

THE IMPACT OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT ON TEACHER JOB SATISFACTION: A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of school management practices—particularly transformational leadership—on teacher job satisfaction in Albanian-language schools in the Republic of North Macedonia. Drawing from the critical need to address disparities in multilingual and multiethnic educational systems, the study employs a mixed-methods design to investigate how school leadership and institutional conditions shape teachers' professional experiences.

Quantitative data were collected from 150 teachers using validated instruments: the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) and the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). Additionally, 20 semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers and school leaders to gain deeper qualitative insights. Statistical analysis revealed a strong and statistically significant correlation ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.01$) between transformational leadership behaviors and teacher job satisfaction. Furthermore, a notable disparity in satisfaction levels was observed between Albanian-language ($M = 63.5$) and Macedonian-language schools ($M = 81.3$), suggesting systemic inequities in resource allocation and institutional support.

Qualitative findings reinforced these results, identifying key barriers to satisfaction such as insufficient funding (85%), political interference (70%), and administrative overload (68%). The study concludes that while transformational leadership positively influences teacher morale, its effectiveness is limited without broader structural reforms. The findings underscore the importance of equitable policy frameworks, leadership development programs, and depoliticized school governance to foster teacher well-being and improve educational outcomes in bilingual contexts.

This research contributes to the growing body of literature on educational equity and leadership in post-socialist, ethnically diverse societies, offering both theoretical insights and practical recommendations for policymakers and educational institutions.

Keywords: teacher job satisfaction, transformational leadership, school management, educational equity, bilingual education.

1. Introduction

Teacher job satisfaction has increasingly been recognized as a critical component of educational effectiveness, directly influencing not only teacher retention and performance but also student outcomes and institutional culture. A satisfied teaching workforce is more likely to demonstrate higher levels of motivation, engagement, and commitment to pedagogical innovation and student-centered instruction. Consequently, understanding the factors that influence teacher job satisfaction has become a key area of interest for educational policymakers, school administrators, and researchers alike. Among these factors, the role of school leadership—particularly transformational leadership—has gained prominence in recent decades, as leadership is seen as pivotal in shaping the school climate, setting professional expectations, and supporting teacher development.

While extensive research in developed countries has examined the relationship between leadership styles and teacher satisfaction, studies conducted in post-socialist, multilingual, and ethnically diverse societies remain comparatively limited. The Republic of North Macedonia offers a unique and complex educational context in this regard. The country is characterized by

its multiethnic composition, with substantial Albanian, Turkish, Roma, and Serbian populations, and operates a bilingual education system in which instruction is offered in both Macedonian and Albanian languages. Although the legal framework supports educational rights for all ethnic groups, disparities in educational resources, infrastructure, and administrative support remain prevalent, particularly between schools operating in different linguistic and ethnic contexts. Albanian-language schools, in particular, often experience systemic disadvantages such as underfunding, outdated facilities, and political interference in management appointments, which may adversely affect the working conditions and overall job satisfaction of teachers.

Within this challenging context, leadership practices in schools become even more consequential. Transformational leadership—a style that emphasizes vision, inspiration, support, and development—has been associated with increased teacher motivation, improved organizational commitment, and greater instructional effectiveness. However, in the absence of enabling institutional environments, the potential of transformational leadership to improve teacher satisfaction may be constrained. Therefore, while leadership plays a central role, it cannot be analyzed in isolation from broader structural and policy factors that define the educational landscape. Issues such as unequal funding, ethno-political tensions, and bureaucratic overload must be taken into account when assessing how leadership affects teacher morale in bilingual school systems.

Previous studies in the region have generally focused on broad assessments of educational quality or macro-level governance reforms but have not provided in-depth analysis of leadership and teacher satisfaction in the unique environment of Albanian-language schools. Some existing literature has touched on the implications of ethnic divides for school governance (Kamenova, 2020), but the relationship between specific leadership approaches—such as transformational leadership—and teacher well-being has been underexplored. Moreover, most of these studies have relied on quantitative indicators without integrating qualitative data that capture the lived experiences of teachers working under difficult conditions.

This study seeks to address these gaps by investigating the impact of school management practices—especially transformational leadership—on teacher job satisfaction in Albanian-language schools across North Macedonia. Utilizing a mixed-methods research design, the study combines quantitative data from 150 teachers with qualitative insights from 20 in-depth interviews to provide a comprehensive understanding of both the measurable correlations and the nuanced realities influencing teacher satisfaction. The study also explores how systemic inequalities, including political influence, administrative overload, and lack of professional development opportunities, shape teachers' perceptions of leadership and their broader professional experiences.

By focusing specifically on Albanian-language schools, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of educational equity and leadership effectiveness in multilingual and post-socialist settings. It aims to provide evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, educational leaders, and institutions of higher education tasked with preparing future school leaders. Additionally, the study offers a foundation for comparative research across linguistic communities in North Macedonia and other multiethnic societies facing similar educational governance challenges. Ultimately, by shedding light on both leadership dynamics and systemic obstacles, this research aspires to support the creation of more inclusive, equitable, and motivating school environments for all educators.

2. Theoretical Framework

Teacher job satisfaction is a multidimensional construct that encompasses various aspects of teachers' professional lives, including their perceptions of work conditions, interpersonal relationships, professional autonomy, recognition, and opportunities for growth. It is generally defined as the extent to which individuals feel positive or fulfilled by their roles in an organization (Spector, 1997). In the field of education, teacher satisfaction has been directly linked to a range of positive outcomes, including improved student performance, higher teacher retention rates, and enhanced school climate (Dinham & Scott, 2000). Thus, understanding the factors that contribute to or inhibit job satisfaction is critical for improving the quality and equity of educational systems.

2.1 Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory: A foundational theory in the study of job satisfaction is Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959), which distinguishes between motivators and hygiene factors. According to Herzberg, motivators—such as achievement, recognition, and the nature of the work itself—contribute to job satisfaction, while hygiene factors—such as salary, working conditions, and administrative policies—prevent dissatisfaction but do not necessarily lead to increased satisfaction. In the context of Albanian-language schools in North Macedonia, Herzberg's theory offers a valuable lens for understanding the dual pressures faced by educators. While many teachers may find intrinsic motivation in their mission to educate, a lack of sufficient hygiene factors—such as underfunded schools, inadequate materials, and excessive administrative tasks—can lead to professional burnout and disengagement.

Recent applications of Herzberg's theory in educational contexts (Shah & Jumani, 2015) have reinforced the idea that job satisfaction among teachers is more likely to be achieved when both sets of factors are addressed. For instance, recognition and career advancement may serve as strong motivators, but if they are not accompanied by decent salaries, a safe working environment, and manageable workloads, overall job satisfaction may still remain low. This dual-factor understanding is crucial in analyzing why transformational leadership, although effective in principle, may face limits in contexts marked by systemic deprivation or governance challenges.

2.2 Transformational Leadership Theory: Transformational leadership, introduced by Burns (1978) and further developed by Bass and Avolio (1994), refers to a style of leadership that seeks to engage followers in a shared vision, inspire higher levels of motivation, and support individual growth. In contrast to transactional leadership—which relies on reward and punishment mechanisms—transformational leaders aim to elevate the values and aspirations of their teams. According to Bass and Avolio, transformational leadership comprises four core components: idealized influence (acting as role models), inspirational motivation (articulating an appealing vision), intellectual stimulation (encouraging innovation and critical thinking), and individualized consideration (attending to the needs of individual staff members).

In educational settings, transformational leadership has been found to have a positive effect on a variety of outcomes, including school climate, teacher morale, student achievement, and organizational learning (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Robinson et al., 2008). Principals who demonstrate transformational leadership behaviors are more likely to build trust, foster collaboration, and empower teachers in their instructional roles. These leaders contribute to a sense of shared purpose and belonging, which in turn enhances teacher job satisfaction. Furthermore, they often serve as buffers against systemic challenges, advocating for their staff and striving to improve institutional support mechanisms.

2.3 Leadership and Context: Post-Socialist and Multiethnic Settings: While transformational leadership offers many benefits, its effectiveness is not guaranteed in all contexts. In post-socialist societies such as North Macedonia, school leaders often operate within rigid bureaucratic structures, face political interference, and lack autonomy over budgeting and staff decisions (Sargent & Hannum, 2009). In such environments, transformational leadership can be difficult to enact meaningfully, as institutional constraints may override leaders' efforts to implement inclusive and visionary practices.

Moreover, multiethnic contexts introduce an additional layer of complexity. Research shows that in bilingual or ethnically segregated education systems, leadership must navigate not only pedagogical challenges but also cultural and political sensitivities (Bush & Glover, 2012). In North Macedonia, where ethnic identity is deeply intertwined with language of instruction and educational governance, Albanian-language school leaders and teachers often experience marginalization in decision-making processes and resource allocation. These factors may undermine the perceived legitimacy and efficacy of leadership, regardless of leadership style. Therefore, it is important to situate transformational leadership within the broader socio-political and institutional environment. As suggested by Hallinger (2011), leadership should not be viewed as a universally applicable skillset, but rather as a practice embedded in cultural, political, and organizational contexts. In North Macedonia, the asymmetric distribution of resources between Macedonian- and Albanian-language schools, alongside politically motivated appointments of school principals, often dilutes the impact of even the most committed and visionary leaders.

2.4 Interplay Between Leadership and Job Satisfaction: Empirical studies globally and regionally support the assertion that leadership has a significant impact on teacher job satisfaction. For example, in a study conducted by Nguni et al. (2006) in Tanzania, transformational leadership was shown to correlate strongly with teacher job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Similarly, in Eastern European contexts, including Serbia and Bulgaria, researchers have found that supportive and communicative school leaders play a critical role in fostering teacher engagement (Ilić, 2018; Kamenova, 2020).

However, these relationships are often moderated by institutional and cultural variables. In under-resourced or politically constrained schools, leadership may have only a partial effect unless accompanied by structural reforms. Studies by Day and Sammons (2016) emphasize that sustained improvements in job satisfaction depend not only on leadership style but also on systemic support for continuous professional development, fair evaluation practices, and participatory governance.

Additionally, teachers' perceptions of leadership are influenced by their past experiences, expectations, and the degree of professional autonomy they are afforded. In hierarchical systems where teachers have limited say in curriculum development, resource management, or school improvement plans, even transformational leadership may be viewed as rhetorical rather than substantive. Thus, improving teacher satisfaction requires a holistic strategy that combines visionary leadership with inclusive and responsive institutional policies.

2.5 Educational Equity and Leadership: The concept of educational equity is central to this study. Equity refers to the principle of fairness in education, where all students and educators are provided with the resources and support they need to succeed. In multiethnic societies like North Macedonia, equity is not only a matter of resource allocation but also of political recognition and institutional responsiveness. Leaders in Albanian-language schools must navigate dual expectations: to manage the pedagogical responsibilities of their institution and to advocate for equity in an environment where their communities may be structurally disadvantaged.

Leadership thus becomes a vehicle for advancing social justice in education. As Shields (2010) argues, transformative leadership—an extension of transformational leadership—requires leaders to address issues of equity and inclusion proactively, challenging the status quo when it reproduces injustice. In the case of North Macedonia, such leadership may involve advocating for bilingual materials, ensuring fair teacher evaluations across language lines, or challenging politically driven appointments.

By framing leadership as an equity-driven practice, this study builds on contemporary models that see the school leader not just as a manager but as a change agent. This is particularly important in marginalized educational settings, where transformational efforts must contend with deeper systemic inequities that affect both teacher morale and student outcomes.

3. Results Analysis and Interpretation

This section presents a systematic interpretation of the six statistical tables, emphasizing the relationship between transformational leadership and teacher job satisfaction in Albanian-language schools. The results are not only statistically interpreted but also contextualized within the realities of a multilingual education system in a post-socialist country.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Core Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min	Max
Teacher Job Satisfaction (JSS)	67.8	13.2	34.0	94.0
Transformational Leadership (MLQ)	71.4	11.7	40.0	92.0

Table 1 summarizes descriptive statistics for the two key variables: teacher job satisfaction and transformational leadership. The mean job satisfaction score ($M = 67.8$) indicates a moderate level of satisfaction, falling short of the ideal threshold of 75 or above that typically reflects high satisfaction. This moderate score suggests a mixed emotional and professional state among teachers, potentially shaped by intrinsic motivation as well as systemic challenges.

Conversely, the relatively high mean for transformational leadership ($M = 71.4$) suggests that many school leaders are perceived as supportive, visionary, and actively engaged. However, the considerable standard deviation ($SD = 11.7$) reflects variability in leadership experiences across schools, implying that while some leaders exhibit strong transformational qualities, others may lean toward bureaucratic or transactional styles.

Table 2. Correlation Between Transformational Leadership and Job Satisfaction

Variables	Pearson's r	p-value
Transformational Leadership ↔ Job Satisfaction	0.68	< 0.01

As shown in Table 2, the Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.68$) reveals a strong, positive association between teachers' perceptions of transformational leadership and their job satisfaction. This implies that enhanced leadership behaviors—such as support, recognition, and inspiration—are linked with increased teacher satisfaction.

This finding aligns with Leithwood and Jantzi (2005), who emphasized that transformational leaders foster emotional engagement and professional growth, both critical to sustaining teacher morale. In the context of North Macedonia, where systemic limitations prevail, this strong association underscores the compensatory role leadership can play in challenging work environments.

Table 3. Job Satisfaction by Language of Instruction

Language	Mean Satisfaction	SD	N
Albanian	63.5	10.4	110
Macedonian	81.3	9.7	40

Table 3 highlights a statistically significant and practically meaningful difference of nearly 18 points in job satisfaction between the two groups. Teachers in Macedonian-language schools report substantially higher satisfaction, which may reflect greater access to resources, stronger institutional support, and less political marginalization.

Conversely, teachers in Albanian-language schools operate within a more constrained environment characterized by chronic underfunding, outdated materials, and weaker institutional backing. These findings underscore that job satisfaction is influenced not only by individual motivation or leadership quality but also by structural conditions and issues of educational equity.

Table 4. Multiple Regression Predicting Job Satisfaction

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Transformational Leadership	0.49	0.08	0.52	6.13	< .001
Years of Experience	0.11	0.05	0.19	2.32	0.023
Perceived Funding Level	0.33	0.09	0.28	3.67	< .001
Administrative Burden	-0.41	0.10	-0.31	-4.10	< .001

Table 4 presents the results of a multiple regression analysis examining predictors of job satisfaction, including transformational leadership, years of experience, perceived funding, and administrative burden. The model explains over 50% of the variance in job satisfaction, a substantial proportion for social science research.

Transformational leadership emerges as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.52$), indicating that leadership behaviors substantially influence teacher satisfaction. Additionally, perceived funding positively predicts satisfaction, while administrative burden has a significant negative impact, highlighting the detrimental effect of bureaucratic overload on teacher morale. These findings point to the necessity of pairing leadership development with institutional reforms aimed at reducing workload.

Table 5. Most Frequently Reported Challenges by Teachers

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Insufficient funding	17	85%
Political interference	14	70%
Administrative overload	13	65%
Lack of professional development	11	55%
Inadequate teaching materials	9	45%

Table 5 summarizes qualitative data from 20 in-depth interviews, quantifying systemic challenges frequently reported by teachers. The data reveal that systemic barriers, rather than classroom-level factors, are the predominant causes of dissatisfaction. Teachers emphasize chronic underfunding, frequent political interference in leadership appointments, and limited professional development opportunities. These barriers correspond with Herzberg's hygiene factors, whose absence leads to dissatisfaction.

This qualitative insight complements the quantitative data by illustrating the lived realities of teachers, especially in Albanian-language schools, where institutional inequities and lack of autonomy persist. Such conditions cannot be fully addressed by leadership alone.

Table 6. Satisfaction by Leadership Perception

Leadership Category	Mean Satisfaction	SD	N
Highly Transformational	79.1	7.3	38
Less Transformational	58.6	8.9	36

Table 6 shows a marked difference of over 20 points in satisfaction between teachers led by highly transformational leaders versus less transformational leaders. This stark contrast confirms that the quality of leadership deeply influences teacher morale, with transformational leadership fostering greater feelings of appreciation, support, and satisfaction.

These findings advocate for the implementation of mandatory leadership training focused on emotional intelligence, communication, and instructional leadership. However, such training must be accompanied by systemic reforms, including merit-based appointments and equitable resource allocation, to realize its full potential.

4. Discussion of Results

The strong correlation between transformational leadership and job satisfaction confirms the theoretical propositions of Bass and Avolio (1994) and validates previous empirical studies conducted in educational settings (Nguni et al., 2006; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). However, the findings also reveal a more complex reality shaped by political and institutional dynamics specific to North Macedonia. While transformational leadership positively influences teacher morale, its impact is moderated by structural inequalities, such as underfunding, administrative overload, and political appointments.

The significant disparity between Albanian- and Macedonian-language schools suggests the presence of systemic discrimination or unequal resource allocation that undermines teacher motivation. These results are consistent with the work of Kamenova (2020), who identified ethnicized governance and resource asymmetry as major issues in Macedonian education. The fact that “perceived funding” and “administrative burden” also significantly predicted job satisfaction supports Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory by demonstrating that the absence of hygiene factors critically lowers satisfaction levels, even when motivators are present.

Moreover, the frequency of problems cited in qualitative interviews highlights the daily struggles that teachers face, which are rarely addressed in policy reforms. Many respondents expressed frustration with politically appointed school leaders who lacked pedagogical experience or leadership training, which diminishes the credibility of school management and affects staff cohesion. This reinforces the need for merit-based appointment systems and professionalized leadership training.

The high variation in satisfaction scores between teachers under highly transformational versus less transformational leaders indicates the value of cultivating leadership skills that promote vision, empathy, and empowerment. However, as the regression analysis shows, leadership must be embedded in an enabling institutional framework to be fully effective. Professional development opportunities, reduced administrative burden, and adequate funding serve as crucial scaffolds that allow transformational leadership to flourish.

In summary, all data sources—both quantitative and qualitative—consistently demonstrate that transformational leadership has a strong, positive, and measurable impact on teacher job satisfaction. However, Albanian-language schools face disproportionate systemic constraints that significantly suppress satisfaction levels. While leadership is necessary for improving teacher morale, it alone is insufficient; effective improvement requires accompanying institutional reforms related to funding, depoliticization, and reduction of administrative workload.

These findings validate the theoretical frameworks proposed by Bass and Avolio (1994) and Herzberg (1966), while simultaneously pointing toward new directions for policy and practice within multiethnic and post-socialist educational contexts.

6. Conclusions

This study examined the relationship between transformational leadership and teacher job satisfaction in the unique context of Albanian-language schools in North Macedonia. The findings provide compelling evidence of the crucial role that school leadership plays in shaping the professional experiences of teachers, while also highlighting the significant influence of broader systemic and institutional factors.

6.1 Summary of Key Findings First, the study found a strong and statistically significant positive correlation ($r = 0.68$) between transformational leadership and teacher job satisfaction. Teachers who perceived their school leaders as visionary, supportive, and encouraging reported notably higher satisfaction with their work. Regression analysis confirmed that transformational leadership was the strongest predictor of job satisfaction among all variables considered, including years of experience and perceived funding levels.

Second, the analysis revealed a significant gap in satisfaction levels between teachers in Albanian-language schools ($M = 63.5$) and their counterparts in Macedonian-language schools ($M = 81.3$). This 18-point gap reflects deep-rooted systemic inequities—related to funding, political interference, and lack of professional support—that disproportionately affect Albanian-speaking educators.

Third, teachers consistently identified institutional and policy-related challenges as the primary sources of dissatisfaction. These included insufficient financial resources, politically motivated appointments, administrative overload, and inadequate access to professional development. Such findings emphasize that teacher satisfaction is not solely a psychological or motivational issue, but also a reflection of the socio-political structure in which education is delivered.

6.2 Theoretical and Practical Implications: From a theoretical perspective, this study reinforces the relevance of Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory in understanding teacher satisfaction. The findings show that while motivational elements—such as leadership and recognition—enhance satisfaction, the absence of basic hygiene factors (e.g., stable funding, fair governance, reasonable workloads) creates dissatisfaction that even strong leadership cannot mitigate.

Additionally, the study contributes to the literature on transformational leadership by validating its positive impact in a post-socialist, multilingual context. However, it also suggests that the effectiveness of transformational leadership is conditioned by institutional factors, as leaders often operate within bureaucratic, politically charged environments that limit their ability to support teachers effectively.

Practically, these findings point to the urgent need for reforms that go beyond leadership training. While cultivating strong leaders remains essential, such efforts must be accompanied by structural interventions aimed at improving equity, resource distribution, and school autonomy.

7. Recommendations

To address the challenges identified in this study and to enhance teacher job satisfaction in Albanian-language schools, a multi-level approach is necessary. The recommendations are categorized into five key areas: policy reform, leadership development, institutional improvement, equity measures, and teacher empowerment.

7.1. Policy-Level Recommendations

1. **Ensure Equitable Funding Between Language Groups** The Ministry of Education must implement a transparent and needs-based funding model that guarantees equitable financial support to all schools, regardless of language of instruction. Resource allocation should be monitored by an independent body to prevent political or ethnic bias.
2. **Depoliticize School Management Appointments** School principals should be appointed through merit-based, transparent selection processes. An independent oversight committee, including representatives from academia and civil society, should monitor appointments to prevent political manipulation.
3. **Introduce Leadership Certification Programs** All school leaders should be required to complete formal certification in educational leadership, with a focus on transformational practices, emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, and inclusive school governance.

7.2 Institutional and Administrative Recommendations

1. **Reduce Bureaucratic Workload for Teachers** Introduce centralized digital platforms to simplify reporting, eliminate redundant administrative tasks, and allow teachers to focus more on instructional and developmental activities.
2. **Establish School-Based Professional Development Units** Every school should establish a Professional Learning Community (PLC) that offers regular workshops, peer mentoring, and reflective teaching practices tailored to the local context.
3. **Develop Context-Sensitive Leadership Tools** The MLQ and other leadership instruments should be adapted culturally and linguistically to reflect the realities of multilingual schools in North Macedonia. Data from these tools should be used for school improvement—not only evaluation.

7.3 Equity and Support Measures

1. **Support Albanian-Language Schools Through Targeted Grant** Establish a “Support Fund for Equity in Education” that provides targeted grants for infrastructure, materials, and training specifically in under-resourced Albanian-language schools.
2. **Strengthen Teacher Voice in Decision-Making** Teachers should be included in school councils, municipal education boards, and national policy consultations. Their insights are crucial for crafting realistic and sustainable reforms.
3. **Create Regional Centers for Inclusive Leadership** Establish regional centers of excellence in Tetova, Skopje, and Kicevo to support leadership development, educational research, and innovation in ethnically diverse regions.
4. **Conduct Annual Monitoring and Reporting on Teacher Satisfaction** Institutionalize a national teacher satisfaction survey (based on the JSS) to track progress, identify risk areas, and guide resource allocation annually.

Final Reflections

This study has provided robust evidence that improving teacher satisfaction in North Macedonia—particularly in Albanian-language schools—requires more than motivation and good leadership. It calls for a systemic rethinking of equity, leadership, and institutional responsibility in multilingual and post-socialist contexts. If these recommendations are implemented in an integrated and committed manner, they can lead not only to more satisfied teachers, but to more resilient schools, more empowered communities, and a more just education system.

The voices of teachers are clear: they want to be inspired, not overburdened; respected, not politicized; developed, not neglected. It is now up to institutions and policymakers to ensure that these voices do not remain unheard.

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