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## Transformational Leadership, Organizational Climate and Job Satisfaction in Work Teams

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Submitted 23/02/18, 1st revision 12/03/19, 2nd revision 17/04/19, accepted 20/06/19

Jorge Imer Gaviria-Rivera<sup>1</sup>, Esteban López-Zapata<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract:**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this paper is to analyze the role of transformational leadership and its relationship with organizational climate, job satisfaction and work team performance.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** An empirical study was conducted with questionnaires applied to a sample of 185 leaders and work team collaborators from Colombian companies belonging to the construction sector. The hypotheses were tested using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

**Findings:** The results showed that transformational leadership positively influences job satisfaction and organizational climate in work teams. It was also found that job satisfaction has a positive influence on organizational climate, and that both constructs positively influence teamwork performance.

**Practical Implications:** This study analyzes the strategic role transformational leadership plays in organizational results stemming from work teams, to the extent that such leadership style promotes a positive organizational climate and high employee satisfaction levels. Organizations could enhance their performance through practices that promote this leadership style in their managers.

**Originality/Value:** This research expands the literature on transformational leadership by presenting empirical evidences on the relationship between this leadership style, organizational climate, job satisfaction, and team performance in the particular context of an emerging economy such as Colombia.

**Keywords:** Transformational leadership, job satisfaction, organizational climate, team performance.

**JEL code:** J28, M12, M14.

**Paper type :** Research article.

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<sup>1</sup>Universidad de Antioquia, Facultad de Ciencias Económicas, Departamento de Ciencias Administrativas, Colombia, [imer.gaviria@udea.edu.co](mailto:imer.gaviria@udea.edu.co)

<sup>2</sup>Corresponding autor. Universidad de Antioquia, Facultad de Ciencias Económicas, Departamento de Ciencias Administrativas, Colombia, [esteban.lopez@udea.edu.co](mailto:esteban.lopez@udea.edu.co)

## 1. Introduction

Transformational leadership is one of the most researched topics of the past few decades, attracting such attention due to its importance to organizational productivity (Ng, 2017). This style of leadership is evidenced by behaviors such as identifying and articulating a vision, providing an appropriate model, fostering acceptance of group goals, demonstrating high performance expectations, providing individualized support to staff, and intellectual stimulation (Podsakoff *et al.*, 1990). The interest for understanding the impact of transformational leadership on team performance has increased given the significance that work teams have acquired as a type of organized units within companies. Both academics and managers recognize that the way work is carried out in organizations is increasingly focused on relationships, particularly on the relationship between the leader and their work team (Nader *et al.*, 2014; Suwanti, *et al.*, 2018).

This research study intends to analyze the role of transformational leadership and its relation to outcome variables such as organizational climate, job satisfaction, and work team performance. To that end, the background and main contributions from the concepts of transformational leadership are presented, and based on the existing literature, a series of hypotheses is supported upon the relationship among these variables. Subsequently, empirical work is carried out using a sample of leaders and collaborators from companies pertaining to the construction sector in Colombia to contrast the hypotheses. Finally, the results, discussion, conclusions and future lines of research are presented.

This study helps to highlight transformational leadership as a management style that favors the achievement of business goals and the development of competitive advantages for organizations. Currently, it is more important to understand what people are rather than what they do; this is easier to achieve with transformational leaders who are closer to their collaborators to better understand their needs, to encourage their innovation and creativity, engaging them and communicating the objectives of the organization to them.

## 2. Transformational Leadership

Leadership is a process of social influence in which a person can gain the help and support of others when carrying out a common task. Due to its strong influence on both followers and organizational processes, leadership is said to play a critical role in achieving organizational goals and efficiency (Nielsen *et al.*, 2016; Rizki *et al.*, 2019.). At the beginning of the twentieth century, the phenomenon of leadership began to be studied and the first theories were born: some focused on the attributes that are characteristic of leaders (traits theory), others focused on the specific behaviors that the leader has with the members of their team (behavioral theories), and others analyze the correspondence between leadership styles and contingencies that make these styles more or less effective (contingency theories) (Robbins, 2004).

In particular, a style of leadership that inspires followers to transcend their own interests for the good of the organization and one which is able to produce a profound and remarkable effect on its followers is highlighted: transformational leadership.

Bass (1990) argues that transformational leaders show consideration by paying attention to particular developmental needs of each one of their employees; leaders allow employees to explore new opportunities, to diagnose organizational problems, and to create solutions. Problems, rapid changes and uncertainties require a flexible organization with leaders who can inspire employees to participate enthusiastically in team efforts and share the organization's goals. The components of transformational leadership are identified in Table 1. These are based both on the literature review carried out and on the concepts provided by some of the most important authors in this field. It is noted that the main dimensions of this leadership style include: communicating a positive vision of the future, empowerment that fosters trust, support and recognition of people, staff development as individuals, innovative thinking, leadership through example, and charisma.

**Table 1:** Behavioral components of Transformational Leadership

House (1977)	Bradford and Cohen (1997)	Bass (1985)	Podsakoff et al. (1990)	Carless <i>et al.</i> (2000)
Providing an attractive vision	Determining and building a common vision		Identifying and articulating a vision High performance expectation	Clear and positive vision of the future
Communicating high performance expectations to the follower	Building a shared-responsibility team	Inspirational motivation	Fostering acceptance of group goals	Empowerment
Behavior to incite individual developments	Continuously developing individuals' skills	Individualized consideration	Providing individualized support	Providing support and recognition Staff development
An example to be imitated by followers		Intellectual stimulation Charismatic behavior of the leader	Intellectual stimulation Providing an appropriate model	Innovative thinking Leadership through example Charisma

*Source:* Own Elaboration

Transformational leaders are visionary – they develop an image of the future for their organization and communicate this vision to their subordinates (Carless *et al.*, 2000). This leadership behavior helps identify new opportunities for their unit, department or company, thus developing, bringing together and inspiring others with their vision of the future (Podsakoff *et al.*, 1990).

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Transformational leaders involve team members in decision-making, share power and information with their staff, and foster autonomy (Carless *et al.*, 2000). Participatory management can take the form of leadership in supervisor-subordinate relationships or it may be evidenced in the organization's willingness to share power in the decision-making process.

Supportive leadership includes providing positive feedback to staff by recognizing individual achievements. Leaders express confidence in the skills of their staff through the use of supportive leadership. Successful leaders not only recognize individuals, but also acknowledge the achievements and successes of the team (Carless *et al.*, 2000). For Podsakoff *et al.* (1990), transformational leader style is aimed at promoting cooperation among employees and making them work together towards a common goal.

Transformational leaders also coach their staff – a behavior which shows respect for their followers as individuals and their concern about employees' personal feelings and needs (Podsakoff *et al.*, 1990). The transformation in the leader's behavior and its impact on others is first observed through their individualized consideration of employees. A leader's approach is not simply reduced to satisfying needs and bringing a task to completion; rather, it is recognizing individual differences and needs, as well as cultural issues (Suryanto and Thalassinou, 2017), developing the maximum potential in each one of their collaborators so that increasingly higher levels of performance are reached (Avolio and Bass, 1995).

As for innovative thinking, transformational leaders use creative, sometimes unconventional strategies to achieve their goals. Such leaders are willing to take risks to achieve their vision and enjoy challenging opportunities (Carless *et al.*, 2000). Leadership through example is another characteristic behavior of transformational leadership. Leader behavior sets an example for employees to follow, and is consistent with the values the leader advocates (Podsakoff *et al.*, 1990).

Finally, charisma is another particular attribute of transformational leadership. Charismatic leaders are perceived as trustworthy, highly competent, and worthy of respect. Through charismatic leadership, the follower is inspired and motivated to reach maximum performance for the fulfillment of the goals of the organization (Carless *et al.*, 2000). Transformational leaders achieve results in many different ways: they can be charismatic toward their followers and thus inspire them, they can meet the emotional needs of each employee, and they may intellectually stimulate employees. Charismatic leaders have great power and influence (Bass, 1990).

## **2.1 Transformational Leadership and Organizational Climate**

For Shanker and Sayeed (2012), organizational climate is defined as a global impression of the organization and the personal impact of the work environment. Organizational climate tends to influence employees' work behaviors and perceptions towards the organization. Randhawa and Kaur (2014) define the organizational climate as a relatively enduring quality in the internal environment of an organization, experienced by all its members, which influences their behavior and may be described in terms of the values of a particular set of characteristics or attributes of the organization. For Permarupan *et al.* (2013), nurturing a positive organizational climate for the workforce is no longer seen as a simply attractive option, it is an essential must.

Organizational climate have a tangible effect on employee motivation. A good working climate increases the morale, loyalty and productivity of employees. Given the significance of a fitting organizational climate for good employee performance, Anderson and West (1998) designed a scale which measured such climate based on four dimensions – vision, participative safety, task orientation, and support for innovation. The vision dimension refers to the level of agreement and understanding that individuals have about the goals of the organization. Participative safety is reflected on the way team members feel accepted by others and are willing to share information about team issues. Task orientation is evidenced in the collaborators' intentions to contribute useful ideas and to support ideas of others which allows the best possible results to be obtained. In turn, support for innovation refers to the employees' perception of team's cooperation in the development and application of new ideas (Anderson and West, 1998).

In particular, leadership style is one of the elements that can influence the climate more substantially. Positive, affective climates in an organization arise from people's positive feelings through shared affective and emotional contagion mechanisms (Walter and Bruch, 2010; Menges *et al.*, 2011). Transformational leaders can constitute important affective events which heighten the positive feelings of their followers and seek to meet their emotional needs (Menges *et al.*, 2011). Transformational leadership styles have also been identified in previous studies as a determining factor in the construction of an appropriate social climate for change (Gil *et al.*, 2005; De Poel *et al.*, 2012). Based on such notions, the first hypothesis is proposed as follows:

*H1: Transformational leadership positively influences organizational climate.*

## **2.2 Transformational Leadership and Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is an attitudinal variable determined by the quality of the working conditions of an organization and which, in turn, determines a series of consequences at the level of employees' behavior, such as: absenteeism, work involvement, loyalty towards the company, among others (Mihalcea, 2013). Job satisfaction represents the employee's attitude towards what they like and dislike about their work – it is one of the feelings and thoughts about work that is expressed affectively or cognitively.

Therefore, job satisfaction represents the thinking and perception of employees towards their workplace in many perspectives (Munir and Rahman, 2016). Macdonald and MacIntyre (1997) designed a scale to measure satisfaction inside and outside the workplace, seeking answers about how the employee feels about the characteristics of the job, workplace affect, their reaction to such affection, and their personal problems.

Transformational leaders who actively promote the progress of their followers, their participation, their leadership capacity, as well as their benevolence and integrity, lead to higher levels of trust. Followers who trust their supervisor will feel more satisfied in their jobs (Yang and Mossholder, 2010; Braun *et al.*, 2013). Previous research has indicated that an employee's direct manager has the greatest influence on employee's job satisfaction levels (Mancheno-Smoak *et al.*, 2009). Therefore, leadership practices employed by immediate managers play an important role in determining whether an employee is satisfied with their job or not (Mancheno-Smoak *et al.*, 2009). Based on these ideas, the second hypothesis is proposed as follows:

*H2: Transformational leadership positively influences job satisfaction.*

### **2.3 Organizational Climate and Job Satisfaction**

Tsai (2014) found that the organizational climate has a significant effect on job satisfaction. Employees with clearer and more effective incentives and rewards for job performance have better job satisfaction, and feel higher job security. On the other hand, Belias *et al.* (2015) found a direct relationship between organizational climate and employee job satisfaction and suggested that, since the dimensions of job satisfaction are components of an organization, job satisfaction is an evaluation of organizational culture. Other research studies such as the one by Avram *et al.* (2015) found significant relationships between job satisfaction and organizational culture. In addition, they argue that the perception of a good organizational climate entails a high degree of job satisfaction, which makes the employee feel grateful towards the organization, establishing long-term relationships based on mutual trust. For Rusu and Avasilcai (2014), the conditions of their company, the machines and equipment used in their daily activities, the physical ambience from the workplace, the rules and procedures imposed by the company, and the support offered by the managers to the employees in performing their work, are motivational factors that influence job satisfaction, which show the influence that the organizational climate has on the level of motivation. The third hypothesis, based on such propositions, thus arises as:

*H3: Organizational climate positively influences job satisfaction.*

### **2.4 Organizational Climate and Team Performance**

Rusu and Avasilcai (2014) consider that culture has a direct effect on factors such as morale, employee's work engagement and work satisfaction, and that these "intermediate" factors have a direct impact on organizational effectiveness. The

interaction between the leader and the team climate may have an important effect on the organization's performance or lack of performance to achieve its mission. By fostering motivation and collective orientation towards group performance, transformational leaders build a work group environment supporting high performance. In this way, the workgroup climate is an essential contributor to the effectiveness, cohesion, and interdependence of work groups (McMurray *et al.*, 2012)

Several research studies confirmed that the relationship between employees and the organizational climate are key to success (Iljins *et al.*, 2015). Rusu and Avasilcai (2014) argue that the trend in new project management focuses on technical matters, but issues such as organizational climate and culture are also recognized as essential for analysis. At the team level, the climate provides a shared representation of work team that enables team members to assign shared meaning to events that are important to the team, and determine the actions that will lead to desired outcomes. These ideas have led researchers to posit that team climate is related to team performance (González-Romá *et al.*, 2009). Based on these ideas, the fourth hypothesis is proposed:

*H4: Organizational climate positively influences team performance.*

## **2.5 Job Satisfaction and Team Performance**

Job satisfaction is an orientation of emotions that employees possess towards the role they are performing at the workplace. Job satisfaction is the essential component for employee motivation and encouragement towards better performance. Motivational factors (the nature of the job, the sense of achievement from their work, the recognition, the responsibility that is granted to them and opportunities for personal growth and advancement) help employees to find their worth with regards to the value given to them by the organization, raising the internal happiness of the employees which, in turn, will cause satisfaction (Raziq and Maulabakhsh, 2015). Satisfied employees may be more productive than dissatisfied employees. Employees can make the most of their potential, maintaining positive feelings and attitudes about their job. Additionally, collaborative effort is more likely to occur when everyone is experiencing positive attitudes, and that collaborative effort can increase organizational effectiveness (Gregory *et al.*, 2009).

Organizational effectiveness is a company's long-term ability to achieve consistently its strategic and operational goals. Three major aspects have been identified as key to evaluating organizational effectiveness: productivity, adaptability, and efficiency (Kataria *et al.*, 2013). Quinn and Thorne (2014) explored the link between job satisfaction and organizational effectiveness through company's goal achievement. Their findings indicate that a company's goal is positively related to job satisfaction; thus, such operational effectiveness provides an intrinsic motivation to the employee which, in turn, may increase their job satisfaction. The fifth hypothesis is posed based on these findings is as follows:

*H5: Job satisfaction influences team performance.*

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Sample and Procedures

To evaluate the hypotheses, a questionnaire was initially designed based on the literature review and existing scales for the transformational leadership, organizational climate, job satisfaction and teamwork performance constructs. Subsequently a pilot test was conducted with 30 collaborators from companies belonging to the construction sector in Colombia to verify that the questions were clearly translated and formulated. With the adjusted scales, the virtual questionnaire was submitted to a sample of 185 work team leaders and collaborators from large, medium and small companies in the Colombian construction sector (Table 2).

*Table 2: Sample characteristics*

Classification variable	Categories	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	Male	37.22
	Female	62.78
<b>Age</b>	18 to 24	2.78
	25 to 32	18.89
	33 to 40	35.00
	41 to 50	23.89
	Over 50	19.44
<b>Position</b>	Management	33.33
	Professional	57.78
	Operational level	8.89
<b>Time on the team</b>	Less than two years	51.67
	More than two years	48.33
<b>Number of team members</b>	2 to 10	55.56
	More than 10	44.44
<b>Company size</b>	Microenterprise (1 to 10 employees)	12.78
	Small (11 to 50 employees)	20.56
	Medium (51 to 200 employees)	37.78
	Large (more than 200 employees)	28.89

*Source: Own Elaboration*

#### 3.2 Measurements

To measure each construct, a 5-point Likert scale was used (1: totally disagree, 5: totally agree). To measure the transformational leadership construct, six items were considered, derived from the scale developed by Carless *et al.* (2000), which assesses the dimensions: clear and positive vision of the future, empowerment, support and recognition, staff development, innovative thinking, leadership through example and charisma. Some sample items for this construct are: “the team leader gives

encouragement and recognition to staff”, “the leader fosters trust, involvement and cooperation among team members”, “the leader encourages thinking about problems in new ways and questions assumptions”.

To measure the organizational climate construct, ten items were included, adapted from the scale proposed by Anderson and West (1998), which includes assessment of the following climate dimensions: vision, participative safety, task orientation and support for innovation. These are some sample items: “I think that the other members of the team clearly understand the team’s objectives”, “team members feel understood and accepted by each other”, “team members build on each other’s ideas in order to achieve the best possible outcome”, “people in the team cooperate in order to help develop and apply new ideas”.

Drawing on the scale developed by Macdonald and MacIntyre (1997), five items were used to measure the job satisfaction construct. Some sample items are: “I receive recognition for a job well done”, “I feel good about working at this company”, “I feel good about my job”.

Finally, four items were considered to measure team performance from the scale developed by Sun *et al.* (2014). These are some example items: “my team does high quality work”, “my team’s overall performance is excellent”.

#### **4. Results**

The scales’ validity and reliability were proven through a Confirmatory Factorial Analysis with EQS 6.1 software using the robust maximum likelihood method. These results are presented in Table 3. The standardized factor loadings are above 0.7 for all items, which guarantees a suitable convergent validity (Hair *et al.*, 1999). Likewise, Cronbach Alpha and the composite reliability index are above 0.7 for each construct, and the average variance extracted is greater than 0.5 for each case, which permits to verify an adequate reliability of the scales (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Results also yielded suitable goodness-of-fit indexes ( $\chi^2 = 340.57$ ,  $df = 269$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $NFI = 0.84$ ;  $NNFI = 0.96$ ;  $CFI = 0.96$ ;  $IFI = 0.96$ ;  $RMSEA = 0.038$ ). Regarding the common method bias, the Harman single factor test showed a very poor fit for the single factor model ( $\chi^2 = 714.22$ ,  $df = 252$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $NFI = 0.65$ ;  $NNFI = 0.71$ ;  $CFI = 0.74$ ;  $IFI = 0.74$ ;  $RMSEA = 0.10$ ).

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics and the correlations between constructs. In general, the results show significant correlations between all factors. Discriminant validity was assessed by verifying that value “1” was not in the confidence interval of the correlations between the different constructs (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988) and that the square root of the average variance extracted for each factor was greater than the estimated correlation between each pair of factors (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). This last criterion is not met only between factor 2 and 4, but taking into account that

this difference is not significant and that the first criterion is met, it can be considered that the scales have sufficient discriminant validity.

**Table 3:** *Constructs, reliability and validity analysis*

Construct	Variable	Loading	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
Transformational Leadership	TL1	0.912	0.951	0.788	0.765
	TL2	0.915			
	TL3	0.904			
	TL4	0.845			
	TL5	0.820			
	TL6	0.848			
Organizational Climate	C1	0.799	0.957	0.730	0.692
	C2	0.812			
	C3	0.826			
	C4	0.835			
	C5	0.827			
	C6	0.848			
	C7	0.863			
	C8	0.846			
	C9	0.804			
	C10	0.855			
Job Satisfaction	S1	0.759	0.926	0.757	0.727
	S2	0.912			
	S3	0.760			
	S4	0.888			
	S5	0.928			
Team Performance	P1	0.876	0.933	0.803	0.784
	P2	0.855			
	P3	0.878			
	P4	0.930			

*Source:* Own Elaboration

**Table 4:** *Means, standard deviations and correlations*

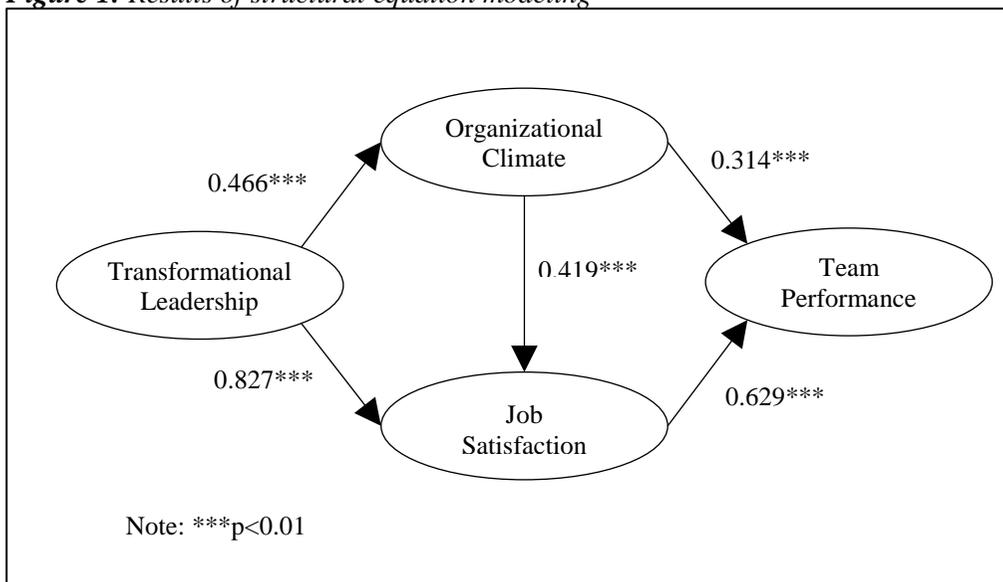
Variable	Mean	SD	F1	F2	F3	F4
F1: Transformational Leadership	4.21	1.06	<b>0.875</b>	0.818	0.802	0.748
F2: Organizational Climate	3.97	1.003	(0.763;0.873)	<b>0.832</b>	0.793	0.876
F3: Job Satisfaction	4.03	1.13	(0.743;0.861)	(0.732;0.854)	<b>0.853</b>	0.811
F4: Team Performance	4.08	0.98	(0.675;0.821)	(0.817;0.917)	(0.752;0.87)	<b>0.885</b>

Below the diagonal: confidence interval for the correlation between factors. Diagonal: square root of the average variance extracted. Above the diagonal: estimated correlation between factors

Source: Own Elaboration

To validate the hypotheses, a Structural Equation Model was analyzed using the robust maximum likelihood method. This model allowed to confirm the statements described in the five hypotheses (Figure 1). In order to assess the model, the goodness-of-fit indexes and the respective standardized beta coefficients were evaluated for each one of the relationships (Table 5).

Figure 1: Results of structural equation modeling



Source: Own Elaboration

Table 5: Coefficients of structural equations

	Hypothesis (Path)	Standard coefficient	Robust t-value
H1	Transformational Leadership → Organizational Climate	0.466	5.495
H2	Transformational Leadership → Job Satisfaction	0.827	11.043
H3	Organizational Climate → Job Satisfaction	0.419	4.914
H4	Organizational Climate → Team Performance	0.314	3.664
H5	Job Satisfaction → Team Performance	0.629	6.780

$\chi^2 = 342.09$ ,  $df = 271$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $NFI = 0.84$ ;  $NNFI = 0.96$ ;  $CFI = 0.96$ ;  $IFI = 0.96$ ;  $RMSEA = 0.038$

Source: Own Elaboration

On the one hand, it can be observed that the goodness-of-fit index NFI (0.843) presents a value below 0.9. Even so, the other indexes, NNFI, CFI and IFI present values above 0.95 and RMSEA is lower than 0.05; therefore, it can be considered that the model

presents a suitable goodness-of-fit. On the other hand, the results show a significant positive coefficient between the transformational leadership and organizational climate constructs ( $\beta=0.466$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), which corroborates hypothesis 1, suggesting a significant relationship between both factors. Furthermore, a direct and significant influence was found between transformational leadership and job satisfaction ( $\beta=0.827$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), which corroborates hypothesis 2. In the same manner, the results show that, just as stated in hypothesis 3, organizational climate positively influences job satisfaction ( $\beta=0.419$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Also, a direct relationship between organizational climate and team performance is evidenced ( $\beta = 0.314$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), as was stated in hypothesis 4. Finally, it is observed that teamwork members' job satisfaction is positively related with their team's performance ( $\beta = 0.629$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), such as was stated in hypothesis 5 that links both constructs.

## **5. Discussion and Conclusions**

This investigation was conducted with the aim of analyzing the role of transformational leadership and its relationship with organizational climate, job satisfaction and work team performance. It highlights the importance of this leadership style in achieving corporate objectives and searching sustainable competitive advantage.

The obtained results show strong and positive relationships between all the variables included in this study. In the first place, it was possible to prove how transformational leadership is a determining factor for team members to feel satisfied with their job. A supervisor or manager with this leadership style will create an environment of trust and individualized support, helping the collaborators to feel satisfied with the job they are doing. To achieve this, it is important that in the recruitment and selection processes of employees who will be in charge of staff the attributes of this leadership style are valued. Similarly, it is recommended to train bosses and managers who are already in the company and provide them with the necessary tools to develop these behaviors.

It was also shown how transformational leadership directly influences a good organizational climate. It is essential that organizations consider the transcendence of human factor in goal achievement and implement organizational practices that generate a positive organizational climate. This is a responsibility and commitment of the managers because, upon generating the appropriate work environment conditions, they will have satisfied staff who will positively regard their job and will feel pleased with it. An effective leadership is that which creates and develops a good climate within the organization, helps achieve the objectives defined at the level of the organization and the satisfaction of each one of its members.

High efficiency and good performance of work teams in organizations has a direct relationship with a good work climate perceived by employees, and with the

satisfaction they have towards their workplaces. This relationship was proven in this study.

It is therefore the managers responsibility to procure both physical and human resources for the organization to guarantee that collaborators work in suitable environments to perform their duties correctly. Good leadership of bosses and managers is key to the organization; the development of the human factor and the organization depends on them to a great extent. Thus, it is important to provide information and training to develop skills and competencies in transformational leadership.

Regarding the limitations of the study, sample representativity must be considered, since only Colombian companies from the construction sector were included. Future research could analyze transformational leadership relationships in firms from other industries and sectors. Another limitation is related with the transversal design (application of the instrument at a given moment); it would be valuable to conduct longitudinal investigations with the same variables in order to understand the dynamic evolution of the relationship between transformational leadership and the rest of the variables analyzed.

For future investigations it would be pertinent to consider measurement variables such as collaborators' motivations; it is important for the transformational leader to be able to identify what really motivates them; each individual is different and needs personalized attention. This would be important so as to be able to draft more suitable welfare programs intended for collaborators.

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