

How Transformational Leadership Shapes Job Satisfaction Among Millennial Educators in Indonesia: Evidence from Yogyakarta

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Abstract

Purpose: This study examines how transformational leadership influences intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction among millennial educators in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, and explores how these relationships are shaped by educators' work experiences and local educational contexts.

Research Methodology: This study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design. Quantitative data were collected through an online survey involving 82 millennial educators from formal and nonformal educational institutions and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). To deepen the interpretation of the statistical results, qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with ten selected informants.

Results: Transformational leadership positively influenced intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction. However, intrinsic motivation did not significantly affect job satisfaction, indicating no mediating effect. Qualitative findings highlight trust, autonomy, personal attention, supportive communication, and inspirational leadership as key factors enhancing job satisfaction.

Conclusions: Transformational leadership directly contributes to job satisfaction, whereas intrinsic motivation plays a limited role as a mediating mechanism in this context.

Limitations: This study is limited by its relatively small sample size and focus on urban educational institutions in Yogyakarta, which may limit the generalizability of the findings.

Contributions: This study provides contextual evidence of transformational leadership in Indonesian education and offers practical insights for developing adaptive, empathetic, and participatory leadership practices for millennial educators.

Keywords: *Educational Leadership, Intrinsic Motivation, Job Satisfaction, Millennial Educators, Transformational Leadership*

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1. Introduction

The digital era has brought significant changes to leadership patterns and human resource management in various sectors, including that of education. Millennials now dominate the workforce, bringing distinct values and expectations compared with previous generations ([Easton, & Steyn, 2022](#); [Muktamar, Hertina, Ratnaningsih, Syaepudin, Syahputra, Hendriana, Masruroh, Sudalyo, & Nursanti, 2023](#)). They tend to prioritize meaningful work, flexibility, and balance between personal and professional lives ([Mahmoud, Reisel, Grigoriou, Fuxman, & Mohr, 2020](#)). In educational institutions, particularly in the Special Region of Yogyakarta (DIY), millennial educators face challenges such as adapting to learning technologies, curriculum innovation, and intergenerational dynamics ([Latuheru, Manuputty, & Angkotasan, 2024](#)). Therefore, leadership that fosters motivation and emotional engagement is critical.

Transformational leadership is considered effective in addressing these challenges. The model emphasizes four dimensions, such as idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration ([Sutanto, Utami, & Diantoro, 2021](#)). These dimensions promote commitment, trust, and a strong work ethic among followers. In education, transformational leaders inspire teachers and educators to innovate and deliver quality learning experiences ([Al-Husseini, & Moizer, 2021](#); [Kareem, Patrick, Prabakaran, Tania, MPM, & Mukherjee, 2023](#)). However, the effectiveness of transformational leadership in enhancing job satisfaction and intrinsic motivation among millennial educators requires further empirical studies.

Most prior studies on transformational leadership have been conducted in corporate or manufacturing contexts, showing positive effects on job satisfaction and employee performance ([Putri, & Meria, 2022](#); [Rafia, & Sudiro, 2020](#)). However, educational institutions differ because they focus not only on productivity but also on values, ethics, and social interactions ([Ahmad, Idrus, & Rijal, 2023](#)). In Yogyakarta, the egalitarian work culture and Javanese social values shape leadership dynamics, highlighting the need to understand how transformational leadership interacts with local culture to optimize job satisfaction among millennials ([Purwanto & Sulaiman, 2023](#)).

Intrinsic motivation is a key psychological mechanism that bridges leadership and job satisfaction. According to the Self-Determination Theory, intrinsic motivation arises when work is meaningful, autonomous, and allows self-actualization ([Aljumah, 2023](#)). Transformational leaders cultivate these conditions through individual attention and guidance. For millennials, intrinsic motivation often outweighs extrinsic incentives, as this generation values personal growth and self-development ([Suyatno, Wantini, & Patimah, 2024](#); [Tang, Wong, Li, & Cheng, 2020](#)). Transformational leadership remains a dominant paradigm in human resource management, particularly in terms of inspiring, motivating, and developing subordinates ([Al, 2023](#)). In education, it influences both intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction through its four dimensions ([Dalkie, & Botha, 2024](#); [Puspitadani, Yudea, & Loo, 2022](#)). Millennials respond positively to autonomy, meaningful work, and supportive leadership rather than rigid authority, shifting leadership from directing performance to fostering engagement and professional fulfillment ([Venida, 2022](#)).

Finally, the cultural context influences the perception of transformational leadership. In collectivist and egalitarian cultures like Yogyakarta, empathetic and participatory leadership shapes educators' attitudes and satisfaction more than hierarchical authority ([Somantri, 2021](#)). Despite the growing body of research, studies examining the interplay between transformational leadership, intrinsic motivation, and job satisfaction among Indonesian millennial educators remain limited ([Wibowo, Putri, & Rino, 2025](#); [Wibowo, Widjaja, & Foedjiawati, 2022](#); [Zarkasyi, 2024](#)). Addressing this gap is essential for optimizing leadership practices for the new generation of educators. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the relationship between transformational leadership, intrinsic motivation, and job satisfaction among millennial educators in Yogyakarta, considering the influence of cultural context.

Despite extensive research on transformational leadership, most studies have focused on corporate or higher education settings, with limited attention paid to millennial educators in Indonesian K-12 and non-formal education contexts. Furthermore, empirical evidence regarding the mediating role of

intrinsic motivation in linking transformational leadership and job satisfaction remains inconsistent. In particular, studies that integrate mixed-methods designs within collectivist cultural settings, such as Yogyakarta, are still scarce. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by examining the statistical relationships and lived experiences of millennial educators.

According to the Self-Determination Theory, intrinsic motivation develops when individuals experience autonomy, competence, and social connectedness in their work environment. These psychological conditions encourage employees to perform their tasks enthusiastically, creatively, and with commitment. Transformational leadership can strengthen intrinsic motivation by providing empowerment, recognition, trust, and opportunities for professional growth ([Magasi, 2021](#)). Leaders who encourage participation and acknowledge employees' contributions help satisfy important psychological needs, thereby increasing employees' internal motivation. Consequently, employees become more engaged and experience greater fulfillment in their work.

Several studies have shown that intrinsic motivation serves as an important mechanism linking transformational leadership with positive organizational outcomes. Merry, Noureen, and Noshaba found that transformational leadership enhances employee outcomes through increased intrinsic motivation, whereas Park, Han, Kim, and Kim highlighted the mediating role of motivation in leadership effectiveness ([Merry, Noureen, & Noshaba, 2022](#); [Park, Han, Kim, & Kim, 2022](#)). In educational settings, educators with high intrinsic motivation tend to demonstrate greater dedication, creativity, and commitment ([Yuan, Wu, Hu, & Lin, 2019](#)). Therefore, intrinsic motivation is expected to mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction among millennial educators ([Andrews, 2018](#); [Nassar, Nastacă, & Nastaseanu, 2021](#)).

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1 Transformational Leadership in the Context of Educational Human Resources

Transformational leadership is a concept that emphasizes the ability of leaders to inspire, motivate, and transform followers' values and behaviors beyond personal interests to achieve organizational goals ([Sugianto et al., 2024](#)). In human resource management, transformational leadership is widely recognized as one of the most effective leadership approaches because it focuses on the psychological and emotional development of followers while promoting positive organizational outcomes such as commitment, performance, and job satisfaction ([Akdere & Egan, 2020](#)). According to [Bass \(2015\)](#), transformational leadership consists of four dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Through these dimensions, leaders serve as role models, communicate a compelling vision, stimulate innovative thinking, and provide individualized support to employees.

In educational institutions, transformational leadership plays an important role in encouraging educators to adapt to technological developments, implement curriculum innovations and improve their professional performance. [Costa et al. \(2025\)](#) demonstrated that educational leaders who adopt transformational leadership practices can create collaborative, supportive, and learning-oriented organizational cultures. Such leadership behaviors are particularly relevant in educational settings, where educators require not only professional guidance but also psychological support to cope with increasing workplace demands.

For millennial educators, transformational leadership may be especially important because this generation tends to value meaningful work, autonomy, collaboration, and personal growth opportunities. Leaders who provide inspiration, trust, and individual attention are more likely to foster positive work attitudes and strengthen educators' satisfaction with their professional role. Therefore, transformational leadership is expected to contribute positively to job satisfaction among Millennial educators.

2.2 Job Satisfaction and the Dynamics of the Millennial Generation

Job satisfaction refers to a positive emotional state resulting from an individual's evaluation of their job and work experiences ([Judge et al., 2020](#)). It reflects employees' perceptions of various aspects of their work, including supervision, recognition, working conditions, and opportunities for

development. Among millennials, job satisfaction is often shaped by non-material factors such as meaningful work, work-life balance, autonomy, and opportunities for self-development, rather than solely by financial rewards ([Wiranata, 2024](#)). Previous studies have suggested that millennials tend to respond more positively to participatory, supportive, and empathetic leadership styles than to traditional hierarchical leadership approaches ([Ross, 2021](#)).

In educational institutions, educators' job satisfaction is influenced by organizational support, clarity of work goals, professional autonomy, and leadership quality. Leaders who provide constructive feedback, recognize individual contributions, and create inclusive work environments can significantly enhance employee engagement and job satisfaction ([Ilyas et al., 2024](#)). Because transformational leadership emphasizes individualized consideration and inspirational motivation, it is particularly relevant to the expectations and values of millennial educators. Consequently, transformational leadership is expected to have a direct positive influence on job satisfaction.

2.3 Hypotheses Development

H₁: Transformational leadership has a positive effect on intrinsic motivation

H₂: Intrinsic motivation has a positive effect on job satisfaction

H₃: Transformational leadership has a positive effect on job satisfaction

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods approach using a sequential explanatory design, in which quantitative data collection and analysis were conducted first, followed by qualitative inquiry to provide a deeper interpretation of the quantitative findings ([Creswell & Plano Clark, 2023](#)). This design was selected because the relationship between transformational leadership, intrinsic motivation, and job satisfaction is influenced not only by measurable organizational factors but also by individual experiences and sociocultural contexts.

In the first phase, quantitative data were collected to examine the structural relationships among transformational leadership, intrinsic motivation, and job satisfaction using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). In the second phase, qualitative interviews were conducted with selected participants to explain and contextualize the statistical findings, particularly regarding how leadership practices are perceived by millennial educators within the educational environment of Yogyakarta. The integration of both phases enabled a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under investigation.

3.2 Population and Research Sample

The target population consisted of millennial educators born between 1981 and 2000 who were employed in formal and nonformal educational institutions located in Yogyakarta City, Sleman Regency, and Bantul Regency. This population was selected because millennials represent a significant proportion of the educational workforce and possess distinct work values characterized by a preference for meaningful work, flexibility, and collaboration. A purposive sampling technique was employed for this study. Respondents were required to meet three inclusion criteria, such as actively employed as educators, working under the direct supervision of an institutional leader, and having at least two years of work experience. Quantitative data were obtained from 82 respondents using an online survey. For the qualitative phase, 10 informants were purposively selected based on variations in job satisfaction levels and perceptions of leadership experiences.

3.3 Research Variables and Operational Definitions

This study examined three main constructs: Transformational Leadership (independent variable), Intrinsic Motivation (mediating variable), and Job Satisfaction (dependent variable). Transformational Leadership was adapted from [Bass \(2015\)](#) and measured through four dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Intrinsic Motivation was measured based on Self-Determination Theory indicators emphasizing autonomy, competence, and meaningful engagement in work ([Luarn et al., 2023](#))([Meyer & Allen, 2001](#)). Job Satisfaction was measured using dimensions adapted from [Spector \(1997\)](#), including satisfaction with

work itself, supervision, rewards, and the work environment. All constructs were assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Prior to data collection, the instrument was reviewed by three experts in Human Resource Management to ensure content validity and contextual suitability for the educational sector.

3.4 Data Collection Techniques

Quantitative data were collected using an online questionnaire administered via Google Forms between May and July 2025. The questionnaire items were adapted from established measurement scales and modified to fit the educational context of this study. A pilot test involving 20 respondents was conducted to evaluate the item clarity and preliminary reliability. Following the quantitative phase, qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 10 purposively selected educators. The interviews explored the participants' experiences with transformational leadership, sources of intrinsic motivation, and factors contributing to job satisfaction. The interview sessions lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and were conducted either face-to-face or online. All participants received information regarding the study objectives, voluntary participation, confidentiality protection, and the right to withdraw at any stage of the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection.

3.5 Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative data were analyzed using SmartPLS 4.0 through the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach. PLS-SEM was selected because it is suitable for predictive research models, accommodates relatively small sample sizes, and allows for the simultaneous examination of direct and indirect relationships among latent variables ([Hair & Alamer, 2022](#)). The analysis consisted of two stages. First, the measurement model (outer model) was evaluated through indicator loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability (CR), and discriminant validity using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Second, the structural model (inner model) was assessed through path coefficients, Coefficient of Determination (R^2), Effect Size (f^2), Predictive Relevance (Q^2), and hypothesis testing using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 re-samples.

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following [Braun and Clarke \(2019\)](#). The process involved data familiarization, coding, theme development, and interpretation of the data. The qualitative findings were subsequently integrated with the quantitative results to provide richer explanations of the statistical relationships observed in the first phase. The validity and reliability of the quantitative data were ensured through construct validity and internal consistency assessment. Qualitative trustworthiness was strengthened through source triangulation and a comparison of the survey findings and interview narratives. The ethical principles of confidentiality, voluntary participation, and secure data management were maintained throughout the research process.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Results of Structural Model Analysis (Inner Model)

The structural model was analyzed using PLS-SEM with SmartPLS 4.0 [Hair and Alamer \(2022\)](#), to examine the relationships among transformational leadership, intrinsic motivation, and job satisfaction. The results show that transformational leadership explains 19.0% of intrinsic motivation ($R^2 = 0.190$) and 18.8% of job satisfaction when combined with intrinsic motivation ($R^2 = 0.188$). Bootstrapping results indicate that transformational leadership significantly affects intrinsic motivation ($\beta = 0.436$, $p < 0.05$) and job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.213$, $p < 0.05$). However, intrinsic motivation did not significantly affect job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.121$; $p > 0.05$). Therefore, all direct effects of transformational leadership were supported, while the effect of intrinsic motivation on job satisfaction was not supported as can be seen in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1. Bootstrapping test results and structural path coefficient in the PLS-SEM model

Relationship Path	β	t-value	p-value	Result
Transformational Leadership → Intrinsic Motivation	0.436	2.045	0.042	Supported

Relationship Path	β	t-value	p-value	Result
Intrinsic Motivation → Job Satisfaction	0.121	1.701	0.089	Not Supported
Transformational Leadership → Job Satisfaction	0.213	2.045	0.042	Supported

Table 2. R² Value of endogenous constructs in PLS-SEM structural models

Construct	R ²	Level
Intrinsic Motivation	0.190	Moderate
Job Satisfaction	0.188	Moderate

4.2 Results of Measurement Model Analysis (Outer Model)

The measurement model was evaluated to assess the validity and reliability of the constructs using outer loading, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Composite Reliability (CR). The results are presented in Table 3 and Table 4. Table 3 shows that all indicator loadings exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.50, indicating acceptable convergent validity. Most indicators demonstrated adequate loadings, with MI1 (0.812), MI2 (0.786), and JS2 (0.814) having the highest values.

Table 4 presents the reliability and validity results of the study. All constructs achieved Composite Reliability values above 0.70 and AVE values above 0.50, confirming satisfactory internal consistency and convergent validity. Overall, the measurement model met the required validity and reliability criteria, indicating that the constructs were suitable for further structural model analysis.

Table 3. Results of convergent validity test (outer loading) on the PLS-SEM measurement model

Construct	Indicator	Loading	Result
Transformational Leadership	IC1	0.724	Valid
Transformational Leadership	IC2	0.708	Valid
Transformational Leadership	IC3	0.615	Valid
Transformational Leadership	II1	0.742	Valid
Transformational Leadership	II2	0.668	Valid
Transformational Leadership	II3	0.593	Acceptable
Transformational Leadership	IM1	0.701	Valid
Transformational Leadership	IM2	0.685	Valid
Transformational Leadership	IM3	0.572	Acceptable
Transformational Leadership	IS1	0.661	Valid
Transformational Leadership	IS2	0.618	Valid
Transformational Leadership	IS3	0.587	Acceptable
Intrinsic Motivation	MI1	0.812	Valid
Intrinsic Motivation	MI2	0.786	Valid
Intrinsic Motivation	MI3	0.644	Valid
Job Satisfaction	JS1	0.672	Valid
Job Satisfaction	JS2	0.814	Valid
Job Satisfaction	JS3	0.703	Valid
Job Satisfaction	JS4	0.621	Valid

Table 4. Composite reliability and AVE test results

Construct	CR	AVE	Result
Transformational Leadership	0.874	0.542	Reliable & Valid
Intrinsic Motivation	0.831	0.623	Reliable & Valid
Job Satisfaction	0.817	0.531	Reliable & Valid

4.3 Bootstrapping Results and Line Significance Test

A bootstrapping analysis with 5,000 resamples was conducted to test the significance of the structural relationships in the model. The results are shown in Table 5. The findings show that transformational leadership has a significant positive effect on intrinsic motivation ($\beta = 0.436$; $p = 0.042$) and job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.213$; $p = 0.042$). However, intrinsic motivation did not significantly affect job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.121$; $p = 0.089$).

Table 5. Bootstrapping test results and significance of path structural models (path coefficients)

Relationship Pathway	β	t-value	p-value	Result
Transformational Leadership $\rightarrow$ Intrinsic Motivation	0.436	2.045	0.042	Significant
Intrinsic Motivation $\rightarrow$ Job Satisfaction	0.121	1.701	0.089	Not Significant
Transformational Leadership $\rightarrow$ Job Satisfaction	0.213	2.045	0.042	Significant

4.4 Integration of Qualitative Results

To complement the quantitative findings, this study incorporated qualitative data through in-depth interviews with ten millennial educators from formal and nonformal educational institutions in Yogyakarta, Sleman, and Bantul. Interviews were conducted between February 15 and March 3, 2025, either face-to-face or online, with an average duration of 45-60 minutes. The interviews explored the participants' experiences of leadership, motivation, and job satisfaction. Most informants emphasized that their work motivation was strongly influenced by trust, autonomy, and the opportunity to express ideas, rather than direct supervision. One participant stated.

"I am enthusiastic about working not because I am ordered, but because I am given space to be creative and trusted to manage my own learning activities." (I3, Interview, February 18, 2025)"

Meanwhile, a high school teacher added that the personal attention of the leader has an important meaning:

"When the principal asks how we're doing and listens to our ideas, it's a motivation." (I7, Interview, February 22, 2025)

Several other respondents highlighted the importance of a collaborative work environment. A young lecturer in Sleman stated:

"Leaders who are willing to go directly to discuss without formality make us feel equal and valued." (I2, Interview, February 16, 2025)

The qualitative findings reinforce the quantitative results by showing that transformational leadership supports intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction through trust, autonomy, and supportive relationships. This aligns with the Self-Determination Theory, which highlights autonomy, competence, and social connectedness as key sources of intrinsic motivation ([Ryan et al., 2021](#)). In Yogyakarta egalitarian culture, inspirational and individualized leadership also helps to strengthen emotional attachment and organizational commitment among millennial educators ([Setiadi et al., 2024](#); [Zarkasyi, 2024](#)). An informant from a non-formal educational institution described the ideal leader in a reflective style as follows:

"My leader doesn't talk much, but he always sets an example through action, it keeps us motivated without feeling commanded." (I9, Interview, March 1, 2025)

This quote indicates that leadership styles based on example and empathy are more in line with the characteristics of millennials, who tend to reject hierarchical structures. Thus, the results of this study confirm the importance of a transformational leadership approach that is rooted in the values of autonomy, meaning of work, and social connections, not just command structures.

4.5 Discussion of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The findings of this study indicate that transformational leadership has a significant positive effect on intrinsic motivation among Millennials educators. This suggests that leaders who provide inspiration, intellectual stimulation, individualized attention, and moral examples can strengthen educators' internal willingness to engage meaningfully in their work. In the context of education, transformational leaders do not merely direct employees to complete institutional tasks; they also create psychological conditions that allow educators to feel trusted, valued, and empowered. This finding is consistent with Self-Determination Theory, which explains that intrinsic motivation develops when individuals experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness in their work environment ([Morales, 2022](#)). This also supports [Kekeocha, Anoke, Chukwuemeka-Onuzulike, and Ngozi \(2024\)](#) finding that intrinsic motivation is closely related to the perceived meaningfulness and personal value of work.

The positive relationship between transformational leadership and intrinsic motivation also aligns with previous studies showing that supportive and empowering leadership can increase employees' internal motivation. [Mustajab and Darmayanti \(2025\)](#) found that transformational leadership enhances employee performance by encouraging empowerment and participation. [Kriswanto and Santosa \(2025\)](#) showed that transformational leadership can improve teacher outcomes through intrinsic motivation. In the educational context, this result is particularly relevant because millennial educators tend to value autonomy, self-development, and meaningful professional contributions more than rigid hierarchical control. This is in line with [Venida \(2022\)](#), who argued that younger generations of educators are motivated when their work provides opportunities for learning, creativity and professional growth.

The study found that transformational leadership positively affects job satisfaction among millennial educators. Educators feel more satisfied when leaders communicate clearly, provide personal support, show fairness, build trust, involve them in decision-making, recognize their contributions, and grant them professional freedom. This shows that leadership quality is an important factor in shaping educators' positive work experiences ([Sismiati, Sulaiman, Usmar, Lanori, & Susanto, 2025](#)). However, intrinsic motivation did not significantly affect job satisfaction. This indicates that internal motivation alone is insufficient to determine satisfaction. Millennial educators may feel motivated to teach and develop themselves, but their satisfaction can still be influenced by their workload, recognition, career opportunities, institutional support, policies, and workplace relationships. The modest R^2 values also suggest that other factors may more fully explain job satisfaction ([Mardanov, 2021](#)).

The qualitative findings strengthen the quantitative results by showing that trust, autonomy, supportive communication, and opportunities to express ideas are important to educators. In Yogyakarta participatory and egalitarian culture, empathetic and relational leadership is especially relevant. Overall, transformational leadership plays a central role in improving job satisfaction, while intrinsic motivation remains important but needs supportive institutional conditions to produce stronger satisfaction

4.6 Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on transformational leadership, intrinsic motivation, and job satisfaction by providing evidence from Indonesian millennial education. The findings show that transformational leadership is an important factor in shaping positive work attitudes through inspiration, support, empowerment, autonomy, competence, and social connectedness. However, the non-significant effect of intrinsic motivation on job satisfaction indicates that motivation alone is insufficient to create satisfaction without supportive institutional conditions, such as fair workload, recognition, career development, and a positive work environment ([Hardianto et al., 2025](#); [Ryan & Deci, 2020](#)). Educational leaders should strengthen inspirational communication, provide professional autonomy, understand individual needs, and create a collaborative work culture. Educational institutions should also combine transformational leadership with broader human resource strategies, including supportive policies, fair workload distribution, recognition, and career development opportunities, to maintain job satisfaction and professional commitment among millennial educators ([Abu-Rumman 2021](#)).

4.7 Research Limitations and Directions for Advanced Research

This study had several limitations. First, the quantitative sample consisted of 82 millennial educators, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Although PLS-SEM is suitable for relatively small samples, future research should involve a larger number of respondents to strengthen the statistical power and provide more representative results. Second, the study was conducted only in urban educational institutions in Yogyakarta City, Sleman and Bantul. Therefore, the findings may not fully represent millennial educators in rural areas or other regions with different cultural and institutional characteristics of the country.

Third, this study used a cross-sectional design, which means that data were collected at one point in time. Consequently, this study cannot fully explain the changes in leadership perception, motivation, and job satisfaction over time. Future research should use a longitudinal design to examine how transformational leadership affects educators' motivation and satisfaction across different career stages. Fourth, this study focused only on transformational leadership, intrinsic motivation, and employees' job satisfaction. Future studies should include additional variables, such as organizational culture, work engagement, psychological empowerment, perceived organizational support, work-life balance, and career development opportunities.

Future research may also compare formal and non-formal educational institutions or examine the differences between millennial and Generation Z educators. Such comparisons would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how the generational values influence leadership expectations and job satisfaction. Future studies should explore the cultural dimensions of leadership in Yogyakarta and other Indonesian regions to develop a more contextual model of transformational leadership in the education sector.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Conclusion

This study examined the relationships among transformational leadership, intrinsic motivation, and job satisfaction among millennial educators in the Special Region of Yogyakarta. The findings indicate that transformational leadership has a significant direct effect on job satisfaction, highlighting the importance of supportive, inspirational, and participatory leadership practices in educational institutions. Among the dimensions of transformational leadership, individualized consideration and inspirational motivation emerged as the most influential factors in shaping millennial educators' positive perceptions of leadership. The results further show that the relationship between transformational leadership and intrinsic motivation is significant but relatively modest, while intrinsic motivation does not significantly affect job satisfaction. These findings suggest that job satisfaction among millennial educators is primarily driven by direct leadership influence rather than internal motivational mechanisms and may also be shaped by other contextual, organizational, and psychological factors not included in this model.

Qualitative findings complement the quantitative results by demonstrating that trust, personal attention, autonomy, and opportunities for self-expression play important roles in enhancing educators' positive work experiences. Consistent with Self-Determination Theory, millennial educators value meaningful work, collaborative relationships, and supportive leadership environments that foster autonomy, competence, and professional growth. Overall, this study contributes to the literature on transformational leadership in education by providing empirical evidence from the Indonesian context, particularly, Yogyakarta. The findings suggest that educational leaders should adopt adaptive, empathetic, and participatory leadership approaches to enhance millennial educators' job satisfaction.

5.2 Research Limitations

This study was limited to millennial educators in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, which may restrict the generalizability of its findings. In addition, this study focused only on transformational leadership, intrinsic motivation, and job satisfaction, while other factors that may influence educators' job satisfaction were not examined.

5.3 Suggestions and Directions for Future Research

Future research should involve broader educational contexts and geographical regions. Researchers are also encouraged to examine additional variables, such as organizational culture, work engagement, organizational support, and psychological empowerment, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing educators' job satisfaction.

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Author Contributions

HH contributed to the study conceptualization, data collection and analysis, and manuscript preparation. FF contributed to the methodology and statistical analysis. SM contributed to the literature review and revisions of the manuscript. AF supervised the study and validated its findings. All authors have reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

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