



Exploring the influence of leadership styles on employee motivation in selected public sector organizations in Botswana

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Abstract

Purpose: The study investigates the influence of leadership styles on employee motivation in selected public sector organizations in Botswana. It specifically explored how different leadership approaches, practices, and behaviors affect motivation, engagement, job satisfaction, and overall performance.

Methodology/Design: A qualitative research design was employed, involving in-depth interviews with 30 employees across selected public sector institutions. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and insights related to leadership influence on motivation, engagement, and satisfaction.

Findings: Results indicated that transformational and inclusive leadership practices significantly enhanced employee motivation and commitment. Inspirational and participative leadership increased engagement, while rule-focused leadership limited intrinsic motivation. Supportive behaviors, fair treatment, recognition, empowerment, and continuous guidance were identified as key strategies for improving job satisfaction and performance.

Implications: The study provides practical guidance for public sector managers and policymakers in Botswana to adopt leadership practices that inspire, involve, and support employees. Implementing strategies such as recognition, empowerment, and participative decision-making can strengthen motivation, engagement, and overall organizational effectiveness.

Originality/Value: The study contributes to the literature on leadership and employee motivation in African public sector settings. The integration of Transformational Leadership Theory, Path-Goal Theory, and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory offers a comprehensive understanding of how leadership behaviors influence employee outcomes in Botswana's public institutions.

Keywords: Leadership styles, employee motivation, public sector, job satisfaction, transformational leadership, Botswana

Introduction

Leadership plays a central role in shaping employee motivation, commitment, and overall organizational performance. In public sector organizations, leaders not only make decisions and allocate resources but also influence how employees perceive their roles and responsibilities. Leadership style refers to the approach a leader uses to guide, support, and interacts with staff. Common styles include transformational, transactional, and democratic leadership, each affecting employee motivation in different ways (Northouse, 2021) [34]. Transformational leaders, for instance, inspire employees by articulating a clear vision and recognizing individual contributions, whereas transactional leaders focus on rewards and punishments to drive performance (Bass & Riggio, 2019) [6].

In Botswana, public sector organizations provide critical services such as education, healthcare, and civil administration. Employees in these organizations often work under strict procedures, limited resources, and high workloads. The effectiveness of leadership in such settings can greatly affect employee motivation and service delivery. Studies in other African countries suggest that participative and supportive leadership increases motivation, morale, and job satisfaction (Mensah & Tawiah, 2024) [32]. However, research specifically examining how leadership styles influence motivation in Botswana's public sector remains limited (Makambe & Moeng, 2020) [28]. Understanding these dynamics is essential for improving public service outcomes and fostering a motivated workforce.

Problem Statement

In spite of the critical role of leadership, many public sector organizations in Botswana report challenges with employee

motivation. Employees often feel disengaged, underappreciated, or excluded from decision-making, which can reduce their commitment and productivity (Masale, Barkhuizen, & Schutte, 2021) [30]. Leadership practices that fail to address employee needs, provide recognition, or encourage participation may contribute to low morale, absenteeism, and turnover.

Existing studies in Botswana have largely focused on general human resource practices or leadership in private firms, leaving a gap in understanding the specific relationship between leadership styles and employee motivation in public organizations (Makambe & Moeng, 2020) [28]. Without detailed, qualitative insights, managers may struggle to develop leadership strategies that genuinely inspire staff, and policymakers may find it difficult to design interventions that improve motivation across the public sector.

Significance of the Study

The study will offer practical insights for public sector managers in Botswana by showing how leadership styles influence employee motivation. Findings can inform leadership training, guide management practices, and improve employee engagement and job satisfaction. A motivated workforce can, in turn, enhance service delivery, efficiency, and organizational performance.

For policymakers, the study provides evidence on the types of leadership approaches that foster motivation in public organizations, helping to refine management policies and leadership development frameworks. Academically, the study fills a gap in the literature on leadership and motivation in Botswana's public sector, offering qualitative

evidence that can support future research. Finally, the study will benefit employees by highlighting leadership behaviors that encourage recognition, participation, and a supportive work environment, thereby enhancing overall workplace morale and commitment.

Research Objective

The study explores the influence of leadership styles on employee motivation in selected public sector organizations in Botswana. Specifically, it seeks to:

1. Explore how different leadership styles influence employee motivation in selected public sector organizations in Botswana;
2. Examine the perceptions regarding the effectiveness of leadership practices in enhancing motivation and engagement; and
3. Identify leadership behaviors and strategies that can improve motivation, job satisfaction, and overall performance among public sector staff in Botswana.

Theoretical Underpin

The Transformational Leadership Theory, Path–Goal Theory and the Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory of Motivation underpin the study

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational Leadership Theory explains leadership as a process where leaders inspire and motivate employees to go beyond routine job demands. According to Bass and Riggio (2019) [6], transformational leaders create a shared vision, encourage creativity, and recognize individual contributions. Such leaders also support personal development, which helps employees feel valued and motivated. In public sector organizations in Botswana, this leadership style is relevant because it can improve employee commitment, morale, and willingness to contribute to organizational goals through inspiration and recognition.

Path–Goal Theory

Path–Goal Theory focuses on how leaders help employees achieve work goals by choosing leadership behaviors that fit employee needs and work conditions (House, 1971; Northouse, 2021) [19, 34]. The theory identifies directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented leadership styles as ways leaders can guide and motivate staff. By clarifying tasks, removing obstacles, and providing support, leaders can improve employee motivation and performance. This theory is useful for this study because public sector employees in Botswana often face rigid procedures and resource constraints, which require flexible and supportive leadership.

Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory of Motivation

Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory distinguishes between hygiene factors and motivators in the workplace (Herzberg, 1966; Robbins & Judge, 2021) [17, 40]. Hygiene factors such as salary, supervision, and working conditions prevent dissatisfaction, while motivators such as recognition, responsibility, and achievement promote higher motivation and job satisfaction. This theory supports the study by explaining how leadership behaviors that emphasize recognition, growth, and meaningful work can enhance employee motivation in Botswana’s public sector organizations. These theories provide a clear perspective for

understanding how leadership styles influence employee motivation, attitudes, and performance in selected public sector organizations in Botswana.

Literature Review

Leadership Styles

Leadership styles refer to the patterns of behavior leader’s use to guide, support, and influence employees at work. Evidence from organizational studies showed that leadership approaches that emphasize communication, respect, and employee involvement are more likely to create positive attitudes among staff (Yukl, 2020) [46]. Leaders who engage employees in discussions and provide clear guidance tend to build trust and cooperation, which supports commitment and motivation. On the other hand, leadership styles that are rigid and overly controlling may weaken morale and discourage initiative, particularly in public organizations where employees already operate under strict procedures (Avolio & Gardner, 2021) [4].

Employee Motivation

Employee motivation reflects the level of energy, dedication, and effort employees are willing to invest in their work. Motivation is shaped by factors such as recognition, fairness, supportive supervision, and opportunities to contribute meaningfully to organizational goals. Research shows that employees are more motivated when they feel their efforts are acknowledged and when they experience respectful treatment from management (Kuvaas *et al.*, 2020) [22]. In public sector environments, where salary increases and promotions may be limited, non-financial factors such as appreciation, trust, and positive work relationships play an important role in sustaining motivation (Nguyen, Malik, & Budhwar, 2021) [33].

Public Sector Organizations in Botswana

Public sector organizations in Botswana are central to national development and the delivery of essential services, including health, education, and public administration. These institutions operate within formal structures guided by policies, regulations, and accountability requirements. Employees in the public sector often face challenges such as limited resources, procedural delays, and increasing service demands, which can affect morale and productivity (Sebudubudu & Molutsi, 2020) [42]. Leadership and management practices therefore play a critical role in shaping employee experiences.

Leadership Styles and their Influence on Employee Motivation in Selected Public Sector Organizations in Botswana

Leadership style has a strong effect on how employees feel about their work and how much effort they are willing to give. In public sector organizations, where rigid rules and limited incentives are common, leadership behavior becomes an important source of motivation. Transformational Leadership Theory explains how leaders motivate employees by inspiring them, sharing a clear vision, and supporting personal growth (Bass & Riggio, 2019) [6]. This theory suggests that when leaders act as role models and encourage creativity, employees are more likely to feel motivated and committed to their work. Studies show that transformational leaders who communicate goals clearly and recognize employee

contributions help workers develop a sense of purpose and belonging (Northouse, 2021) ^[34]. In public institutions, where financial rewards are often limited, such non-financial motivation plays a key role in sustaining employee morale. Employees who feel valued and inspired tend to show higher levels of dedication and willingness to go beyond basic job duties.

Other leadership styles, such as transactional leadership, focus more on rules, supervision, and reward–punishment systems. While this approach can help maintain discipline and structure, research suggests it may not support long-term motivation, especially in service-oriented public organizations (Robbins & Judge, 2021) ^[40]. Employees may comply with instructions but lack emotional attachment to their work. Transformational leadership, as explained by the theory, offers a stronger explanation for how leadership styles can positively shape motivation in Botswana’s public sector by focusing on inspiration, trust, and shared goals.

Perceptions Regarding the Effectiveness of Leadership Practices in Enhancing Motivation and Engagement

Employee perceptions of leadership practices strongly influence their motivation and engagement. Path–Goal Theory provides a useful explanation of how leadership effectiveness depends on how employees experience leadership behavior (House, 1971; Northouse, 2021) ^[19, 34]. The theory argues that leaders improve motivation by choosing behaviors that match employee needs and by removing barriers that make work difficult. Employees are more motivated when they believe their leaders are supportive, fair, and helpful.

In public sector organizations, leadership effectiveness is often judged by how leaders communicate, guide, and support staff. Research shows that employees who view their leaders as approachable and responsive are more engaged and motivated at work (Northouse, 2021) ^[34]. Path–Goal Theory highlights leadership behaviors such as supportive and participative leadership, which help employees feel encouraged and involved. These behaviors are important in public institutions where work pressure and bureaucratic systems can reduce motivation.

However, when employees perceive leadership as distant, unfair, or overly directive, motivation tends to decline. Makambe and Moeng (2020) ^[28] report that some public sector employees in Botswana view leadership as bureaucratic and unresponsive, which weakens engagement.

Leadership Behaviors and Strategies that can Improve Motivation, Job Satisfaction, and overall Performance among Public Sector Staff in Botswana

Leadership behaviors play a key role in shaping employee motivation, job satisfaction, and performance. Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory of Motivation explains this by separating workplace factors into hygiene factors and motivators (Herzberg, 1966; Robbins & Judge, 2021) ^[17, 40]. Hygiene factors, such as salary, supervision, and working conditions, help prevent dissatisfaction, while motivators, such as recognition, responsibility, and achievement, actively improve motivation and satisfaction.

Leadership behaviors that focus on motivators are especially important in public sector organizations. Studies show that recognition, empowerment, and opportunities for growth increase employee motivation and performance (Bass & Riggio, 2019) ^[6]. When leaders acknowledge effort and

provide meaningful feedback, employees feel appreciated and more satisfied with their jobs. Herzberg’s theory supports the idea that motivation improves when leaders go beyond basic conditions and focus on personal achievement and recognition.

Empowerment and participative leadership strategies also align with Herzberg’s motivators. Employees who are trusted and involved in decision-making often show higher commitment and better performance (Masale *et al.*, 2021) ^[30]. In Botswana’s public sector, where service delivery depends heavily on employee commitment, leadership strategies that promote recognition, responsibility, and supportive supervision can improve motivation and job satisfaction.

Empirical Review

Lopes and Silva (2022) ^[26] conducted a cross-sectional survey involving 250 public and private sector employees in Benguela Province, Angola. The researchers used structured questionnaires to gather data on leadership practices and employee motivation. Data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis to test relationships. Findings revealed that leaders who communicated clearly, recognized employee contributions, and encouraged skill development were associated with higher employee motivation and job commitment. The study reported that supportive leadership accounted for a significant portion of variation in employee job satisfaction and willingness to exceed basic duties. These results underscore the role of leadership behavior in enhancing motivation in organizational settings (Lopes & Silva, 2022) ^[26].

Similarly, Novák and Svoboda (2024) carried out a mixed-methods study examining leadership and employee motivation in three Czech public institutions. They administered questionnaires to 300 employees and conducted follow-up interviews with 30 workplace leaders. Quantitative data were analyzed using factor analysis and regression techniques, while interviews were thematically analyzed. The study found that leaders who fostered open communication and emphasized employee voice were associated with higher motivation scores among staff. Interview data confirmed that employees valued supportive feedback, opportunities for involvement, and respectful treatment. These results suggest that leadership behavior in Czech public organizations plays a key role in shaping motivation and workplace engagement (Novák & Svoboda, 2024).

Further, Rojas and Pérez (2023) ^[41] conducted a cross-sectional survey of 220 employees across public sector agencies in La Paz and Cochabamba. Participants completed structured questionnaires measuring leadership support, recognition practices, and motivation outcomes. The researchers used hierarchical regression to assess the impact of leadership behaviors on employee motivation. Findings showed that recognition and supportive leader behavior significantly improved employees’ intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction.

Methodology

Philosophical Foundation

This study was grounded in a constructivist philosophical foundation, which assumes that knowledge is subjective and socially constructed, emphasizing the understanding of participants’ experiences and perspectives (Creswell &

Poth, 2018) [13]. The constructivist paradigm guided the exploration of how leadership behaviors influenced employee motivation in public sector organizations in Botswana.

Research Design

A qualitative research design was adopted to enable a detailed examination of leadership practices and their effects on employee motivation. The qualitative approach allowed for the collection of rich, descriptive data, capturing the nuances of employee experiences and perceptions (Patton, 2015) [39]. This design was suitable because it facilitated an in-depth understanding of the social and organizational contexts in which leadership behaviors affected motivation.

Population, Sampling Technique and Sample

The target population consisted of employees from selected public sector organizations in Botswana who had direct experience with leadership practices. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 30 participants, including supervisors and junior staff. This small, focused sample ensured that participants had relevant experience and could provide meaningful insights into leadership practices and motivation (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016) [15].

Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which provided the flexibility to explore participants' experiences while maintaining consistency across all interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Questions centered on leadership behaviors, communication, recognition, and factors affecting employee motivation. All interviews were conducted face-to-face, lasted 30–45 minutes, and were audio-recorded with participants' consent.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data, involving transcription, coding, and identification of patterns and themes related to leadership practices and employee motivation (Braun & Clarke, 2006) [8]. Emerging themes were compared across participants to generate meaningful insights. The analysis was iterative, allowing for refinement of codes and categories to reflect participants' experiences accurately.

Trustworthiness, Validity, and Reliability

To ensure trustworthiness, the study applied strategies such as member checking, where participants reviewed transcripts to confirm accuracy, and peer debriefing, where colleagues reviewed coding and thematic analysis to ensure consistency (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) [23]. Credibility was enhanced by prolonged engagement with participants and detailed field notes, while transferability was supported through rich descriptions of the research context and participants' experiences. Validity was ensured by developing a structured interview guide aligned with the research objectives and by triangulating data from multiple participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018) [13]. Reliability was addressed by using consistent data collection procedures, clear documentation of the coding process, and repeated review of transcripts to ensure the themes accurately reflected the data.

Participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, their voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001). Informed consent was obtained in writing before interviews. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained

by assigning codes to participants and securely storing data. The researcher ensured that participants' responses were reported objectively and without identifying information.

Results

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Understanding the demographic characteristics of the participants provides context for interpreting the findings of this study. The demographic information collected included gender, age, educational level, and years of work experience. This information helps to understand the diversity of the participants and their perspectives on leadership practices and employee motivation.

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the thirty participants who took part in the study. The demographic information provides useful background for understanding participants' views on leadership practices and employee motivation in public sector organizations.

In terms of gender, the findings show that 18 respondents (60%) were male, while 12 respondents (40%) were female. This distribution suggests a slightly male-dominated workforce, which is common in many public sector institutions across Africa. Similar patterns were reported in Angola, where Lopes and Silva (2022) [26] found that male employees formed the majority of respondents in public sector leadership and motivation studies. This gender composition may influence how leadership practices are experienced and interpreted at different levels of the organization.

Regarding age, most respondents fell within the 30–39 years group (40%), which is followed by those aged 20–29 years (26.7%). Smaller proportions were recorded for the 40–49 years group (20%) and those 50 years and above (13.3%). This indicates that the workforce is largely made up of relatively young and middle-aged employees who are actively engaged in career development. A study conducted in Mali by Traoré and Diallo (2021) [45] similarly reported that employees within the 30–39 age group were more likely to express strong opinions on leadership behavior and motivation due to their active involvement in organizational activities.

With respect to educational qualification, the majority of respondents held a Bachelor's degree (60%), while 20% had a Diploma and another 20% possessed a Master's degree. This suggests that most participants had adequate educational background to understand leadership processes and organizational expectations. Comparable findings were observed in Angola, where higher educational levels were associated with greater awareness of leadership practices and motivational needs (Lopes & Silva, 2022) [26].

Concerning work experience, most respondents had 6–10 years of experience (40%), followed by those with 0–5 years (23.3%). Participants with 11–15 years of experience accounted for 20%, while 16 years and above represented 16.7%. This spread indicates a mix of relatively new and experienced employees, allowing for diverse perspectives. Evidence from Mali also shows that employees with moderate to long work experience tend to provide deeper insights into leadership effectiveness and motivation in public organizations (Traoré & Diallo, 2021) [45]. Evidently, the demographic profile reflects a balanced and informed group of participants whose characteristics are consistent with those reported in similar African public sector studies. This diversity strengthened the credibility of the findings and provided a solid basis for examining leadership practices and employee motivation in the study context.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 30)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	18	60
	Female	12	40
Age (years)	20–29	8	26.7
	30–39	12	40.
	40–49	6	20.
	50 & above	4	13.3
Educational Qualification	Diploma	6	20
	Bachelor’s degree	18	60
	Master’s	6	20
Work Experience (years)	0-5	7	23.3
	6–10	12	40
	11-15	6	20
	16 & above	5	16.7

Source: Field Data, 2026

Trustworthiness, Validity, and Reliability of the Study Results

To ensure that the findings of this study were credible and dependable, specific measures were applied to address trustworthiness, validity, and reliability across all three research objectives. These measures helped to confirm that the results accurately reflected participants’ experiences and that the data were collected and analyzed in a consistent manner.

Table 2 presents an overview of how trustworthiness, validity, and reliability were addressed for each research objective. For Objective 1, credibility was strengthened by engaging participants through in-depth interviews and

allowing them to confirm the accuracy of their responses, while the use of a uniform interview guide supported consistency across all interviews. In relation to Objective 2, trustworthiness was enhanced by comparing responses across participants and reviewing emerging themes, which helped to reduce bias and ensure that the findings reflected shared perceptions of leadership effectiveness. For Objective 3, detailed descriptions of leadership behaviors made it possible to relate the findings to similar public sector settings, while repeated review of transcripts and themes ensured stable and dependable results. These measures helped ensure that the study findings were sound and reflected participants’ real experiences.

Table 2: Trustworthiness, Validity, and Reliability of Results by Research Objective

Research Objective	Trustworthiness Measures	Validity Measures	Reliability Measures
Objective 1: Explore how different leadership styles influence employee motivation	Credibility was ensured through in-depth interviews and member checking, where participants confirmed the accuracy of their responses. Rich descriptions were used to reflect participants’ experiences.	Interview questions were aligned directly with leadership styles and motivation to ensure the data captured what was intended. Probing questions helped clarify responses.	Consistency was maintained by using the same interview guide for all participants and following the same interview process throughout the study.
Objective 2: Examine perceptions of leadership effectiveness in enhancing motivation and engagement	Participants’ views were compared across interviews to identify common patterns, improving credibility. Peer review of themes helped reduce researcher bias.	Validity was strengthened by focusing questions on lived experiences of leadership practices and perceived effectiveness, ensuring relevance to the objective.	Reliability was supported by careful documentation of interview procedures and consistent coding of responses during analysis.
Objective 3: Identify leadership behaviors and strategies that improve motivation, job satisfaction, and performance	Transferability was enhanced through detailed explanations of leadership behaviors described by participants, allowing comparison with similar public sector contexts.	The findings were validated by linking leadership behaviors directly to reported motivation and job satisfaction outcomes.	Reliability was ensured through repeated review of transcripts and themes to confirm stability and consistency of findings.

Source: Field Data, 2026

Objective One: To explore how different leadership styles influence employee motivation in selected public sector organizations in Botswana

This objective explored how employees experienced different leadership styles in their workplaces and how these styles shaped their motivation. Analysis of the interviews revealed that leadership style strongly affected how employees felt about their work, commitment, and willingness to go beyond basic duties.

Theme 1: Inspirational Leadership Increases Motivation

Many participants explained that leaders who encouraged them, shared clear direction, and showed confidence in staff abilities made them feel motivated. Employees felt energized when leaders trusted them and spoke positively about their work. One participant stated:

“When my supervisor encourages us and appreciates our effort, I feel motivated to work harder even when conditions

are difficult.” Such leadership created enthusiasm and a sense of purpose.

Theme 2: Rule-focused Leadership Limits Motivation

Some respondents described leadership that focused mainly on rules, targets, and discipline. While this approach ensured order, it often reduced motivation. Employees felt they were working only to meet minimum requirements. As one participant noted:

“We follow instructions because we have to, not because we feel inspired.” This style led to compliance rather than genuine commitment.

Theme 3: Inclusive Leadership Builds Ownership

Participants highlighted that leaders who involved staff in discussions and decisions improved motivation. Being consulted made employees feel valued. One respondent shared:

“When our ideas are considered, we feel part of the organization, and it pushes us to give our best.” This approach strengthened motivation and teamwork.

Objective Two: To examine the perceptions regarding the effectiveness of leadership practices in enhancing motivation and engagement

This objective focused on how employees viewed leadership practices and whether these practices supported motivation and engagement. The findings showed that employee perceptions were shaped mainly by daily interactions with leaders.

Theme 1: Supportive Leadership Strengthens Engagement

Employees perceived leadership as effective when leaders were approachable and willing to listen. Supportive actions such as guidance and understanding personal challenges improved engagement. One participant explained:

“My manager listens when we have challenges, and that makes me feel committed to my work.”

Theme 2: Poor Communication Reduces

Motivation Several participants expressed frustration with leaders who communicated poorly or only gave instructions without explanation. This created distance between managers and staff. A respondent remarked:

“Sometimes decisions are made without explaining why, and it makes us feel ignored.” Such perceptions weakened motivation.

Theme 3: Fair Treatment Improves Trust

Employees viewed leadership as effective when leaders treated staff fairly and consistently. Fairness increased trust and engagement. One participant stated:

“When everyone is treated equally, we feel motivated to contribute.” Perceived unfairness, on the other hand, led to disengagement.

Objective Three: To identify leadership behaviors and strategies that can improve motivation, job satisfaction, and overall performance among public sector staff in Botswana

This objective examined specific leadership actions that employees believed could improve motivation, satisfaction, and performance. Participants clearly identified behaviors that made a positive difference in their work lives.

Theme 1: Recognition and Appreciation Boost Morale

Most participants emphasized the importance of recognition. Simple actions such as verbal praise or acknowledgment increased motivation and satisfaction. One respondent said:

“Even a simple thank you from my supervisor makes me feel valued.”

Theme 2: Empowerment Encourages Performance

Employees reported higher motivation when leaders trusted them with responsibility and allowed independence. Empowerment made staff feel confident and capable. A participant noted:

“When I am trusted to handle my work, I feel proud and perform better.”

Theme 3: Continuous Support Improves Job Satisfaction

Support through training, feedback, and understanding personal needs was seen as vital. Participants felt that

supportive leaders created a positive work environment. One employee explained:

“Leaders who guide us and support our growth make the job enjoyable.”

These findings show that leadership style, daily leadership practices, and specific behaviors all play an important role in shaping employee motivation, engagement, and performance in Botswana’s public sector organizations.

Discussion of Findings

Objective One: To explore how different leadership styles influenced employee motivation in selected public sector organizations in Botswana.

The findings revealed that leadership style had a significant impact on employees’ willingness to engage, their commitment, and their motivation to perform beyond minimum expectations. When interpreted through the lens of Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass & Riggio, 2019) [6], it is evident that leaders who inspire, intellectually stimulate, and recognize employees’ contributions can positively shape motivation and engagement in public sector workplaces.

Inspirational Leadership Increases Motivation

The results showed that employees responded positively to leaders who communicated a clear vision, encouraged them, and expressed confidence in their abilities. Such leaders created enthusiasm, purpose, and a sense of ownership among staff. This aligns with the principles of Transformational Leadership Theory, which emphasizes the role of inspirational motivation in energizing employees and promoting commitment (Bass & Riggio, 2019) [6]. Similar findings have been reported in other contexts. In Ghana, Owusu and Mensah (2022) [37] found that transformational leaders who provided recognition and clear guidance increased employee motivation and engagement in public institutions. In Nigeria, Okeke and Abiola (2021) [36] reported that employees felt more committed when leaders demonstrated confidence in staff capabilities and encouraged innovation. Likewise, a study in Malawi by Chirwa (2020) [12] revealed that leaders who motivated staff through vision-sharing and encouragement enhanced job satisfaction and performance. Even in Spain, Martínez and López (2019) [29] found that transformational leadership behaviors such as providing inspiration and intellectual stimulation significantly boosted employee motivation in public service organizations. These studies reinforce the notion that inspirational leadership can universally increase motivation across diverse cultural and organizational contexts.

Rule-focused Leadership Limits Motivation

The study also highlighted that leadership styles emphasizing strict rules, targets, and discipline often reduced intrinsic motivation. Employees described working mainly to comply with instructions rather than feeling inspired to excel. This finding is consistent with Transactional Leadership Theory, which suggests that transactional or overly rule-oriented leadership, while maintaining order, may not sustain long-term motivation and engagement (Bass & Riggio, 2019). In Ghana, Agyapong *et al.* (2021) [3, 6] observed that public sector employees under rigid, rule-based management exhibited lower morale and were less willing to engage in discretionary tasks. Similarly, Nigerian research by

Adeyemi and Eze (2020) ^[1] found that excessive focus on rules and procedures limited employees' sense of autonomy and motivation. These findings highlight the limitations of a purely transactional approach in encouraging commitment and performance.

Inclusive Leadership Builds Ownership

Lastly, employees reported that participative and inclusive leadership fostered a sense of ownership, increased motivation, and strengthened teamwork. When employees were consulted and involved in decision-making, they felt valued and more willing to contribute. This aligns with Transformational Leadership Theory, which emphasizes individualized consideration, encouraging leaders to attend to employees' needs and involve them in goal-setting (Bass & Riggio, 2019) ^[6]. Supporting evidence comes from Malawi, where Banda (2021) ^[5] found that leaders who encouraged staff participation increased engagement and job satisfaction. In Spain, García and Torres (2020) ^[16] reported that inclusive leadership practices promoted a sense of responsibility and motivation among public sector employees. In Ghana, Mensah and Boateng (2021) ^[3] observed that participative leadership improved collaboration and commitment, demonstrating that inclusion in decision-making positively influences employee motivation.

These findings suggest that transformational leadership practices especially inspirational and inclusive behaviors are critical in enhancing employee motivation in Botswana's public sector, while rule-focused, purely transactional approaches may limit intrinsic motivation.

Objective Two: To explore employees' perceptions of leadership practices and their effectiveness in enhancing motivation and engagement

The results revealed that employees' experiences were shaped largely by how leaders interacted with them daily. When interpreted through the Path-Goal Theory (House, 1971; Northouse, 2021) ^[19, 34], the findings show that effective leaders help remove obstacles, provide guidance, and adjust their behavior to meet employee needs, which ultimately enhances motivation and goal attainment.

Supportive Leadership Strengthens Engagement

The study showed that employees were more engaged when leaders were approachable, listened actively, and provided guidance tailored to individual needs. Supportive leadership behaviors reassured employees, created trust, and encouraged commitment. One participant said, "My manager listens when we have challenges, and that makes me feel committed to my work." This aligns with Path-Goal Theory, which emphasizes the leader's role in providing support to reduce barriers and enhance employee motivation (House, 1971) ^[19]. Similar findings have been reported internationally. In Ireland, O'Connor and Murphy (2020) ^[35] found that supportive supervisors in public sector organizations increased employee engagement and reduced job-related stress. In Singapore, Lim and Tan (2019) ^[24] observed that employees performed better when leaders addressed personal and professional concerns, reinforcing the importance of supportive leadership for motivation.

Poor Communication Reduces Motivation

Participants also highlighted that ineffective communication by leader's diminished motivation and engagement. When leaders gave instructions without explanations or failed to

clarify decisions, employees felt excluded and disconnected. One respondent remarked, "Sometimes decisions are made without explaining why, and it makes us feel ignored." According to Path-Goal Theory, such a lack of guidance represents a failure to clarify paths to goal achievement, which can reduce employee motivation (Northouse, 2021) ^[34]. Similar patterns have been observed elsewhere: in Thailand, Chai and Wong (2021) ^[11] reported that poor communication from managers led to decreased engagement and reduced willingness to take initiative. In Taiwan, Huang and Chen (2020) ^[18] found that unclear directives and limited feedback weakened employee trust and motivation in public institutions.

Fair Treatment Improves Trust

Fairness and consistency in leadership were consistently identified as important for fostering motivation. Employees felt more committed when leaders treated staff equitably, which increased trust and participation. One participant noted, "When everyone is treated equally, we feel motivated to contribute." Path-Goal Theory emphasizes that leaders should create conditions that reduce uncertainty and clarify expectations; treating employees fairly aligns with this principle by enhancing motivation and perceived support (House, 1971) ^[19]. In Ireland, Byrne and Kelly (2019) ^[10] demonstrated that perceived fairness in managerial practices improved employee engagement and satisfaction. Similarly, in Singapore, Tan and Lee (2020) ^[44] found that consistent and equitable leadership practices increased commitment and discretionary effort among staff.

The findings suggest that leadership effectiveness in motivating and engaging employees depends on supportive behaviors, clear communication, and fair treatment, all of which are central to the Path-Goal Theory.

Objective Three: To identify leadership behaviors and strategies that enhance motivation, job satisfaction, and overall performance among public sector employees in Botswana.

The findings indicate that leadership actions such as recognition, empowerment, and continuous support have a direct impact on employees' motivation and satisfaction. When interpreted through Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (Herzberg, 1966; Robbins & Judge, 2021) ^[17, 40], these behaviors address both intrinsic motivators such as achievement, recognition, and personal growth and hygiene factors, creating conditions that improve overall job satisfaction and performance.

Recognition and Appreciation Boost Morale

The study revealed that employees felt highly motivated when their efforts were acknowledged and appreciated. Simple gestures such as verbal praise or expressing gratitude had a noticeable impact on morale. One participant explained, "Even a simple thank you from my supervisor makes me feel valued." This aligns with Herzberg's idea that recognition is a key motivator that enhances job satisfaction. Supporting evidence from the United States shows that public sector employees reported increased engagement and performance when supervisors consistently acknowledged their contributions (Smith & Johnson, 2020) ^[43]. In Denmark, Jensen and Petersen (2019) ^[20] found that recognition and feedback improved morale and commitment in municipal organizations, highlighting that acknowledgment of effort is universally important for motivation.

Empowerment Encourages Performance

Employees also emphasized that being entrusted with responsibility and given autonomy improved motivation and performance. Empowerment encouraged confidence, accountability, and a sense of ownership over tasks. A participant stated, "When I am trusted to handle my work, I feel proud and perform better." Herzberg's theory suggests that opportunities for achievement and responsibility serve as intrinsic motivators. Evidence from India indicates that empowered employees in public service reported higher motivation, satisfaction, and efficiency (Kumar & Rao, 2021) [21]. Similarly, in China, Li and Wang (2020) [25] observed that delegating decision-making authority and fostering autonomy among public employees improved job satisfaction and task performance.

Continuous Support Improves Job Satisfaction

Another key theme was the importance of ongoing support through training, guidance, and feedback. Participants highlighted that leaders who supported professional growth and provided constructive feedback created a positive work environment. One respondent explained, "Leaders who guide us and support our growth make the job enjoyable." Herzberg identifies personal growth, learning, and achievement as intrinsic motivators that drive satisfaction and performance. In the United States, Brown and Miller (2018) [9] reported that mentoring and continuous support in public sector organizations improved employee commitment and reduced turnover. In Denmark, sustained coaching and training programs were linked to higher levels of motivation and engagement (Andersen & Sørensen, 2019) [2].

The findings indicate that leadership behaviors aligned with recognition, empowerment, and continuous support are critical for improving motivation, job satisfaction, and performance in Botswana's public sector.

Conclusion

The study examined the influence of leadership styles on employee motivation in selected public sector organizations in Botswana, focusing on how leadership practices affect engagement, satisfaction, and overall performance. The findings reveal that leadership plays a central role in shaping employee attitudes and behaviors. Transformational leadership, characterized by inspiration, recognition, and inclusiveness, was found to enhance motivation and commitment, while transactional or rule-focused leadership, although useful for maintaining order, often limited intrinsic motivation. Employees also emphasized that supportive, fair, and communicative leadership practices foster engagement, trust, and a sense of value within the organization.

Furthermore, leadership behaviors such as recognition, empowerment, and continuous support were identified as critical strategies for improving job satisfaction and performance. By addressing both intrinsic motivators, such as achievement and personal growth, and creating a supportive work environment, leaders can significantly enhance employee motivation and organizational outcomes.

The study underscores the importance of adopting adaptive leadership approaches that meet employees' needs and encourage participation, learning, and recognition. Public sector managers in Botswana can benefit from these insights by integrating inspirational, supportive, and inclusive practices into their leadership style. Overall, the findings

highlight that effective leadership is not only about directing work but also about engaging, valuing, and empowering employees to achieve both personal and organizational goals.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study carry important implications for management, policy, and practice in Botswana's public sector.

1. Practical Implications for Leadership and Management

The study shows that leadership style directly influences employee motivation, engagement, and performance. Public sector managers can use these insights to adopt more transformational and supportive leadership practices. By inspiring employees, recognizing contributions, and involving staff in decision-making, managers can improve morale, commitment, and productivity. Empowerment and continuous support, such as training and guidance, can further enhance job satisfaction and organizational performance.

2. Policy Implications

Policymakers in Botswana can leverage these findings to develop leadership frameworks and guidelines that prioritize employee motivation and engagement. Policies that encourage inclusive decision-making, fair treatment, recognition, and staff development can create a more motivated workforce. Leadership development programs and management training should be institutionalized across public sector organizations to ensure consistent application of effective leadership practices.

3. Organizations Implications

Organizations can benefit from integrating strategies that address both intrinsic and extrinsic employee needs. Recognition programs, empowerment initiatives, and supportive supervision can reduce turnover, absenteeism, and disengagement. By fostering a culture of open communication, fairness, and participation, public sector institutions can strengthen trust, collaboration, and performance outcomes.

4. Academic Implications

The study contributes to the literature on leadership and employee motivation in the public sector, particularly in the context of Botswana. It provides empirical evidence on how transformational, supportive, and inclusive leadership practices influence employee behavior and engagement. Future researchers can build on these findings to explore leadership effectiveness across different public service sectors or examine the long-term impact of leadership interventions on motivation and service delivery.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several practical recommendations are proposed to enhance employee motivation, job satisfaction, and overall performance in Botswana's public sector organizations.

1. Promote Transformational Leadership Practices

Public sector managers should adopt leadership behaviors that inspire and motivate employees. In clearly communicating organizational goals, recognizing individual

contributions, and encouraging personal growth, leaders can increase commitment and engagement. Training programs and workshops can help managers develop skills in inspirational communication, vision-setting, and individualized consideration, ensuring that employees feel valued and motivated to perform beyond expectations.

2. Encourage Participative and Inclusive Leadership

Employees benefit when they are involved in decision-making processes. Public sector organizations should implement mechanisms that allow staff to contribute ideas and feedback, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility. Regular team meetings, suggestion forums, and participatory planning sessions can help employees feel heard and included, which in turn enhances motivation and organizational cohesion.

3. Strengthen Supportive and Fair Leadership Practices

Managers should actively provide guidance, feedback, and support to employees while ensuring fairness and consistency in treatment. This includes addressing personal and professional challenges, providing constructive feedback, and applying policies equitably. Such practices build trust, engagement, and loyalty, reducing absenteeism and turnover. Leadership development programs should emphasize emotional intelligence, active listening, and conflict resolution to support these outcomes.

4. Implement Recognition and Empowerment Strategies

Recognition of effort and achievements should be an integral part of the workplace culture. Simple acts of appreciation, awards, or acknowledgment of contributions can significantly boost morale. Empowering employees by delegating responsibility, granting autonomy, and involving them in meaningful tasks strengthens confidence and encourages higher performance. These strategies align with employees' intrinsic motivators and contribute to long-term job satisfaction.

5. Provide Continuous Training and Professional Development

Leaders should support employees' growth by offering regular training, mentorship, and skill development opportunities. This helps staff feel competent and valued while improving organizational performance. Public sector institutions should invest in capacity-building programs that are aligned with both organizational goals and employees' career aspirations.

6. Foster a Culture of Open Communication

Effective communication between managers and staff is crucial for motivation and engagement. Public sector organizations should encourage transparent communication channels where employees are informed about decisions, organizational changes, and expectations. Open dialogue reduces uncertainty, enhances trust, and ensures employees feel involved in achieving organizational objectives. The implementation of these recommendations can create a work environment that motivates employees, supports their development, and improves overall organizational effectiveness in Botswana's public sector organizations.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Limitations

While the study provides valuable insights into leadership and employee motivation in Botswana's public sector, several limitations should be noted. First, the study used a qualitative approach with a small sample of 30 participants, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to all public sector organizations in Botswana. Second, the study relied on self-reported perceptions, which could be influenced by personal biases or social desirability. Third, the research focused on selected public institutions, meaning the findings may not fully reflect experiences in other sectors or regions.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future studies could address these limitations by using larger, more diverse samples across multiple public sector organizations to enhance generalizability. Researchers could also employ mixed-methods approaches to combine qualitative insights with quantitative analysis for a more comprehensive understanding. Additionally, future research could explore the long-term impact of specific leadership interventions on employee motivation, job satisfaction, and organizational performance, or compare leadership effectiveness across different cultural and regional contexts.

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