

Transformational leadership, organizational culture, and employee job satisfaction: an exploratory case study of a hotel group

Transformaciono liderstvo, organizaciona kultura i zadovoljstvo zaposlenih poslom: eksplorativna studija slučaja hotelske grupacije

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Abstract

This exploratory case study examines the relationships among transformational leadership, organizational culture, and employee job satisfaction within a single hotel group. The study applied a quantitative research design using data collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 35 employees. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis were used to examine employees' perceptions of the three constructs and the associations among them. The findings indicate moderately positive perceptions of transformational leadership, organizational culture, and job satisfaction. Statistically significant positive associations were identified among all three variables. Transformational leadership was positively associated with both organizational culture and job satisfaction, while organizational culture was also positively associated with job satisfaction. The strongest relationship was found between transformational leadership and organizational culture. Given the small sample and single-organizational setting, the findings should be interpreted as context-specific and exploratory rather than representative of the wider hospitality industry. Nevertheless, the study offers practical insight for hotel management by highlighting the importance of supportive leadership, clear communication, shared organizational values, employee participation, and development opportunities in creating a more favourable work environment.

Keywords: transformational leadership, organizational culture, job satisfaction, exploratory case study, hotel group

Sažetak

Ova eksplorativna studija slučaja ispituje odnose između transformacionog liderstva, organizacione kulture i zadovoljstva zaposlenih poslom u okviru jedne hotelske grupacije. Istraživanje je zasnovano na kvantitativnom istraživačkom pristupu, a podaci su prikupljeni strukturisanim upitnikom sprovedenim među 35 zaposlenih. Deskriptivna statistika i korelaciona analiza korišćene su za ispitivanje percepcija zaposlenih o tri posmatrana konstrukta i povezanosti među njima. Rezultati ukazuju na umereno pozitivne percepcije transformacionog liderstva, organizacione kulture i zadovoljstva poslom. Utvrđene su statistički značajne pozitivne povezanosti između sve tri varijable. Transformaciono liderstvo bilo je pozitivno povezano sa organizacionom kulturom i zadovoljstvom poslom, dok je organizaciona kultura takođe bila pozitivno povezana sa zadovoljstvom poslom. Najjača povezanost utvrđena je između transformacionog liderstva i organizacione kulture. Zbog malog uzorka i istraživanja sprovedenog u okviru jedne organizacije, rezultate treba tumačiti kao kontekstualno specifične i eksplorativne, a ne kao reprezentativne za širu ugostiteljsku industriju. Ipak, istraživanje pruža praktične uvide za hotelski menadžment, posebno u pogledu podržavajućeg liderstva, jasne komunikacije, zajedničkih organizacionih vrednosti, uključivanja zaposlenih i mogućnosti njihovog razvoja.

Ključne reči: transformaciono liderstvo, organizaciona kultura, zadovoljstvo poslom, eksplorativna studija slučaja, hotelska grupacija

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1. Introduction

The hospitality industry depends heavily on the quality of human interaction. Hotels do not compete only through facilities, price, or location, but also through the service experience created by employees in everyday contact with guests. Because of this, internal organizational conditions matter a great deal. The way employees are managed, supported, and included in the organization can influence not only their own work experience, but also the consistency and quality of service delivery.

In such a setting, leadership becomes especially important. Employees in hospitality often work under time pressure, deal with demanding situations, and are expected to maintain professionalism in direct guest interactions. This makes the role of managers more complex than simple task supervision. Leadership can shape the climate in which employees work, the quality of communication within the organization, and the extent to which employees feel motivated and supported in their roles.

At the same time, employee job satisfaction remains a major issue in the hospitality sector. High workloads, emotional demands, irregular schedules, and limited resources can all affect how employees evaluate their work. These perceptions are closely related to the wider organizational environment, including managerial behaviour, communication practices, support, and shared organizational values. For this reason, transformational leadership, organizational culture, and job satisfaction are particularly relevant constructs for understanding employee experience in hospitality organizations.

Against this background, the purpose of this exploratory case study is to examine the relationships among transformational leadership, organizational culture, and employee job satisfaction within one hotel group. More specifically, the study explores whether employees who report more positive perceptions of transformational leadership also perceive the organizational culture more favourably and report higher job satisfaction. It further examines whether a more positive perception of organizational culture is associated with higher employee job satisfaction. By focusing on a single organizational setting, the study does not seek to produce findings that are representative of the hospitality industry as a whole. Instead, its contribution lies in providing context-specific evidence and practical insight into how employees within the observed hotel group experience the relationships among leadership, organizational culture, and job satisfaction.

2. Literature review

Leadership has particular importance in the hospitality industry because daily work depends on constant interaction between employees, managers, and guests. Service quality is shaped not only by formal procedures and operational efficiency, but also by communication, trust, support, and the broader atmosphere in which employees perform their work. In that sense, leadership in hospitality is closely connected to both employee attitudes

and organizational functioning. Among the various leadership approaches discussed in the literature, transformational leadership stands out because of its strong emphasis on vision, motivation, support, and employee development (Bass, 1990; Northouse, 2018). Transformational leadership was introduced by Burns (1978) and later developed by Bass (1990), Bass and Riggio (2006), and Avolio and Yammarino (2013). It refers to a style in which leaders encourage employees to move beyond immediate self-interest and work toward broader organizational goals. This leadership style is commonly associated with four dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1990; Bass & Riggio, 2006). In practical terms, transformational leaders act as role models, communicate a clear and meaningful vision, encourage employees to think in new ways, and show concern for individual needs and development (Northouse, 2018). In hospitality, where employees often work under pressure and are expected to respond quickly and professionally, these leader behaviours are especially relevant.

Although transformational leadership is often discussed as a broad and influential leadership concept, its importance in hospitality becomes even clearer when examined in relation to employee job satisfaction and organizational culture. Leadership in this context is experienced through everyday interactions: the degree of support employees receive, the clarity of direction provided by supervisors, openness to new ideas, trust, and opportunities for development. These elements are central to how employees interpret both their direct relationship with managers and the wider organizational environment.

The relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction has been widely emphasized in the literature. Employees in hospitality often face demanding workloads, emotional pressure, irregular schedules, and the expectation to maintain a consistently high standard of service. Under such conditions, the quality of supervision becomes highly important. Research in the hospitality sector has shown that leadership style is significantly related to employee job satisfaction, with transformational leadership standing out as an important positive predictor (Rothfelder et al., 2012). Other hospitality research has similarly identified the relationship with supervisors, clarity of work organization, and opportunities for personal development as key drivers of job satisfaction (Heimerl et al., 2020). More recent research has further confirmed the relevance of transformational leadership for hotel employees' work attitudes, while also suggesting that this relationship may operate through employee engagement, psychological well-being, or organizational culture (Abolnasser et al., 2023; Aristana et al., 2023). Together, these findings suggest that employees are more likely to report positive job attitudes when leaders are perceived as supportive, fair, motivating, and development-oriented.

Organizational culture represents another important dimension of hospitality work. It is generally understood as the shared system of values, beliefs, norms, and

practices that shapes how people behave and interact within an organization (Schein, 1985). In hospitality, culture matters because service quality depends not only on individual competence, but also on coordination, communication, trust, support, and a shared understanding of what good service means in practice. A review of hospitality research confirms that organizational culture is a central concept in the field because it influences both internal functioning and service delivery (Leyva-Duarte et al., 2020). A positive culture can strengthen consistency and cohesion, while a weak or fragmented culture may contribute to dissatisfaction, miscommunication, and lower performance (Cameron & Freeman, 1991; Lund, 2003).

The literature also suggests a close connection between leadership and organizational culture. Leaders shape culture through the values they communicate, the standards they reinforce, and the behaviours they reward in everyday work. In hospitality organizations, leaders who encourage trust, openness, participation, and mutual respect are more likely to contribute to a work environment in which employees cooperate effectively and identify with organizational values. Recent evidence from hotel employees also indicates a positive relationship between transformational leadership and organizational culture, suggesting that leadership behaviours are closely connected with how employees perceive shared organizational values and practices (Aristana et al., 2023). Because of that, transformational leadership is not only relevant as a direct influence on employees, but also as a factor associated with how employees perceive the broader culture of the organization.

The relationship between organizational culture and job satisfaction is equally important. Employees generally report more positive job attitudes when they perceive the organization as fair, supportive, and guided by clear shared expectations. In hospitality, where unclear communication, weak internal support, and a lack of fairness can quickly affect day-to-day work experiences, the cultural environment becomes especially important. Prior hospitality research has shown that fairness-related perceptions are meaningfully connected with job satisfaction (Nadiri & Tanova, 2010). Recent hospitality research has similarly shown that organizational culture is associated with job satisfaction and other employee outcomes, including organizational citizenship behaviour, service recovery performance, and intention to leave (Dawson et al., 2023). This is consistent with broader arguments in the literature that organizational culture influences not only what employees do, but also how they experience their work and relate to colleagues and supervisors (Belias & Koustelios, 2014; Lund, 2003). Taken together, previous studies point to a consistent pattern of relationships among transformational leadership, organizational culture, and job satisfaction. Transformational leadership is associated with more positive employee attitudes because supportive and inspiring leaders strengthen motivation, trust, and commitment. At the same time, leadership is connected with organizational culture, since leaders help shape communication patterns, support, participation, and

shared values. Organizational culture, in turn, is closely related to job satisfaction because employees are generally more satisfied in workplaces characterized by fairness, trust, and supportive interpersonal relationships. These links are particularly meaningful in hospitality, where employee experience is closely tied to service delivery and organizational effectiveness.

Overall, the literature suggests that transformational leadership offers a useful framework for understanding how leadership is connected to both employee job satisfaction and organizational culture in hospitality. When considered together, these three constructs provide a more complete picture of how employees experience their work environment, how service-oriented values are maintained, and how organizational conditions may support or undermine positive work attitudes. In labour-intensive service settings such as hotels, these relationships are not only theoretically important, but also highly relevant for practice.

In light of the existing literature, further examination of the relationships among transformational leadership, organizational culture, and job satisfaction remains relevant in the hospitality context. These constructs are particularly important in-service settings, where employee attitudes, managerial support, and organizational values are closely connected to employees' work experiences and the quality-of-service delivery. Although recent studies have examined selected relationships among these constructs, they have often focused on mediation mechanisms or broader employee outcomes rather than providing an integrated exploratory assessment of all three constructs within a single hotel group (Abolnasser et al., 2023; Aristana et al., 2023; Dawson et al., 2023). The present study therefore does not seek to propose a new theoretical model, but rather to provide an integrated and context-specific assessment of these relationships. Such an approach may help identify organizational areas that employees perceive positively, as well as aspects of leadership, communication, participation, and managerial support that may require further attention. Accordingly, the aim of this exploratory case study is to examine the associations among transformational leadership, organizational culture, and employee job satisfaction within the observed hotel group.

Accordingly, three research hypotheses were formulated: H1. More positive employee perceptions of transformational leadership are associated with higher job satisfaction within the observed hotel group. H2. More positive employee perceptions of transformational leadership are associated with a more favourable perception of organizational culture within the observed hotel group. H3. A more favourable perception of organizational culture is associated with higher employee job satisfaction within the observed hotel group.

3. Methodology

The study was designed as an exploratory quantitative case study of one hotel group, with the aim of examining

employee perceptions of transformational leadership, organizational culture, and job satisfaction within a specific organizational setting. Data were collected using a structured online questionnaire created through the Google Forms platform. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions and statements measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Seven negatively worded items within the organizational culture scale were reverse-coded before calculating Cronbach's alpha, the composite organizational culture score, and the correlations, so that higher composite values consistently represented a more favourable perception of organizational culture. Item-level descriptive statistics were reported using the original response coding, and the reverse-coded items are identified with the designation (R) in Table 5.

The empirical research was conducted from March 1 to March 15, 2025, among employees of a large hotel group operating several hotel properties in Croatia. At the time of the study, the hotel group employed approximately 800 employees. The study included employees working in different hotels and organizational units belonging to the same hotel group. While most respondents worked in individual hotel properties, some were employed in centralized corporate and administrative services, such as finance, human resources, marketing, and other functions that provide support to the hotel group as a whole.

A purposive non-probability sampling approach was applied. The questionnaire was distributed to 70 employees selected on the basis of their availability, current employment status within the hotel group, and relevance to the research topic. A total of 35 completed

questionnaires were collected, resulting in a response rate of 50%. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, and respondents were informed that the data would be used exclusively for research purposes.

The sample included employees from different organizational units, including front office, housekeeping, technical services, food and beverage, finance, human resources, marketing, and other operational and administrative departments. Employees with different work roles and levels of responsibility were included in order to capture a range of perspectives and work experiences across the hotel group. The inclusion of respondents from both individual hotel properties and centralized company services enabled a broader exploratory assessment of employee perceptions within the observed organizational setting.

The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. Means and standard deviations were calculated for individual items and the main research constructs, while correlation coefficients were used to examine the associations among transformational leadership, organizational culture, and employee job satisfaction. The applied analytical approach provided a descriptive and exploratory assessment of these associations within the observed hotel group. Given the small sample, the purposive non-probability sampling procedure, and the focus on a single organizational setting, the findings should be interpreted as context-specific and exploratory. They cannot be generalized to all employees of the observed hotel group or to the wider hotel sector and hospitality industry.

Table 1. Study selection process

Construct	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha	Source of variables
General information about respondents	10	–	–
Job satisfaction	17	0.77	Heimerl, P., Haid, M., Benedikt, L., & Scholl-Grissemann, U. (2020). Factors influencing job satisfaction in hospitality industry. <i>SAGE Open</i> , 10(4), Article 2158244020982998.
Transformational leadership	14	0.82	Avolio, B. J., & Bass, B. M. (2004). <i>Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire: Manual and sampler set</i> (3rd ed.). Mind Garden.
Organizational culture	18	0.79	Van der Post, W. Z., de Coning, T. J., & Smit, E. v. d. M. (1997). An instrument to measure organizational culture. <i>South African Journal of Business Management</i> , 28(4), 147–168.

Source: Authors' compilation

The research instrument consisted of four sections. In addition to general respondent information, it included three key constructs: job satisfaction, perceptions of transformational leadership, and organizational culture. The job satisfaction construct covered relationships with superiors, fairness and clarity of managerial decisions, autonomy at work, feedback, working conditions, work schedule organization, workload, and opportunities for education, training, and advancement. Perceptions of transformational leadership encompassed the dimensions of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, that is, leader behaviors related to vision, trust, encouraging new ways of thinking, and employee

development. Organizational culture was operationalized through the dimensions of shared values and organizational philosophy, participation in decision-making, and openness of communication, trust, and management support. All statements were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

The reliability of the applied measurement scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The obtained values indicated satisfactory internal consistency for all constructs used in the study. Cronbach's alpha was 0.77 for job satisfaction, 0.82 for transformational leadership, and 0.79 for organizational culture. These results suggest

acceptable to very good reliability of the research instrument, with the highest level of internal consistency found for the transformational leadership scale.

4. Research results

The following table presents the basic socio-demographic and work-related characteristics of the respondents

included in the empirical study. In order to provide a clearer overview of the sample structure, the respondents are classified according to gender, age, educational level, length of service in the hospitality industry, and their organizational work setting within the hotel group. Such a presentation of the sample is important for understanding the context in which the research was conducted and for interpreting the results obtained.

Table 2. Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Description	Number of respondents	Share (%)
Gender		
Male	21	60.0
Female	14	40.0
Age		
18–25 years	3	8.6
26–36 years	14	40.0
37–47 years	13	37.1
48–58 years	5	14.3
59 years and over	0	0.0
Educational level		
Elementary school	0	0.0
High school	11	31.4
Undergraduate degree	14	40.0
Graduate degree	6	17.1
Postgraduate degree	4	11.4
Length of service in the hospitality industry		
Less than 1 year	2	5.7
1 to 3 years	6	17.1
4 to 7 years	10	28.6
More than 7 years	17	48.6
Organizational work setting within the hotel group		
Smaller hotel property	6	17.1
Medium-sized hotel (3 or 4 stars)	11	31.4
Luxury hotel (5 stars)	9	25.7
Centralized corporate and administrative services	9	25.7

Source: Authors' calculations

Table 2 presents the socio-demographic and work-related characteristics of the respondents included in the study. The sample consisted of 35 respondents, of whom 60.0% were male and 40.0% were female. In terms of age, the largest share of respondents belonged to the 26–36 age group (40.0%), followed by those aged 37–47 years (37.1%), while no respondents were aged 59 years or over. Regarding educational level, most respondents held an undergraduate degree (40.0%) or a high school qualification (31.4%), whereas 17.1% had a graduate degree and 11.4% a postgraduate degree.

With regard to work experience in the hospitality industry, nearly half of the respondents (48.6%) had more than seven years of experience, while 28.6% had worked in the sector for four to seven years. A smaller proportion of

respondents had one to three years of experience (17.1%), and only 5.7% had less than one year of service. Regarding the respondents' organizational work setting, the largest share worked in medium-sized three- or four-star hotels operated by the hotel group (31.4%). Equal proportions worked in luxury five-star hotels and in centralized corporate and administrative services (25.7% each), while 17.1% worked in smaller hotel properties. The centralized services category included functions such as finance, human resources, marketing, and other departments providing support to the hotel group as a whole. Overall, the sample may be described as moderately diverse in terms of age, education, work experience, and organizational work setting.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of job satisfaction items

Statement	Mean	SD
My relationship with my superiors is good.	3.83	0.90
My superiors deal fairly with questions and concerns.	3.63	0.90
My superiors make clear and understandable decisions.	3.74	0.84
My superiors leave me room to make my own decisions.	3.57	0.84
I receive praise from my superiors for good work.	3.83	0.84
My superiors allow criticism.	3.29	0.91
My superiors make decisions in consultation with the team.	3.66	0.89
My superiors provide regular personal feedback.	3.54	0.87

Table 3. Continued

Statement	Mean	SD
Legally mandated breaks are respected.	3.63	0.96
I am satisfied with the duty schedule and working time regulations.	3.57	0.99
My workload is appropriate.	3.54	1.05
My company has sufficient staff.	3.00	1.04
I can truly relax during my free time.	3.60	1.02
I would like to continue my education.	3.80	0.98
I have good opportunities for advancement within the company.	3.83	0.91
My company offers further training opportunities relevant to my job.	3.63	0.90
Further training is compatible with my job.	3.54	0.91

Source: Authors' calculations

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics for the job satisfaction items, including the mean values and standard deviations. Overall, the results indicate a moderately positive level of job satisfaction among respondents, as most mean scores are above the midpoint of the scale. The highest mean values were recorded for the statements referring to a good relationship with superiors, receiving praise for good work, and opportunities for advancement within the company ($M = 3.83$ each), followed closely by the desire to continue education ($M = 3.80$) and the clarity of decisions made by superiors ($M = 3.74$). These findings suggest that interpersonal relations with supervisors, recognition, and career development are perceived relatively positively by respondents.

At the same time, somewhat lower mean values were observed for the statements related to the acceptance of criticism by superiors ($M = 3.29$) and the sufficiency of staff within the company ($M = 3.00$), indicating that these aspects may represent weaker points in employees' job satisfaction. The standard deviation values range from 0.84 to 1.05, suggesting a moderate dispersion of responses. The highest variability was found for workload ($SD = 1.05$), staffing sufficiency ($SD = 1.04$), and the ability to relax during free time ($SD = 1.02$), which indicates that respondents' experiences in these areas differ more noticeably. Overall, the results point to a generally satisfactory perception of job-related conditions, with certain organizational aspects leaving room for improvement.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of transformational leadership items

Statement	Mean	SD
Leaders instill pride in others for being associated with them.	3.34	0.95
Leaders go beyond self-interest for the good of the group.	3.57	0.90
Leaders act in ways that build others' respect for them.	3.69	0.78
Leaders talk about their most important values and beliefs.	3.57	0.93
Leaders talk optimistically about the future.	3.94	0.75
Leaders talk enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished.	4.11	0.60
Leaders articulate a compelling vision of the future.	3.89	0.69
Leaders re-examine critical assumptions to question whether they are appropriate.	3.77	0.81
Leaders seek different perspectives when solving problems.	3.83	0.82
Leaders encourage others to look at problems from many different angles.	3.86	0.84
Leaders suggest new ways of looking at how to complete tasks.	3.91	0.74
Leaders treat others as individuals rather than just as members of a group.	3.66	0.84
Leaders consider that each individual has different needs, abilities, and aspirations from others.	3.71	0.76
Leaders help others develop their strengths.	3.83	0.84

Source: Authors' calculations

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics for the transformational leadership items, including mean values and standard deviations. Overall, the results indicate a relatively positive perception of transformational leadership among respondents, as most mean scores are above the midpoint of the scale. The highest mean value was recorded for the statement referring to leaders speaking enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 0.60$), followed by leaders talking optimistically about the future ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 0.75$), suggesting that inspirational motivation is one of the most strongly perceived dimensions of leadership in the observed hotel context. High mean values were also found for leaders suggesting new ways of completing tasks ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 0.74$) and articulating a compelling vision of the future ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.69$), indicating that respondents generally perceive their leaders as

encouraging innovation and communicating a clear direction.

Moderately high mean values were observed for items related to intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration, such as seeking different perspectives when solving problems ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 0.82$), helping others develop their strengths ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 0.84$), and encouraging others to view problems from different angles ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 0.84$). A slightly lower score was recorded for leaders instilling pride in others for being associated with them ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 0.95$), which may indicate that the symbolic and charismatic dimension of leadership is somewhat less pronounced. Overall, the findings point to a generally favourable perception of transformational leadership, particularly in terms of inspiration, vision, and openness to new ideas.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics of organizational culture items

Statement	Mean	SD
Nothing holds this organization together and binds its members into a unified whole. (R)	2.54	1.00
Employees in this organization have a clear understanding of its values and philosophy.	3.43	0.80
This organization consistently makes employees aware of how they are expected to behave at work.	3.74	0.81
This organization has strong values that are widely shared by its members.	3.83	0.74
Managers in this organization rarely do things that show employees what is important for the long-term success of the organization. (R)	3.34	0.95
Managers in this organization rarely communicate the organization's values and philosophy to employees. (R)	3.43	0.85
Employees in this organization are consulted about decisions concerning what the organization plans to do.	3.43	0.82
Employees in this organization are genuinely encouraged to participate in broader organizational policy matters.	3.57	0.94
In this organization, employees are involved in decisions that directly affect their work.	3.46	0.89
Employees in this organization have a say in the organization's work methods.	3.31	0.94
This organization does not allow employees to participate in the decision-making process. (R)	3.49	0.99
Employees in this organization have very little authority over their own work goals. (R)	3.43	0.90
In this organization, there is a low level of trust and openness with supervisors. (R)	3.29	0.96
In this organization, communication flows freely upward, downward, and horizontally.	3.49	1.06
Employees in this organization cannot rely on management support when needed. (R)	2.94	1.10
Managers in this organization provide clear communication, assistance, and support to their subordinates.	3.71	0.83
This organization listens to the views of its employees.	3.71	0.83
Senior management in this organization provides help and support to employees when needed.	3.83	0.84

Note. Items marked with (R) are negatively worded. The item-level means and standard deviations presented in Table 5 are based on the original response coding. Before calculating Cronbach's alpha, the composite organizational culture score, and the correlations, these items were reverse-coded so that higher composite values consistently represented a more favourable perception of organizational culture.

Source: Authors' calculations

Table 5 presents the descriptive statistics for the organizational culture items using the original response coding. Because the table includes both positively and negatively worded items, values above the scale midpoint do not have the same interpretation for all statements. Negatively worded items should therefore be interpreted in the opposite direction and were reverse-coded when calculating the composite organizational culture score. The highest mean values were recorded for the statements referring to the existence of strong organizational values widely shared by members ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 0.74$) and the support provided by senior management when needed ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 0.84$). Relatively high mean values were also observed for the statements indicating that the organization makes employees aware of expected behaviour at work ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 0.81$), that managers provide clear communication and support ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 0.83$), and that the organization listens to employees' views ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 0.83$). These findings suggest that shared values, clarity of expectations, and managerial support were perceived as relatively well-developed elements of organizational culture.

Lower mean values were observed for the statement that nothing holds the organization together and binds its members into a unified whole ($M = 2.54$, $SD = 1.00$) and for the statement that employees cannot rely on management support when needed ($M = 2.94$, $SD = 1.10$). This may indicate that respondents generally do not strongly agree with the most negative assessments of organizational cohesion and managerial support. At the same time, several items related to employee participation, authority, and openness in communication recorded moderate mean values, suggesting that these aspects are present to a certain extent but not uniformly perceived by all respondents. Standard deviation values range from 0.74 to 1.10, indicating a moderate dispersion of responses, with the greatest variability found in items related to management support and employee involvement in decision-making. Overall, after reverse coding the negatively worded items, the findings point to a moderately favourable perception of organizational culture, although certain aspects of participation, trust, and internal communication appear to leave room for improvement.

Table 6. Means, standard deviations, and correlations among the main research constructs

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3
1. Job satisfaction	3.60	0.68	—		
2. Transformational leadership	3.76	0.44	.39*	—	
3. Organizational culture	3.28	0.39	.47**	.51**	—

Note. M = mean; SD = standard deviation. Correlation coefficients are presented below the diagonal. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Source: Authors' calculations

Table 6 presents the mean values, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients among the three main research constructs: job satisfaction, transformational leadership, and organizational culture. Among the observed variables,

transformational leadership recorded the highest mean value ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 0.44$), followed by job satisfaction ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.68$). Organizational culture had a somewhat lower, but still moderately positive, mean score

($M = 3.28$, $SD = 0.39$). These results indicate that respondents evaluated transformational leadership most favourably, while their perceptions of organizational culture were comparatively less positive.

The correlation analysis revealed statistically significant positive associations among all three constructs. Transformational leadership was positively associated with job satisfaction ($r = .39$, $p < .05$), indicating that respondents who perceived leadership more favourably also tended to report higher job satisfaction. Organizational culture was positively associated with job satisfaction ($r = .47$, $p < .01$), suggesting that employees with more favourable perceptions of the organizational environment also tended to be more satisfied with their jobs.

The strongest association was found between transformational leadership and organizational culture ($r = .51$, $p < .01$). This result suggests that employees' perceptions of leadership are particularly closely connected with how they evaluate shared values, communication, participation, trust, and managerial support within the hotel group. One possible explanation is that managerial behaviour represents one of the most visible ways through which employees experience organizational culture in their everyday work. However, given the cross-sectional design and the use of correlation analysis, the findings indicate associations rather than causal relationships.

The results therefore provide support for all three hypotheses. H1 is supported by the positive association between transformational leadership and job satisfaction. H2 is supported by the positive association between transformational leadership and organizational culture, while H3 is supported by the positive association between organizational culture and job satisfaction. These findings should be interpreted as context-specific evidence relating to the observed hotel group.

5. Discussion

This exploratory case study examined the associations among transformational leadership, organizational culture, and employee job satisfaction within one hotel group. The positive association between transformational leadership and job satisfaction is consistent with recent hospitality research. Abolnasser et al. (2023) found that transformational leadership was connected with hotel employees' job satisfaction through employee engagement and psychological well-being. However, Aristana et al. (2023) did not identify a significant direct effect of transformational leadership on job satisfaction, but found that organizational culture mediated this relationship. This difference suggests that the relationship between leadership and satisfaction may depend on the organizational context and on the mechanisms included in the analytical model. The comparatively weaker association between transformational leadership and job satisfaction in the present study may reflect the fact that job satisfaction is also connected with more immediate employment conditions, such as staffing sufficiency,

workload, work schedules, and opportunities for recovery, which are not determined by leadership alone (Dorta-Afonso et al., 2023; Shi et al., 2022). The strongest association in the present study was found between transformational leadership and organizational culture. This finding is consistent with Aristana et al. (2023), who reported a positive relationship between these constructs among hotel employees. One possible explanation is that employees experience organizational culture through managers' everyday behaviour, including communication, support, participation in decision-making, and the reinforcement of shared values. Nevertheless, the direction of this relationship cannot be determined from correlation analysis.

The positive association between organizational culture and job satisfaction is also in line with recent findings. Dawson et al. (2023) demonstrated that hospitality organizational culture is related to employees' job satisfaction and other work outcomes. Similarly, Aristana et al. (2023) found that organizational culture was significantly related to job satisfaction. In the present study, relatively positive perceptions of shared values and managerial support were accompanied by more moderate evaluations of employee participation, authority, and internal communication.

The results also indicate several areas that may require managerial attention. The moderate scores concerning participation and managers' openness to criticism are relevant in light of Aslan and Atesoglu (2021), who showed that participation as a workplace value was associated with job satisfaction through psychological ownership. Elbaz et al. (2022) likewise emphasized the importance of employee voice and constructive grievance handling for job satisfaction among frontline hospitality employees.

Staffing sufficiency received the lowest job-satisfaction item score, while workload and the ability to relax during free time varied considerably among respondents. Although the present study did not directly examine the effects of understaffing, Shi et al. (2022) found that daily work stressors may reduce hotel employees' job satisfaction. Dorta-Afonso et al. (2023) also showed that integrated human-resource practices can support job satisfaction directly and through lower burnout. More recent evidence from understaffed hotels further indicates that perceived organizational support is positively associated with work satisfaction (Cheng et al., 2026).

Overall, the study does not propose a new causal model, but provides an integrated assessment of leadership, organizational culture, and job satisfaction within a specific hotel group. Its main contribution lies in identifying organizational strengths and areas that may benefit from further managerial attention.

6. Conclusion

This exploratory case study provides context-specific evidence that transformational leadership, organizational culture, and employee job satisfaction are positively

associated within one hotel group. The particularly strong association between transformational leadership and organizational culture may indicate that employees experience organizational values and practices partly through managers' everyday behaviour. The overall pattern of findings is broadly consistent with recent hospitality research (Abolnasser et al., 2023; Aristana et al., 2023; Dawson et al., 2023).

The study's main contribution is practical rather than theoretical. For the management of the observed hotel group, the findings indicate that particular attention should be given to employee participation, managers' openness to criticism, internal communication, staffing sufficiency, and opportunities for professional development. More detailed managerial recommendations are presented in the Practical Implications section.

The study is limited by its small purposive sample, focus on a single hotel group, cross-sectional design, and reliance on self-reported data. The findings therefore cannot be generalized to the wider hotel sector or interpreted as evidence of causal relationships. Future research should include larger and more diverse samples, compare different hotel groups and organizational units, and apply longitudinal or more advanced analytical approaches.

Practical implications

The results suggest that leadership development should focus not only on communicating goals and motivating employees, but also on regular feedback, openness to criticism, employee participation, and individual support. Structured opportunities for employees to express suggestions and concerns may strengthen both job satisfaction and perceptions of organizational culture.

Management should also examine workload distribution and staffing sufficiency across hotels and departments. In addition, communication between individual hotel properties and centralized services could be strengthened through regular meetings, clearer feedback channels, and more transparent communication of organizational decisions. Training, professional development, and visible advancement opportunities should remain important elements of employee-support practices.

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Declaration of generative AI in the writing process

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI) for editing, translation, and proofreading of the text. After using this tool, the authors reviewed and edited the resulting content as necessary and take full responsibility for the content of the published article.

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