 items) developed by Bass and Avolio. These values indicate acceptable to high internal consistency across the scales.

Validity of instruments

To clear ambiguities and further refine the research instrument, the questionnaire was pre-tested at the University of Education, Winneba (UEW). This University was used because it has a similar administrative structure and offers the same programmes as the study area. This University is within the geographical area. A critical examination of each item and its meaning is known as pre-testing (Kumar, 2011). Before the pre-testing was done, the instrument was subjected to face and content validity. First, to ensure face validity, the questionnaire was given to colleagues with high research credentials after it had been adapted for relevant comments and suggestions. Second, to ascertain content validity, expert opinion, necessary corrections, and judgment of the supervisors were relied on for approval.

Procedure for Data Collection

An introductory letter was sent to the various departments selected to seek permission to conduct the study. Initial contacts were made, and dates for data collection were fixed. When the time and date were due, the researchers asked for help from some of the academic staff at the respective colleges to call and gather the participants in one place. This is because, at the time of data collection, the senior staff members were on strike. The researchers provided a brief overview of the importance of the research to the participants and the teachers who helped

me distribute questionnaires and supervise participants. Participants involved were motivated to ensure their full participation and attention. The participants took approximately 25 to 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The data collection process took about two weeks.

Ethical Considerations

To ensure adherence to ethical protocols, the study followed established guidelines on informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and data protection as recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2018). Participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw at any time, and the measures in place to protect their identities. All responses were anonymised and stored securely to prevent unauthorised access. In line with standard research ethics, the collected data will be retained for six months after publication to allow for verification if necessary and will then be permanently deleted to safeguard participants' privacy (Israel & Hay, 2006). These measures ensured that the study met ethical standards required for social science research and protected the rights and well-being of all participants.

Data Analysis

Descriptive and statistical methods were used to analyse the data that was collected. SPSS version 25 and JASP software were used in analysing the data. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was used in analysing data for research objectives one and two. PROCESS by Hayes was used to analyse the mediating role of EPW on the relationship between TL and EWE among administrative staff.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among Key Variables (N = 104)

Variable	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	1	2	3
TL	2.88	0.81	1.98	3.53	—		
PWB	3.01	0.63	1.32	3.22	.42**	—	
WE	2.99	0.71	1.03	1.61	.56**	.68**	—

M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; Correlations are Pearson coefficients. ** $p < .01$ (2-tailed).

Table 1 presents results on the descriptive statistics and correlations among TL, PWB, and WE with a sample of 104 participants. The results show that the mean scores for the variables were moderately high: TL (M = 2.88, SD = 0.81), PWB (M = 3.01, SD = 0.63), and WE (M = 2.99, SD = 0.71). Regarding the correlation analysis TL was moderately correlated with PWB ($r = .42$, $p < .01$) and more strongly correlated with WE ($r = .56$, $p < .01$). Additionally, PWB had a strong positive correlation with WE ($r = .68$, $p < .01$). In terms of distribution, the skewness and kurtosis statistics provide insight into the shape of the data. All variables exhibited positive skewness, indicating higher concentrated responses. Specifically, TL (skewness = 1.98), PWB (skewness = 1.32), and WE (skewness = 1.03).

When Leadership Transforms, Engagement Follows: The Mediating Role of Psychological Well-Being Among Administrative Staff in Ghanaian Higher Education

The mediating role of PWB on the relationship between TL and WE among administrative staff.

The study further examined the mediating role of EPW on the relationship between TL and EWE among administrative staff. The mediator variable is PWB, the predictor variable is TL, and the criterion variable is EWE. A regression-based mediation analysis was performed to establish whether PWB explains the relationship between TL and WE among administrative staff. Table 4 presents the details of the mediation analysis.

Table 2: Total, Direct, and Indirect Effect of X on Y

Indicators	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Total effect of X on Y	1.337	.071	1.197	1.478
Direct effect of X on Y	.782	.056	.672	.892
Indirect effect(s) of X on Y	.556	.131	.348	.830
Partially standardised indirect effect(s) of X on Y	.060	.015	.036	.090
Completely standardised indirect effect(s) of X on Y	.307	.051	.219	.412

X- Transformational Leadership; Y- Work Engagement; Mediator- Employee Psychological Wellbeing.

As presented in Table 2, results found a positive and significant total effect of PWB on WE, $B = 1.337$, $BootSE = .071$, $BootCI(1.197, 1.478)$. The results also found a positive and significant direct effect of TL on WE among administrative staff, $B = .782$, $BootSE = .056$, $BootCI(.672, .892)$. Most importantly, the results showed a significant positive mediation effect of PWB in the relationship between TL and EWE, $B = .556$, $BootSE = .131$, $BootCI(.348, .830)$.

Discussions

The study found moderately high levels of TL, PWB, and WE. This implies that, on average, employees perceive a fair level of leadership support, feel psychologically well, and are somewhat engaged at work. However, because the study consisted of participants from different departments within the university, there was a need to get insight into the shape of the data. The skewness and kurtosis statistics provided an understanding of the shape of the data. All three variables exhibited positive skewness, indicating that responses were concentrated more on the higher end of the scale. Given the data, it is imperative to state that most staff gave favourable ratings on these variables, but with a noticeable tail toward lower responses. The kurtosis values suggest that many respondents provided similar high ratings, with fewer extreme values. In the researchers' view, the patterns in skewness and kurtosis are relevant to this study because they show that staff members consistently experience high levels of supportive leadership and positive workplace experiences. However, the higher kurtosis for transformational leadership and psychological well-being also suggests a clustering of responses, which could mean that most employees have similar perceptions in these areas despite differences in departments. This reflects a common leadership approach (TL) or

workplace culture in the studied organisation. Overall, the data support the conclusion that TL is linked to better employee outcomes, and the shape of the data confirms that these experiences are widely shared among participants (Kark, Van Dijk, & Vashdi, 2018; Kim & Cruz, 2022; Puni, Mohammed, & Asamoah, 2018).

Moreover, a moderately significant positive correlation was found among all the variables. A link between leadership in general and the well-being of employees has been identified by diverse studies (Liyanage, 2020; Van De Voorde et al., 2012; Arnold et al., 2007; Grant et al., 2007). There is a need for leaders to create an enabling milieu for employee participation in decision-making (Parker et al., 2015). Wu (2017) concurred that a surge in EE increases employee commitment in an organisation. Similarly, Wray (2016) posited that a leader's ability to involve employees increases WE. This suggests that leaders must be supportive and take a genuine interest in knowing employee engagement requirements (Bolarinwa, 2015). Bolarinwa (2015) concluded that the three psychological conditions leaders need to engage employees are meaningfulness, safety, and availability of resources. Holstad et al. (2014) explained the said relationship by asserting that first, transformational leaders use individualised consideration, characterised by showing empathy towards employees. According to Kelloway et al. (2012), through intellectual stimulation, transformational leaders enhance employees' confidence and self. Transformational leadership inspire followers to contribute to their organisation and the community. According to Pearce and Conger (2003), TL encourages and develops employees intellectually and artistically while incorporating employee care as a crucial component of the company's goal. This leadership style extends beyond rewards for achievement. According to Trofino (2000), who makes a similar claim, transformational leaders establish a clear vision for their organisation. A study by Hayati, Charkhabi, and Naami (2017) revealed that TL significantly and positively impacts WE and its facets (Popli & Rizvi, 2016; Popli & Rizvi, 2017). It was additionally found that TL transfers their high power and enthusiasm to their subordinates by way of modelling (Shepperd et al. 2018). Several studies have posited that TL behaviours facilitate trust and integrity, contributing to organisational success, career advancement opportunities, etc. (Blomme et al., 2018; Liu & Zhang, 2017). In the hospital sector in Sri Lanka, Thisera and. Sewwandi (2018) revealed that each of the dimensions of TL influences the WE of health practitioners (Evelyn & Elegwa, 2020).

Overall, the study findings revealed a statistically significant mediation effect of PWB in the relationship between TL and WE. The result suggests that for PWB to explain the variances in WE, TL plays a critical role. It is important to mention that the absence of PWB or low PWB would jeopardise the relationship between TL and WE. First, the findings from the mediation analysis showed that TL has a positive effect on PWB, which in turn leads to greater WE (Dai et al., 2020; Ghadi et al., 2013). In the researchers' view, transformational leaders are those who inspire their staff, show concern for individual needs, and encourage creativity and personal growth. At the University of Cape Coast (UCC), senior staff members who reported working under such leaders may feel more valued, supported, and respected. For instance, a department head who regularly checks in with staff, offers guidance on challenges, and appreciates senior staff efforts can make them feel mentally and emotionally healthier (Zhu et al., 2009).

When Leadership Transforms, Engagement Follows: The Mediating Role of Psychological Well-Being Among Administrative Staff in Ghanaian Higher Education

Secondly, TL and WE are not only directly related but are significantly influenced by PWB. This means that when leaders treat employees well, it boosts their mental health, which then increases their willingness to commit and contribute to their work (Meng et al., 2020). When the leader listens and acts on these suggestions, the staff member feels recognised and mentally refreshed, which increases their dedication and involvement at work. This finding supports existing research, such as that of Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), who argue that psychological well-being is a key factor in driving WE (Nurtjahjani et al., 2022).

From the researchers' perspectives, PWB, which acts as a bridge between good leadership and engaged work behaviour, should ensure that leaders do more than just assigning tasks; they need to ensure that their staff feel emotionally safe and mentally supported. For instance, a staff member who receives emotional support during a family crisis may feel more loyal to their department and motivated to work hard once they return. This shows that caring leadership not only solves short-term problems but also builds long-term commitment and productivity among staff. The findings suggest that leaders could be trained on how to give constructive feedback, recognise individual strengths, and create inclusive team environments.

The study findings are consistent with extant literature (Ghadi et al., 2017; Kara et al., 2019; Manu & Sinosh, 2020; Marwan et al., 2022). For example, Ghadi et al. (2017) explored the mediating role of PWB in the public sector, confirming its influence in enhancing employee outcomes under TL. Kara et al. (2019) focused on the hospitality industry, highlighting how leaders who demonstrate transformational qualities positively impact the psychological state and engagement of service employees. Manu and Sinosh (2020) conducted their study in the higher education sector, aligning closely with the current context, and found that psychological well-being was essential in translating leadership behaviours into higher levels of staff engagement. Similarly, Marwan et al. (2022) and Nurtjahjani et al. (2021) examined health and corporate settings, respectively, further reinforcing the idea that psychological well-being consistently serves as a key psychological mechanism through which transformational leadership promotes WE. The convergence of evidence from such varied sectors emphasises the robustness of the mediating role of PWB and affirms its importance in the leadership-engagement dynamic.

The findings of the current study connect to the theory of leader-member exchange quality. This is because a leader's behaviour toward followers reflects how dependable, devoted, and supportive the leader is to followers, which influences the quality of the relationships either positively or negatively. The implication is that high-quality interactive participants may therefore perceive their leaders as more transformational, and less harsh and degrading (Liyanage, 2020; Verbraak, 2014; Walumbwa et al., 2011). Low-quality interactive participants may therefore perceive their leaders as less transformational, harsher and degrading. It can be said that when leaders are more transformational, they provide chances for growth, mentoring, and other benefits to staff members. When a leader provides such resources, followers are motivated to return the favour by exhibiting traits like high employee PWB and employee WE.

Conclusion

The present study makes several practical and theoretical contributions to the body of literature on organisational leadership and behaviours within higher education institutions, particularly in the Ghanaian context. Firstly, the study explored the relationship between TL, PWB, and work WE among senior administrative staff at the University of Cape Coast (UCC). Specifically, the research examined the mediating influence of PWB on the association between TL and WE, a dimension that has received limited attention in previous studies. While earlier research has highlighted the positive impact of TL on employees' engagement at work, the present study extends this knowledge by positioning PWB as a critical intervening variable. The study addresses a significant gap in the literature and provides a deeper understanding of how leaders can influence engagement outcomes through the psychological wellness of employees.

Secondly, practical implications emerge from the findings. University administrators and departmental heads should prioritise coaching, mentoring, and inspiring their staff as key leadership practices. These actions can stimulate increased motivation and discretionary effort among staff members, ultimately contributing to the institution's strategic goals. Given that the study found a moderately strong and statistically significant positive correlation between TL and WE, it is recommended that transformational leadership practices be consistently adopted and reinforced across all administrative levels. Additionally, the evidence of a significant mediating effect of PWB suggests that leaders aiming to enhance employee engagement should not overlook the psychological dimensions of their workforce. Efforts to build self-efficacy, promote work-life balance through targeted workshops, and foster a sense of accountability among staff are essential strategies that can drive both employee satisfaction and organisational performance.

Thirdly, the study reinforces the notion that TL behaviours are not only impactful but also teachable. As such, the findings should be integrated into professional development and leadership training programmes at departmental levels. This is because enhancing leaders' capacity to adopt transformational behaviours will likely yield long-term benefits in terms of employee motivation and engagement. Lastly, the results of this study offer empirical support for the (LMX) theory. According to this theory, managers who cultivate high-quality relationships with their subordinates, characterised by mutual respect, trust, and support, tend to elicit positive reciprocal behaviours. When leadership provides opportunities for growth, mentoring, and emotional support, staff members are more inclined to respond with increased loyalty, voluntary effort, and heightened engagement with their work responsibilities. Despite these contributions, the study is not without limitations. The use of an explanatory research design may constrain the ability to establish causality among the studied variables. Moreover, a response rate of 49% was recorded during the data collection phase, which raises concerns regarding the potential for non-response bias and the generalisability of the findings. Therefore, future research may benefit from employing longitudinal or mixed-method designs and improving participant response rates to enhance the robustness and external validity of the results.

When Leadership Transforms, Engagement Follows: The Mediating Role of Psychological Well-Being Among Administrative Staff in Ghanaian Higher Education

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for this article's research, authorship, and/or publication.

Data availability

Anonymised data is available upon reasonable request through the corresponding author.

References

- Agyemang, C. B., & Ofei, S. B. (2013). Employee work engagement and organisational commitment: a comparative study of private and public sector organisations in Ghana. *Eur J Bus Innov Res*, 1(4):20–33.
- Akdere, M. (2006). Improving the quality of work-life implications for human resources. *Business Review (Cambridge)*, 6(1), 173-173.
- Arnold, K. A., Turner, N., Barling, J., Kelloway, E. K., & McKee, M. C. (2007). Transformational leadership and psychological well-being: The mediating role of meaningful work. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 12(3), 193-203.
- Babbie, E. R. (2016). *The practice of social research* (14th ed.). Cengage Learning, Belmont
- Baffour-Awuah, E., & Agyei, S. K. (2020). Effects of transformational and transactional leadership styles on job satisfaction: The Case of Cape Coast Technical University. *International Journal of Education and Evaluation*, 6(4), 9-24.
- Bass, B. M. and Avolio, B. J. 1997. Full range leadership development: Manual for the multifactor leadership questionnaire, CA, Mind Garden.
- Bass, B.M. (1985). *Leadership and performance beyond expectations*, Free Press, New York, NY.
- Bland, J. M., & Altman, D. G. (1997). Statistics notes: Cronbach's alpha. *BMJ*, 314(7080), 572.
- Blomme, J. R. B. (2018). *Positive Coworker Exchanges*. In Turner de Tormes Eby, L., Allen, T.D. (eds.) *Personal Relationships. The Effect on Employee Attitudes, Behaviour and Well-being*. Routledge, New York, 107-130.
- Bolarinwa, K. A. E. (2015). Identities, intentionality and institutional fit: Perceptions of senior women administrators at liberal arts colleges in the Upper Midwestern USA. *Journal of Higher Education Research & Development*, 33(1), 100-113.
- Cloete, N., Maassen, P., & Bailey, T. (Eds.). (2015). *Knowledge Production and Contradictory Functions in African Higher Education*. Cape Town: African Minds.
- Dai, Y. D., Zhuang, W. L., Lu, S. C., & Huan, T. C. (2021). Work engagement or job burnout? Psychological ownership amongst the employees of international tourist hotels. *Tourism Review*, 76(6), 1243-1259.

- Decuyper, A., & Schaufeli, W. (2020). Leadership and work engagement: Exploring explanatory mechanisms. *German Journal of Human Resource Management*, 34(1), 69-95.
- Duarte, A. P., Ribeiro, N., Gomes, D., & Hernandez, D. (2015). The role of leadership in employee motivation. *Journal of Human Resource Management*, 3(2), 1-20.
- Dulac, W. B. (2008). The Elley-Irving socio-economic index, 1981 census revision. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 20(2), 115-128.
- Evelyn, T. A., & Elegwa, J. E. (2020). Five-factor model of personality and transformational leadership. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 85(5), 751-765.
- Ghadi, M. Y., Fernando, M., & Caputi, P. (2017). Transformational leadership and work engagement: The mediating effect of meaning in work. *Leadership & Organisation Development Journal*, 34(6), 532-550.
- Ghadi, M.Y., Fernando, M., & Caputi, P. (2013). Transformational leadership and work engagement: The mediating effect of meaning in work. *Leadership & Organisation Development Journal*, 34(6), 532-550.
- Giorgi, G.; Arcangeli, G.; Perminiene, M.; Lorini, C.; Ariza-Montes, A.; Fiz-Perez, J.; Di Fabio, A.; Mucci, N. (2017). Work-Related Stress in the Banking Sector: A Review of Incidence, Correlated Factors, and Major Consequences. *Front. Psychol.* 8, 2166.
- Grant, L. W., Christianson, B., Price, H. (2007). Toward a theory of spiritual leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 14(6), 693-727.
- Harrell-Cook, G., Levitt, K., & Grimm, J. (2017). From engagement to commitment: A new perspective on the employee attitude-firm performance relationship. *International Journal of Leadership Journal*, 9(1), 3-29.
- Hayati, D., Charkhabi, M., & Naami, A. Z. (2017). The relationship between transformational leadership and work engagement in governmental hospital nurses: A survey study. *Springer Plus*, 3(25), 3-25.
- Holstad, T. J., Korek, S., Rigotti, T., & Mohr, G. (2014). The relation between transformational leadership and follower emotional strain: The moderating role of professional ambition. *Leadership*, 10(3), 269-288.
- Huertas-Valdivia, I., Llorens-Montes, F. J., & Ruiz-Moreno, A. (2018). Achieving engagement among hospitality employees: A serial mediation model. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 30(1), 217-241.
- Hunter, E.M., Neubert, M.J., Perry, S.J., Witt, L.A., Penney, L.M., Weinberger, E. 2013. Servant leaders inspire servant followers: Antecedents and outcomes for employees and the organisation. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 24, 316-331.
- Israel, M., & Hay, I. (2006). *Research Ethics for Social Scientists*. SAGE Publications.
- Issahaku, J., Nkyi, R. S., & Dramanu, W. C. (2020). *Leadership trapeze: Strategies for leadership in team-based organisations*. Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Yukl, G. A. (1994). *Leadership in Organisation*. Englewood
- Jackson, S. E., & Schuler, R. S. (2011). *Managing Human Resources*. Cengage Learning.

When Leadership Transforms, Engagement Follows: The Mediating Role of Psychological Well-Being Among Administrative Staff in Ghanaian Higher Education

- Jiang, W., Zhao, X., & Ni, J. (2017). The impact of transformational leadership on employee sustainable performance: The mediating role of organisational citizenship behaviour. *Sustainability*, 9(9), 1567.
- Kara, A. (2019). Employee engagement in the U.S. was stagnant in 2015. *Gallup Management Journal Online*, 5(1), 1–5.
- Kark, R., Van Dijk, D., & Vashdi, D. R. (2018). Motivated or demotivated to be creative: The role of self-regulatory focus in transformational and transactional leadership processes. *Applied Psychology*, 67(1), 186-224.
- Keloway, E. K., Turner, N., Barling, J., & Loughlin, C. (2012). Transformational leadership and employee psychological well-being: The mediating role of employee trust in leadership work and stress. *An International Journal of Work, Health & Organisations*, 26, 39-55.
- Kim, H. D.; Cruz, A. B.(2022). Transformational Leadership and Psychological Well-Being of Service-Oriented Staff: Hybrid Data Synthesis Technique. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health*, 19, 8189. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph 19138189>.
- Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D.W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 30(3): 607-610.
- Kuenzi, E., & Schminke, L. (2019). Leadership style, organisational culture and performance: Empirical evidence from UK companies. *International Journal of Human Resources Management*, 11(4), 766–788.
- Kumar, R. (2011). *Research Methodology: A Step-by-Step Guide for Beginners* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Li, J., & Yuan, B. (2017). Both angel and devil: The suppressing effect of transformational leadership on proactive employee's career satisfaction. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 65, 59-70.
- Liden, R. C., & Maslyn, J. M. (1998). Multidimensionality of leader-member exchange: An empirical assessment through scale development. *Journal of Management*, 24(1), 43-72.
- Liden, R. M. & Graen, D. A. (1980), "The moderator-mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations". *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51(6), pp. 1173-1182.
- Liu, J., & Zhang, Y. (2017, April). Attention modelling for targeted sentiment. In *Proceedings of the 15th Conference of the European Chapter of the Association for Computational Linguistics: Volume 2, Short Papers* (pp. 572-577).
- Liu, Y., & Liu, J. (2021). The influence of transformational leadership on employee creativity: The mediating role of psychological empowerment and the moderating role of knowledge sharing. *Journal of Business Research*, 130, 113-125.
- Liyanage, F. J. (2020). *Indirect leadership*. Transformational leadership at a distance (pp. 26–47).
- Lord, R. G., Day, D. V., Zaccaro, S. J., Avolio, B. J., Eagly, A. H. (2017). Leadership in applied psychology: Three waves of theory and research. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 102(3), 434-451.

- Manoppo, J. (2021). The influence of transformational leadership on employee performance. *Journal of Business and Management*, 23(4), 45-52.
- Manu, B., & Sinosh, A. M. (2020). Employee Engagement and Leadership. *Human Resource Development Review*, 11(2), 156–181.
- Marwan, A., Suriyanti, S., & Wahyudi, W. (2022). The effect of transformational leadership on organisational commitment and job satisfaction: Evidence from higher education in Indonesia. *Journal of Educational Management*, 18(2), 234-245.
- Meng, F., Wang, Y., Xu, W., Ye, J., Peng, L., & Gao, P. (2020). The diminishing effect of transformational leadership on the relationship between task characteristics, perceived meaningfulness, and work engagement. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 585031.
- Neuman, W. L., & Robson, K. (2018). *Basics of social research: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (3rd ed.). Pearson Education.
- Nurtjahjani, F., Batilmurik, R. W., & Pribadi, J. D. (2021). The influence of transformational leadership style on work engagement, remuneration dimediation and educator motivation. *Jurnal Aplikasi Manajemen*, 19(1), 11-22.
- Nurtjahjani, F., Batilmurik, R. W., Puspita, A. F., & Fanggidae, J. P. (2022). The relationship between transformational leadership and work engagement. Moderated mediation roles of psychological ownership and belief in a just world. *Organisation Management Journal*, 19(2), 47-59.
- Parker, A. M., Amidu, M., & Abor, J. Y. (2015). The effects of revenue diversification and cross-border banking on risk and return of banks in Africa. *Research in International Business and Finance*, 40, 1-18.
- Pearce, C. L., & Conger, J. A. (2003). All those years ago. *Shared leadership: Reframing the hows and whys of leadership*, 1-18.
- Popli, S., & Rizvi, I. A. (2016). Exploring the relationship between service orientation, employee engagement and perceived leadership style: A study of managers in the private service sector organisations in India. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 29(1), 59–70.
- Popli, S., & Rizvi, I. A. (2017). Leadership style and service orientation: the catalytic role of employee engagement. *Journal of Service Theory and Practice*, 27(1), 292-310.
- Posadzińska, I., Słupska, U., Karaszewski, R. 2020. The Attitudes and Actions of the Superior and the Participative Management Style. *European Research Studies Journal*, 23(S1), 479-492.
- Puni, A., Mohammed, I., & Asamoah, E. (2018). Transformational leadership and job satisfaction: The moderating effect of contingent reward. *Leadership & Organisation Development Journal*, 39(4), 522-537.
- Saks A. M. (2019). Antecedents and consequences of employee engagement revisited. *J Organ Eff*. 6:19 38. doi:10.1108/joepp-06-2018-0034
- Schaufeli W, Shimazu A, Hakanen J, Salanovam M, De Witte, H. (2017). An ultra-short measure for work engagement: the UWES-3 validation across five countries. *Eur J Psychol Assess*. 35(4):577–591.

When Leadership Transforms, Engagement Follows: The Mediating Role of Psychological Well-Being Among Administrative Staff in Ghanaian Higher Education

- Schaufeli, W. B., & Bakker, A. B. (2004). Job demands, job resources, and their relationship with burnout and engagement: A multi-sample study. *Journal of Organizational Behavior: The International Journal of Industrial, Occupational and Organizational Psychology and Behavior*, 25(3), 293-315.
- Schneider, T. (2015). *The Skipper Effect in the Icelandic Herring Industry*. Reykjavik: University of Iceland.
- Shepperd, B. Z. (2018). An investigation into the leadership practices of volunteer leaders. *Leadership & Organisation Development Journal*, 36(7), 885-898.
- Skakon, J.; Nielsen, K.; Borg, V.; Guzman, J. (2010). Are Leaders' Well-Being, Behaviours and Style Associated with the Affective Well-Being of Their Employees? A Systematic Review of Three Decades of Research. *Work Stress*, 24, 107–139.
- Telef, B. B. (2013). The positive and negative affect schedule (PANAS): Validity and reliability study of the Turkish version. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, 13(2), 1301-1306.
- Thisera, T. J. R., & Sewwandi, E. P. I. (2018). Transformational leadership and employee engagement in the hospitality sector in Sri Lanka. *Global Journal of Management and Business Research*, 18(12), 27-33.
- Thisera, T., & Sewwandi, K. (2020). Impact of transformational leadership on employee engagement in Sri Lankan universities. *Journal of Management Research*, 22(3), 145-158.
- Trofino, A. M. (2000). Antecedents and consequences of employee engagement. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 21(7), 600- 619.
- University of Cape Coast. (2023). Human Resource Office Annual Report 2023. University of Cape Coast Publications.
- Van De Voorde, K., Paauwe, J., & Van Veldhoven, M. (2012). Employee well-being and the HRM-organisational performance relationship: A review of quantitative studies. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 14(4), 391-407
- Verbraak, G. M. (2014). Psychological empowerment in the workplace: dimensions, measurement, and validation. *Academy of Management Journal*, 18(5), 1442-1465.
- Walumbwa, F. O., Avolio, B. J., Gardner, W. L., Wernsing, T. S., & Peterson, S. J. (2011). Authentic leadership: Development and validation of a theory-based measure. *Journal of Management*, 34(1), 89-126.
- Wray, L. (2016). *Research Methods in Education*. Routledge.
- Wu, P. U. (2017). Influence of autocratic leadership style on the job performance of academic librarians in Benue State. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 4(7), 148- 152.
- Zhu, J. (2009). *Quantitative models for performance evaluation and benchmarking: data envelopment analysis with spreadsheets* (Vol. 2). New York: Springer.