Constructive Leadership Styles, Perceptions of Organizational Support, and the Role of Unionization in Employee Outcomes in Higher Education

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Given the central importance of leadership in organizations, this paper provides a step toward increasing our understanding of how leadership styles influence employee perceptions of organizational support and associated outcomes, and how unionization plays a role, within the unique context of higher education institutions. Using survey data from 53 full-time faculty and staff in both public and private higher education institutions across the Midwestern U.S., we found that perceptions of organizational support mediated the relationships between transformational and transactional leadership styles and both job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Consistent with contingency theory of leadership, which holds that leaders are more effective when they enact styles or behaviors that fit the context (Fiedler, 1964; Tosi & Slocum, 1984), we also examined the moderating role of unionization and found a significant moderating effect for relationships involving transactional leadership and job satisfaction. We conclude with suggestions for future research in this important area.

INTRODUCTION

The behavior of leaders can have a drastic influence on employee experiences and it is no surprise that leadership has served as a topic of great interest in research for many decades. Effective leadership has also been an area of great investment in practice, with the Center for Creative Leadership (2019) reporting that organizations spent a median $346,200 annual budget on leadership development programs. Although this topic is no less important in higher education institutions, leadership effectiveness in higher education has received much less attention in systematic research compared to other organizations (e.g., see Bryman, 2007; Hassan et al., 2018; Roncesvalles & Gaerlan, 2021). Higher education institutions operate differently than typical businesses and organizations in many other industries and, as a result, it is important to understanding how leadership

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behaviors impact key outcomes in the unique context of higher education (Kasalak et al., 2022; Samad et al., 2015). For example, unlike managers in 'typical' organizations in other industries, deans of colleges in universities serve as leaders who must contend with both top-down and bottom-up processes and simultaneously (Hassan et al., 2018), but extant research has predominantly focused on top-level leaders of universities rather than mid-level leaders (Maduforo et al., 2026). Examining leadership in higher education, and particularly leadership styles enacted by deans, can shed light on the extent to which leadership practices influence employee outcomes among faculty and staff and how unionization may shape this relationship.

One of the mechanisms through which leader behaviors can influence employee outcomes such as job satisfaction and turnover is through perceptions of organizational support. Grounded in social exchange theory, perceptions of organizational support is a construct that represents the degree to which employees feel that their employers value and care about their well-being which, in return, can motivate the employees to reciprocate through heightened motivation, job performance, and other positive outcomes (Maan et al., 2020; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). In addition to being a construct of interest in organizational research in general, recent research findings in higher education indicate that these perceptions also play an important role in employee outcomes in higher education institutions (e.g., Carrell et al., 2022; Schmiedehaus et al., 2023). Thus, when exploring the effects of leadership styles in higher education, the role of organizational support perceptions can help elucidate how leadership ultimately impacts the experiences and behaviors of employees.

As a collective whole, the literature illustrates that workplace experiences in higher education are shaped by a complex interaction of leadership practices, employee outcomes, and union representation. Constructive leadership styles have been found to consistently support positive employee outcomes both in higher education and in other industries, yet their effectiveness may be influenced by structural factors such as unionization. Unions can enhance job security and create an environment of perceived fairness, but research examining the potential effects of leadership styles, perceptions of organizational support, and unionization on employee outcomes in higher education within the same study have been limited. This gap in the research highlights the need to examine how leadership practices influence employee outcomes in higher education and how unionization shapes this relationship (Harper, 2026).

Rather than examining leadership, unionization, and organizational support in isolation, the current study contributes to the literature by combining these factors to better understand how they influence the

workplace within the unique structural and cultural context of higher education institutions. Given the importance of leadership in organizations in virtually all industries and within higher education specifically, this study provides a step toward increasing our understanding of how leadership styles influence employee perceptions and associated outcomes, and how unionization may play a role. Using survey data from full-time faculty and staff in four-year colleges and universities across the Midwestern U.S., we examined the mediating role of perceptions of organizational support on the relationship between leadership styles and employee outcomes. Consistent with contingency theory of leadership, which holds that leaders are more effective when they enact styles or behaviors that fit the context (Fiedler, 1964; Tosi & Slocum, 1984), we also examined the moderating role of unionization on these relationships. We conclude with suggestions for future research in this important area.

Leadership in Higher Education

Leaders in higher education institutions can be more impactful when they are committed to supporting employees and empowering them to be successful within their roles. Higher education leaders who demonstrate a high level of commitment to their employee's development and create a positive organizational culture are significantly more likely to have employees who are responsive to change within an organization (Nordin, 2012). Leaders can have a positive impact on both employee- and organizational-level outcomes when they clearly communicate goals and expectations (Backhaus & Vogel, 2022; Bryman, 2007). As an institution continuously evolves, it is critical that leadership is being mindful of the needs of employees because this kind of intentional leadership approach leads to employees who are more committed to goals and success of the organization.

A key challenge in leadership in both research and practice is determining which leadership styles, or patterns of characteristics and behaviors, tend to make leaders more or less effective. Results of a recent meta-analysis of leadership in the public sector, including higher education, indicated strong relationships between leadership style and a variety of important employee outcomes such as job satisfaction and organization-level outcomes such as organizational performance (Backhaus & Vogel, 2022). Consistent with this, the broader leadership literature has distinguished between constructive or positive leadership styles and destructive or negative leadership styles and their effects on employees (Pletzer et al., 2024). One constructive style that has remained prominent in leadership research in general and in higher education specifically is transformational leadership, which is characterized by inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and intellectual

stimulation that collectively fosters trust, engagement, and psychological well-being among employees (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Rodrigues et al., 2025). Transformational leaders create supportive and ethical work environments by promoting shared values, autonomy, and personal growth, leading to significantly higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Lopez et al., 2025; Rodrigues et al., 2025; Rubin et al., 2005; Shaari et al., 2022).

Another constructive style is transactional leadership, which is characterized by the leader recognizing and rewarding when an employee performs well and implementing corrective actions when an employee performs poorly, and which has also been observed to generally have a positive effect on employee outcomes including organizational commitment, well-being, and satisfaction (Nordin, 2012; Rodrigues et al., 2025). Some research has found that the contingent reward behaviors aspect of transactional leadership, which focuses on using rewards to actively reinforce desired behaviors and high performance of employees, is a specific driver of positive employee outcomes (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Rubin et al., 2005).

A recent meta-analysis found a significant relationship between the type of leadership style and job satisfaction and employee performance in higher education institutions, such that humanistic leadership behaviors that incorporate styles such as servant leadership or transformative leadership showed the strongest positive effect, transactional style had a positive but weaker effect, and passive style had a moderate negative effect on the job satisfaction of academic staff (Kasalak et al., 2022). Similarly, a recent study found that employees in higher education with leaders who engaged in transformational styles reported significantly higher satisfaction with relationships, personal growth, environment and benefits, and the work itself (Cheng & Casihan, 2024). This research implies that leadership styles with higher relational connections with academic staff and open communication directly impact employees in positive ways (Cheng & Casihan, 2024; Kasalak et al., 2022).

In contrast to the positive, inspirational characteristics and behaviors associated with constructive leaders, the ‘dark side’ of leadership involving destructive styles like autocratic leadership can emerge as abusive patterns of behavior that undermine employee well-being and organizational stability. Destructive leaders often engage in hostility, excessive control, or misuse of authority, which erodes trust and damages leader–follower relationships. Exposure to such leadership behaviors is associated with increased stress, emotional exhaustion, and higher turnover intentions among employees (Lopez et al., 2025; Rodrigues et al., 2025; Syed et al., 2021).

Overall, the literature on leadership in higher education suggests that while leadership styles alone don't necessarily guarantee a positive outcome, certain constructive approaches to leadership, such as transformational and transactional leadership, are more effective than others. These findings indicate that leadership practices not only shape organizational outcomes but also impact the work experiences and outcomes of individual employees. However, given that leadership effectiveness in the context of higher education has received considerably less attention than in business and other contexts (Hassan et al., 2018; Roncesvalles & Gaerlan, 2021), further exploration of the effects of leadership styles and potential moderators in higher education is warranted.

Perceptions of Organizational Support

Another factor that can impact important employee outcomes and potentially be shaped by leadership behaviors is employees' perceptions of organizational support, or the degree to which they believe their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Maan et al., 2020; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). According to organizational support theory (Eisenberger et al., 2020), employees tend to develop perceptions of organizational support based on how they believe they are treated by the organization, which in turn guides their expectations about future treatment. Grounded in social exchange theory, employees who perceive high levels of organizational support then feel obligated to reciprocate through increased commitment and performance in support of the organization in exchange. Thus, perceptions of organizational support can serve as a critical mechanism through which leadership and workplace conditions may influence employee outcomes.

In a meta-analysis of research on perceptions of organizational support, Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) found that employee perceptions of supervisor support and favorable work conditions were among several factors that contributed to higher levels of perceived organizational support, which in turn positively related to important outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance and negatively related to turnover intentions. Consistent with these findings, a study of employees in various manufacturing and service sectors found that perceived organizational support was positively related to psychological empowerment, which in turn related to higher job satisfaction and, moreover, that this relationship was particularly strong for employees with lower proactive personalities (Maan et al., 2020).

Perceptions of organizational support is also an important factor in employee outcomes in higher education institutions. For example, in a study on the 'great resignation' or increased rate of faculty turnover in

academia in recent years, researchers found that low levels of perceived organizational support was one of the major factors in higher turnover intentions among faculty (Schmiedehaus et al., 2023). Another study found that, for strategic enrollment managers in higher education institutions, perceptions of organizational support mediated the relationship between perceptions of their managers' coaching behaviors and job engagement (Carrell et al., 2022). In addition, a study of faculty in India found that perceptions of organizational support was significantly related to ethical behavior, and that this relationship was partially mediated by employees' moral ownership or felt responsibility for ethical behavior (Jino & Dyaram, 2019).

Although the findings of these studies indicate that perceived organizational support appears to influence important employee outcomes in higher education, they did not examine the potential role of specific leadership styles in these institutions. Understanding whether and how leadership behaviors may play a role will help shed light on how to enhance support perceptions and improve relevant outcomes in higher education. Outside of higher education, constructive leadership styles do appear to have a positive effect on perceptions of organizational support. For example, a recent study of kindergarten teachers found that contingent reward leadership behaviors led to higher perceptions of organizational support, which in turn led to higher creative teaching performance (Huang et al., 2025). Another recent study of workers in various industries in China found that visionary leadership was related to higher levels of perceived organizational support, which in turn was positively related to employee creativity (Li et al., 2023). In addition, a study of retail workers found that employees whose supervisors engaged in initiating structure leadership behaviors, which is a leadership style involving clear communication and guidance, were more likely to perceive their organizations as supportive and, in turn, were more likely to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors and less likely to quit (Gaudet & Tremblay, 2017).

Consistent with this, in the current study, we expected perceptions of organizational support to mediate the relationship between constructive leadership styles and employee outcomes in higher education settings. Unlike organizations in many other industries, faculty and many staff in higher education institutions either do not have a direct supervisor in the traditional sense, or the person who serves in a supervisor or equivalent role is not necessarily the same as the person who provides visionary leadership to the academic unit. For example, a faculty member's department chair may oversee some aspects of work such as coordinating teaching schedules, whereas the dean of the college or academic unit is responsible for communicating and implementing strategic goals for the unit as a whole. Although linkages between specific leadership styles and

perceptions of organizational support in higher education have received little attention in research relative to other fields, one recent study examined the relationship between transformational leadership and perceived support for university faculty in China and found that faculty perceptions of organizational support served as a significant mediator of the relationship between transformational styles of leaders and knowledge sharing behaviors of faculty (Chen et al., 2024). This lends some credence to the possibility that constructive leadership behaviors such as transformational and transactional styles will have a similar effect on perceived support in higher education as observed in other fields. As such, we expected faculty and staff to perceive leadership behaviors enacted by the leader of their academic units as a reflection of the institution, thus influencing the degree to which they feel supported by the organization. In turn, this perceived organizational support would influence their job satisfaction and their desire to remain or leave the organization.

> **Hypothesis 1**: Perceptions of organizational support will mediate the relationship between constructive leadership styles and job satisfaction, such that transformational and transactional leadership styles will be positively related to perceptions of organizational support, which in turn will be positively related to job satisfaction.

> **Hypothesis 2**: Perceptions of organizational support will mediate the relationship between constructive leadership styles and turnover intentions, such that transformational and transactional leadership styles will be positively related to perceptions of organizational support, which in turn will be negatively related to turnover intentions.

Unionization and Employee Outcomes in Higher Education

Important employee outcomes appear to vary within and across higher education institutions. For example, in a survey of faculty in political science departments, professional satisfaction was highest for those in private institutions and those with a higher load of graduate versus undergraduate courses, and faculty members with more years of experience and higher levels of tenure had higher job satisfaction than their colleagues (Hesli & Lee, 2013). In another study involving public and private university employees in Pakistan, researchers found that academic staff within private universities had higher job satisfaction in regard to pay, promotion opportunities, and supervision than their public university colleagues, but public university staff rated their job security and relationships with their co-workers higher than did private university employees (Khalid et al., 2012). The findings of this research demonstrate that a wide variety of factors including demographics, institutional

policies, working environment, and employment conditions have a significant impact on satisfaction among faculty and staff in universities.

Unions also play an important role in the workforce and may have a significant impact on employee outcomes within higher education institutions. In the United States, about 27% percent of faculty are represented by a union and membership in unions has grown by 7.5% since 2012 (Flannery, 2024) with significant growth continuing after the COVID-19 pandemic (Harper, 2026). Faculty unions create a voice for employees in the governance process with administration and a vehicle for collective bargaining to improve working conditions such as job security, promotion procedures, and assurance of due process and academic freedom (Clemons, 2024; Wickens, 2008). With that said, while faculty unionization has been associated with higher satisfaction with job security and promotion procedures, research has found either no effects or negative effects of unionization on relationships between faculty and administration and on faculty members' overall job satisfaction (Wickens, 2008). For example, one study found that collective bargaining representation was positively related to satisfaction with compensation, negatively related to satisfaction with workload, and had no significant relationship with overall job satisfaction (Krieg et al., 2013). Research on unionization for faculty and staff in higher education has been largely union-driven and limited (Dzwik & Park, 2023), however, so further research is needed in order to fully grasp the potential effects of this factor in higher education contexts.

These observations are consistent with research on unionization of employees in general, which has consistently found a somewhat surprising relationship in which employees in unionized environments tend to have lower job satisfaction, yet are less likely to quit their jobs, compared to those in non-unionized environments (Laroche, 2017). As noted by Laroche (2017), one potential explanation for this finding is a 'chicken-or-egg' situation, in which employees who are dissatisfied may be more likely to unionize than those who are satisfied, rather than unionization causing dissatisfaction in employees. Regardless, the relationship between unionization and employee outcomes, particularly job satisfaction, appears to be complex (Özyavaş, 2022).

According to the contingency theory of leadership, the effectiveness of leadership styles or behaviors are not necessarily universally effective in every organization and situation, but rather the effectiveness of leadership behavior is dependent on the context in which the behavior occurs (Fiedler, 1964; Tosi & Slocum, 1984). The context can involve a variety of factors such as organizational structure, workplace practices, and employee characteristics. Even though leadership and institutional characteristics have at least some direct influence on job satisfaction, the literature also demonstrates that structural conditions such as job security, shared

governance, and collective bargaining representation play a vital role in shaping higher education employee experiences but that these relationships are complex rather than straight-forward. Despite this, research on leadership in higher education tends to examine aspects of leadership without consideration of contextual factors such as governance and management practices in the institution (Ordorika, 2026). This body of research highlights the importance of examining how unionization may interact with leadership behaviors to shape workplace outcomes in higher education.

To that end, we hypothesized that the relationship between constructive leadership styles and employee outcomes would be influenced by unionization. Although unionization can be operationalized in different ways such as individual membership in a union or more general representation by a collective bargaining agreement, we focused on the latter because, in at least some organizations, collective bargaining representation can impact both members and non-members in the same organization and, in some locations, collective bargaining organizations are required to represent all employees covered by the agreement, not just those who are dues-paying members (e.g., Krieg et al., 2013).

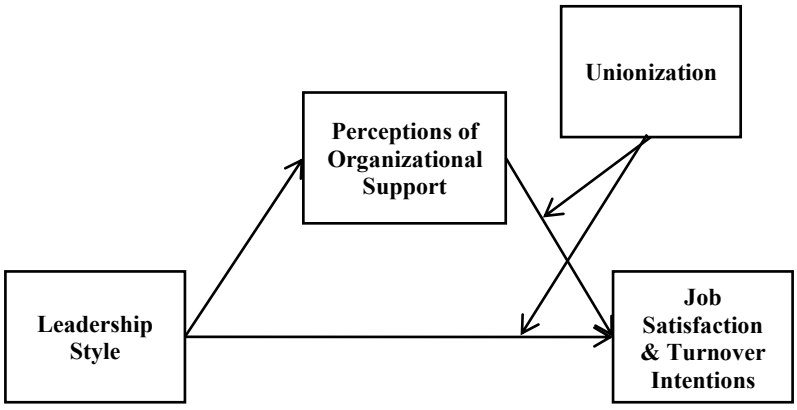
In regard to the influence of leadership styles on employee outcomes, it is possible that unionization is perceived as more beneficial when leaders have poorer relationships with their employees. In other words, in non-unionized environments, we expected to find results similar to previous literature in which constructive leadership styles positively influence employee outcomes. In unionized environments, on the other hand, we expected a paradoxical relationship consistent with findings from some prior research on unionization in which employees would actually be less satisfied at higher levels of constructive leadership (Laroche, 2017). Although it may seem counterintuitive on the surface, it is possible that the benefits of unionization may not be felt as strongly when the leader is constructive because the employees' needs are satisfied by the leader's behaviors, or may even be perceived negatively if the costs of unionization (both in the payment of dues and the potential downsides to unionization, such as strained relationships with administration) may be perceived to outweigh the marginal benefits. On the other hand, when leaders fail to engage in constructive leadership styles, the role of union representation may be more salient and positively influence workplace outcomes because the employees cannot count on their leaders to provide the support and guidance they need. As such, we expected unionization to moderate the relationship between constructive leadership styles and employee outcomes.

Hypothesis 3: Unionization will moderate the relationship between constructive leadership styles and job satisfaction, such that transformational and transactional leadership styles will be associated with higher job satisfaction for non-unionized employees than for unionized employees.

Hypothesis 4: Unionization will moderate the relationship between constructive leadership styles and turnover intentions, such that transformational and transactional leadership styles will be associated with lower turnover intentions for non-unionized employees than for unionized employees.

In order to further elucidate the influence of leadership styles on employee outcomes, we wished to also examine the role of unionization in the previously hypothesized mediating effect of perceived organizational support. Given that perceptions of organizational support represent the degree to which employees feel their organizations value them and takes measures to enhance their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 2020; Maan et al., 2020; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), we postulated that unionization may also have a moderating influence on the relationship between perceived organizational support and employee outcomes. As such, we proposed a moderated mediation in which unionization moderates both the direct relationship between leadership style and employee outcomes and the indirect relationship through perceptions of organizational support, as depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1.
Hypothesized Model Predicting Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intentions.



That is, we hypothesized unionization to moderate two paths of the mediation model. First, we expected there to be a moderating effect of unionization on the relationship between leadership styles and employee outcomes as previously described. Second, we expected that unionization would also moderate the relationship between perceptions of organizational support and employee outcomes. Regarding the latter, perceptions of organizational support were expected to be generally positively related to employee outcomes, but that this relationship would be stronger in unionized institutions. This is because, unlike perceptions of leadership style, in which a less constructive and therefore less effective leader may result in employees feeling less secure in their relationship with their leader and feel a greater need or appreciation for union representation, perceptions of support from the organization itself may operate differently. When an employee feels supported by the entire organization, unionization may produce an additive effect in which employees who feel supported by both their unions and their institutions report more positive outcomes compared to those without unionization.

Hypothesis 5: Unionization will moderate the direct positive relationship between constructive leadership styles and job satisfaction and will moderate the mediating effect of perceptions of organizational support, such that the positive relationship between support and job satisfaction will be stronger for unionized employees.

Hypothesis 6: Unionization will moderate the direct negative relationship between constructive leadership style and turnover intentions and will moderate the mediating effect of perceptions of organizational support, such that the negative relationship between support and turnover intentions will be stronger for unionized employees.

METHOD

Sample and Procedure

The final sample utilized in the current study was comprised of 53 full-time faculty and staff working in academic units (i.e., academic colleges and libraries) at four-year universities and colleges in the Midwestern U.S. who completed an online survey about leadership and workplace experiences. The survey took around 10 to 20 minutes to complete and participants were not offered compensation for taking part in the study. A total of 56 participants completed the survey; however, data from three participants were removed due to failing the two attention check questions embedded within the survey, resulting in a final sample of 53.

Participants in the final sample were 33 faculty (62.3%) and 20 staff (37.7%), with the majority identifying as women (62.3%), White/Caucasian (86.8%), and with age ranges of 25 to 34 (13.2%), 35 to 44 (13.2%), 45 to 54 (28.8%), 55 to 64 (30%), and 65 or older (13.2%) with one (1.9%) unknown. Participants reported organizational tenure (i.e., number of years at current institution) with ranges including less than 1 year (7.5%), 1 to 3 years (17%), 4 to 6 years (17%), 7 to 10 years (18.9%), 11 to 15 years (13.2%), 16 to 20 years (11.3%), or more than 20 years (15.1%). Participants held positions in either public (52.8%) or private (45.3%) institutions (with one or 1.9% unknown), unionized (35.8%) or non-unionized (58.5%) with three (5.7%) unknown, and the vast majority of institutions were non-profit (94.3%) rather than for-profit (5.7%). Institutions were located in Illinois (47.2%), Indiana (11.3%), Missouri (11.3%), Michigan (9.4%), Iowa (7.5%), Ohio (7.5%), and Wisconsin (5.7%).

Participants were recruited by first compiling a list of public and private four-year universities and colleges in each of the seven states included in the study, along with a list of each academic unit (i.e., academic colleges offering curriculum and instruction and libraries) that has its own dean or equivalent unit head. As such, non-academic units (e.g., Dean of Students office) were excluded, as well as institutions whose academic units did not have their own deans/unit heads but rather were organized under a centralized leadership structure. For each academic unit within each institution, we utilized a random number generator to determine whether to recruit a faculty or staff member from that unit and then used a random letter generator to select from a list of faculty/staff on that institution's website or public directory based on their last name. If more than one person's last name began with the same letter, we selected the name in which the second letter was earliest in the alphabet (e.g., last name Sanders would be selected rather than last name Smith). Although not perfectly random, this method allowed for a relatively unbiased identification of potential participants to recruit while ensuring that only one person from each unit was selected so that each dean or unit head would be evaluated by only one individual.

After potential participants were identified, an email invitation to participate was sent via Qualtrics with an individualized link to the online survey. One reminder email was sent approximately one week after the initial invitation. After approximately two weeks, the survey links expired and a second wave of potential participants were identified and recruited from each academic unit that did not receive a response from the previous wave by using the same randomizer technique described above. This method continued for three waves of recruitment for each institution.

The study only included those who were employed full-time and who were not currently serving in an administrative leadership role such as dean or unit head. In addition to the email invitation describing these inclusion criteria, two screening questions were used at the start of the survey ("Do you work full-time at your institution?" and "Do you currently serve as Dean, unit head, or highest-level administrator responsible for leading your academic college, school, or unit?") to ensure that participants met the inclusion criteria.

Survey Design and Measures

This study utilized a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationships among leadership practices, unionization, perceptions of organizational support, and employee outcomes within higher education institutions. The survey was built in Qualtrics and did not collect participants' IP addresses or other identifying information other than the state from which the participant was recruited. Although the email distribution function in Qualtrics was utilized to send invitations and automatically track and send reminders to those who had not completed the survey, this email address and institution information was housed within Qualtrics only and was not part of the survey data files. Survey responses were therefore confidential and reported only in aggregate form. The study received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the authors' institution prior to commencing recruitment and data collection.

Leadership Styles

Two types of leadership styles were measured to assess participants' perceptions of the styles used by their unit heads/leaders. Transformational leadership was measured with the seven-item Transformational Leadership Scale (Carless et al., 2000) using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = Rarely or Never; 5 = Very Frequently or Always). Items were modified for the current study by using the term "My Dean/Unit Head" to indicate the target leader to be evaluated by the participant. An example item is, "My Dean/Unit Head communicates a clear and positive vision of the future." The constructive or 'positive' aspect of transactional leadership, contingent reward behavior, was measured with the five-item Contingent Reward Behavior scale (Podsakoff et al. , 1984; Rubin et al., 2005) using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree). Items were modified for the current study by using the term "My Dean/Unit Head" to indicate the target leader to be evaluated by the participant. An example item is, "My Dean/Unit Head gives me positive feedback when I perform well". Internal consistency reliability was

acceptable for both the transformational (α = .94) and transactional (α = .93) leadership style measures.

Perceptions of Organizational Support

Perceptions of organizational support was measured with the ten-item Perceived Organizational Support Scale (Shanock et al., 2019) using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree). An example item is, "the organization values my contribution to its well-being". This measure had acceptable internal consistency reliability (α = .96).

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction was measured with the ten-item Job Satisfaction Scale **(**Macdonald & MacIntyre, 1997) using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree). An example item is, "I feel good about my job." This measure had acceptable internal consistency reliability (α = .91).

Turnover Intentions

Turnover intentions was measured with the three-item Turnover Intention Scale (Cammann et al., 1983) using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree). An example item is, "I often think about quitting my job." This measure had acceptable internal consistency reliability (α = .85).

Unionization

To determine whether the participant worked in a unionized environment, participants were asked the following question: "Is your institution unionized? A *labor union* is an organization that represents employees in matters related to working conditions, compensation, and employment policies." Response options were Yes, No, or Not Sure. To aid in comparisons of unionized and non-unionized environments, this variable was coded as dichotomous with responses of "Not Sure" treated as missing data.

Demographics and Control Variables

For reporting and description purposes, demographics-related questions regarding participant's gender, age range, and race/ethnicity were included in the survey as well as institution type (non-profit or for-profit). For inclusion as control variables, questions requesting participant's organizational tenure (as range of years working at current institution), job position (faculty or staff), and whether their current institution is public or private were also included in the survey in order to

control for potential influence of these factors on the hypothesized relationships. To control for the potential influence of the participant's or institution's location at the state level, the state from which the survey link was sent (1 = Illinois, 2 = Indiana, 3 = Iowa, 4 = Michigan, 5 = Ohio, 6 = Wisconsin, 7 = Michigan) was also included in the dataset.

RESULTS

Correlations and descriptive statistics for the focal variables are displayed in Table 1. Given that this study utilized dichotomous and ordinal variables, correlations were computed using Spearman's coefficient. To analyze the hypotheses involving mediation, moderation, and moderated mediation, analyses were conducted using the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018) for SPSS version 32 using listwise deletion of missing data, 95% confidence intervals, and 5,000 bootstrap resamples. The PROCESS program utilizes a path analysis framework in which various models involving mediation and/or moderation can be analyzed (e.g., see Edwards & Lambert, 2007) along with the use of asymmetric bootstrap calculations of confidence intervals and standard errors of indirect effects, which results in more robust conclusions compared to simple mediation tests such as the causal steps approach (Baron & Kenny, 1986) and indirect effect tests (e.g., the Sobel z-test; Baron & Kenny 1986).

Table 1.
Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Unionization†	-					
2. Transformat.	.12					
3. Transact.	.01	.73**				
4. Org. Support	.16	.52**	.53**			
5. Job Satisfact.	.10	.58**	.45**	.87**		
6. Turnover Int.	-.05	-.32*	-.24	-.56**	-.61**	-
N	53	53	53	52	50	53
Mean	1.62	3.18	3.10	3.01	3.26	2.56

Standard Deviation	.49	1.16	1.14	1.02	.85	1.12

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$ ** †1 = unionized; 2 = not unionized.

To examine the mediating effect of perceptions of organizational support as proposed in Hypotheses 1 and 2, the mediation models were analyzed using the Model 4 option in the PROCESS macro. Results are displayed in Tables 2 and 3. For Hypothesis 1, perceptions of organizational support significantly mediated the relationship between transformational leadership style and job satisfaction (*ab* = .22, CI [.07, .38]) such that higher levels of transformational leadership were related to higher levels of support (*b* = .35, $p < .01$), which in turn related to higher levels of job satisfaction (*b* = .62, $p < .01$). Perceptions of support also significantly mediated the relationship between transactional leadership style and job satisfaction (*ab* = .29, CI [.13, .47]) such that higher levels of transactional leadership were related to higher levels of support (*b* = .40, $p < .01$), which in turn related to higher levels of job satisfaction (*b* = .72, $p < .01$). For Hypothesis 2, perceptions of organizational support significantly mediated the relationship between transformational leadership style and turnover intentions (*ab* = -.23, CI [-.52, -.06]) such that higher levels of transformational leadership were related to higher levels of support (*b* = .35, $p < .01$), which in turn related to lower levels of turnover intentions (*b* = -.66, $p < .01$). Perceptions of support also significantly mediated the relationship between transactional leadership style and turnover intentions (*ab* = -.30, CI [-.59, -.10]) such that higher levels of transactional leadership were related to higher levels of support (*b* = .40, $p < .01$), which in turn related to higher levels of job satisfaction (*b* = -.75, $p < .01$). Taken together, the results fully support Hypotheses 1 and 2.

Table 2.
Mediation Results Predicting Job Satisfaction.

	Transformational Leadership				
Path	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	*95% CI*
Transform → Support	.35	.11	3.29	<.01	[.14, .56]
Support → Job Satisfaction	.62	.08	7.99	<.01	[.47, .78]
Direct effect (Transform → Satisfaction)	.13	.06	2.03	.05	[.00, .25]
Total effect (Transform → Satisfaction)	.34	.09	3.98	<.01	[.17, .52]
Indirect effect (Transform → Support → Satisfaction)	.22	.08			[.07, .38]

	Transactional Leadership				
Path	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	*95% CI*
Transact → Support	.40	.12	3.42	<.01	[.17, .64]
Support → Job Satisfaction	.72	.08	8.81	<.01	[.55, .88]
Direct effect (Transact → Job Satisfaction)	-.05	.07	-.73	.47	[-.20, .09]
Total effect (Transact → Job Satisfaction)	.24	.11	2.22	.03	[.02, .45]
Indirect effect (Transact → Support → Job Satisfaction)	.29	.09			[.13, .47]

N = 52; Confidence intervals (CI) are 95% bias-corrected estimates with bootstrap 5,000 samples displayed as [lower limit CI, upper limit CI]. State, job position, public/private, and tenure entered as control variables (not displayed in table; full results available upon request).

Table 3.
Mediation Results Predicting Turnover Intentions.

	Transformational Leadership				
Path	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	*95% CI*
Transform → Support	.35	.11	3.29	<.01	[.14, .56]
Support → Turnover Intentions	-.66	.18	-3.77	<.01	[-1.02, -.31]
Direct effect (Transform → Turnover Intentions)	-.02	.14	-.16	.87	[-.31, .26]
Total effect (Transform → Turnover Intentions)	-.25	.14	-1.77	.08	[-.54, .04]
Indirect effect (Transform → Support → Turnover Int.)	-.23	.12			[-.52, -.06]
	Transactional Leadership				
Path	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	*95% CI*
Transactional → Support	.40	.12	3.42	<.01	[.17, .64]
Support → Turnover Intentions	-.75	.18	-4.28	<.01	[-1.10, -.40]
Direct effect (Transactional → Turnover Intentions)	.15	.16	.96	.34	[-.17, .47]
Total effect (Transactional → Turnover Intentions)	-.15	.17	-.93	.36	[-.48, .18]
Indirect effect (Transact. → Support → Turnover Int.)	-.30	.12			[-.59, -.10]

N = 52; Confidence intervals (CI) are 95% bias-corrected estimates with bootstrap 5,000 samples displayed as [lower limit CI, upper limit CI]. State, job position, public/private, and tenure entered as control variables (not displayed in table; full results available upon request).

To examine the moderating effect of unionization on the relationship between leadership style and employee outcomes as proposed in Hypotheses 3 and 4, the moderation models were analyzed using the Model 1 option in the PROCESS macro. Results for Hypothesis 3 are displayed in Table 4; results for Hypothesis 4 are available upon request. For Hypothesis 3, the moderating effect of unionization on the relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction was not significant (b = .02, p = .10). The moderating effect of unionization was significant for the relationship between transactional leadership and job satisfaction (b = .47, p = .02). As depicted in Figure 2, at a lower level of transactional leadership style (i.e., one standard deviation below the mean), participants in a unionized environment reported higher job satisfaction than did participants in a non-unionized environment, but at a higher level of transactional leadership style (i.e., one standard deviation above the mean), participants in a unionized environment reported lower job satisfaction than those in a non-unionized environment. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was supported only for transactional leadership style. For Hypothesis 4, the moderating effect of unionization on the relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intentions was not significant (b = .14, p = .68), nor was it significant for the relationship between transactional leadership and turnover intentions (b = -.37, p = .23). As such, Hypothesis 4 was not supported.

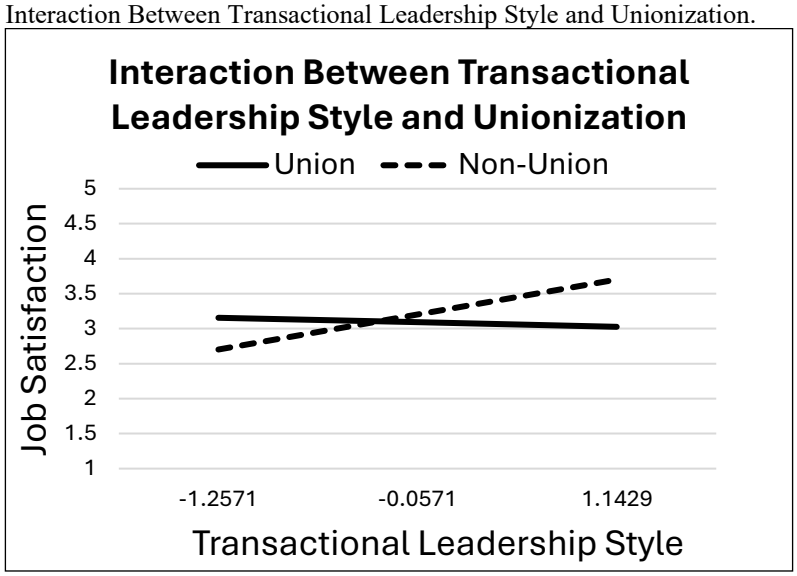
Table 4.
Moderation Results Predicting Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intentions.

	Outcome: Job Satisfaction				
Variable	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	*95% CI*
Constant	3.64	.56	6.53	<.01	[2.52, 4.77]
Transformational	.36	.09	3.86	<.01	[.17, .54]
Unionized	.07	.25	.28	.79	[-.43, .57]
Transform*Union	.02	.20	.10	.92	[-.38, .42]
	R^2	*SE*	*F*	*df (1,2)*	*p*
Model R^2	.41	.47	4.12	(7, 41)	<.01
Model ΔR^2 (Interaction)	<.01		.01	(1, 41)	.92
	Outcome: Job Satisfaction				
Variable	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	*95% CI*
Constant	3.89	.57	6.84	<.01	[2.74, 5.03]
Transactional	.24	.10	2.35	.02	[.03, .45]
Unionized	.14	.25	.54	.59	[-.37, .65]

Transact*Union	.47	.19	2.51	.02	[.09, .85]
	R^2	*SE*	*F*	*df (1,2)*	*p*
Model R^2	.37	.51	3.38	(7, 41)	.01
Model ΔR^2 (Interaction)	.10		6.29	(1, 41)	.02

N = 49; Confidence intervals (CI) are 95% bias-corrected estimates with bootstrap 5,000 samples displayed as [lower limit CI, upper limit CI]. State, job position, public/private, and tenure entered as control variables (not displayed in table; full results available upon request).

Figure 2.
Interaction Between Transactional Leadership Style and Unionization.



To examine the mediation and moderation effects proposed in Hypotheses 5 and 6, the moderated mediation models were analyzed using the Model 15 option in the PROCESS macro. Results are displayed in Tables 5 and 6. For Hypothesis 5, although the relationships between transformational leadership and perceptions of organizational support (b = .40, p < .01) and between perceptions of organizational support and job satisfaction (b = .68, p < .01) were significant, neither the interaction between transformational leadership and unionization (b = .33, p = .07) nor the interaction between perceptions of organizational support and unionization (b = -.30, p = .14) were significant predictors of job satisfaction.

Table 5.

Moderated Mediation Results for Transformational Leadership Style.

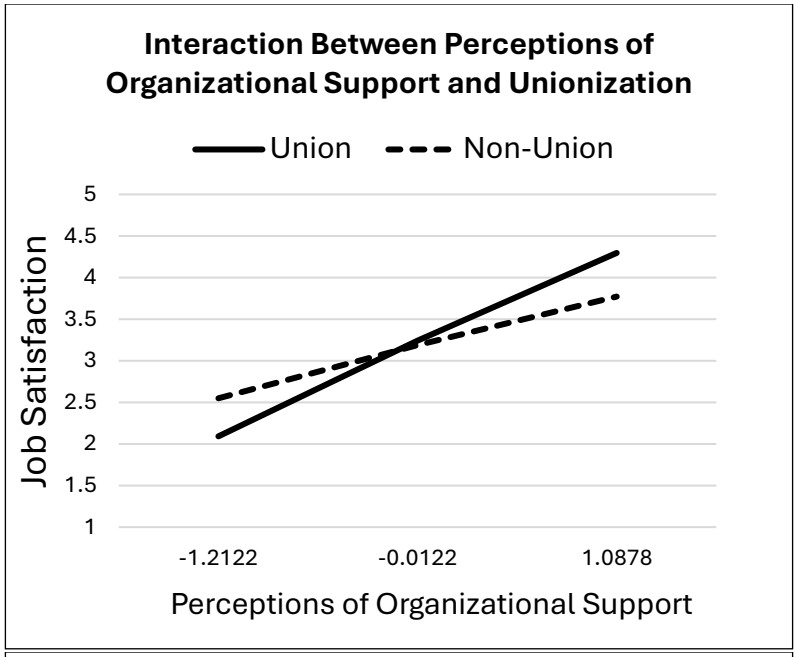
	Outcome: Organizational Support				
Variable	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	*95% CI*
Constant	.31	.61	.52	.61	[-.91, 1.54]
Transformational	.40	.10	3.87	<.01	[.19, .60]
	Outcome: Job Satisfaction				
Variable	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	*95% CI*
Constant	3.38	.36	9.42	<.01	[2.65, 4.10]
Transformational	.05	.07	.76	.46	[-.09, .20]
Org. Support	.68	.09	7.83	<.01	[.50, .85]
Unionized	-.05	.16	-.33	.75	[-.37, .27]
Transform*Unionized	.33	.18	1.85	.07	[-.03, .68]
Org. Support*Unionized	-.30	.20	-1.51	.14	[-.71, .10]
	Index of Moderated Mediation				
Moderator	*Index*		*SE*		*95%CI*
Unionized	-.12		.09		[-.31, .02]
	Outcome: Organizational Support				
Variable	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	*95% CI*
Constant	.31	.61	.52	.61	[-.91, 1.54]
Transformational	.40	.10	3.87	<.01	[.19, .60]
	Outcome: Turnover Intentions				
Variable	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	*95% CI*
Constant	3.12	.83	3.76	<.01	[1.44, 4.80]
Transformational	.10	.17	.58	.57	[-.24, .43]
Org. Support	-.78	.20	-3.89	<.01	[-1.19, -.38]
Unionized	-.01	.37	-.02	.98	[-.75, .73]
Transform*Unionized	-.20	.41	-.50	.62	[-1.03, .62]
Org. Support*Unionized	.33	.46	.72	.48	[-.61, 1.27]
	Index of Moderated Mediation				
Moderator	*Index*		*SE*		*95%CI*
Unionized	.13		.19		[-.20, .56]

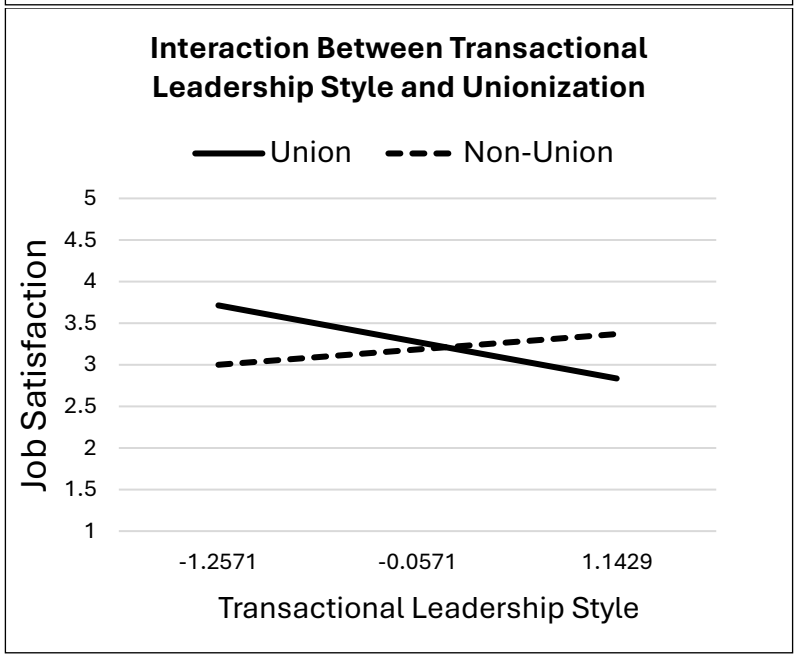
N = 49; Confidence intervals (CI) are 95% bias-corrected estimates with bootstrap 5,000 samples displayed as [lower limit CI, upper limit CI]. State, job position, public/private, and tenure entered as control variables (not displayed in table; full results available upon request).

For transactional leadership style, the relationships between transactional leadership and perceptions of support ($b = .41$, $p < .01$) and

between perceptions of organizational support and job satisfaction (b = .69, p < .01) were significant, and the interaction between transactional leadership and unionization (b = .52, p < .01) on job satisfaction was significant. For lower levels of transactional leadership (i.e., one standard deviation below the mean), those in unionized environments reported higher job satisfaction then did those in non-unionized environments, whereas for higher levels of transactional leadership (i.e., one standard deviation above the mean), those in unionized environments reported lower job satisfaction than did those in non-unionized environments (see Figure 3). The interaction between perceptions of organizational support and unionization (b = -.43, p = .01) was also a significant predictor of job satisfaction. As depicted in Figure 3, for participants who perceived lower levels of organizational support (i.e., one standard deviation below the mean), those in unionized environments reported lower job satisfaction then did those in non-unionized environments, whereas for participants who perceived higher levels of organizational support (i.e., one standard deviation above the mean), those in unionized environments reported higher job satisfaction than did those in non-unionized environments. Taken together, these results provide partial support for Hypothesis 5 in terms of transactional leadership, but not transformational leadership, styles.

Figure 3.
Unionization as Moderator of Perceptions of Organizational Support and Transactional Leadership Style.


Interaction Between Perceptions of Organizational Support and Unionization
Union
Non-Union
Job Satisfaction
5
4.5
4
3.5
3
2.5
2
1.5
1
-1.2122
-0.0122
1.0878
Perceptions of Organizational Support


Interaction Between Transactional Leadership Style and Unionization
Union
Non-Union
Job Satisfaction
5
4.5
4
3.5
3
2.5
2
1.5
1
-1.2571
-0.0571
1.1429
Transactional Leadership Style

For Hypothesis 6, although the relationships between transformational leadership and perceptions of organizational support (b = .40, p < .01) and between perceptions of organizational support and turnover intentions (b = -.78, p < .01) were significant, neither the interaction between transformational leadership and unionization (b = -.20, p = .62) nor the interaction between perceptions of organizational support and unionization (b = .30, p = .48) were significant predictors of turnover intentions. For transactional leadership style, although the relationships between transactional leadership and perceptions of organizational support (b = .41, p < .01) and between perceptions of organizational support and turnover intentions (b = -.77, p < .01) were significant, neither the interaction between transactional leadership and unionization (b = -.41 p = .20) nor the interaction between perceptions of organizational support and unionization (b = .44, p = .26) were significant predictors of turnover intentions. As such, the results failed to support Hypothesis 6.

Table 6.
Moderated Mediation Results for Transactional Leadership Style.

	Outcome: Organizational Support				
Variable	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	*95% CI*
Constant	.36	.62	.57	.57	[-.90, 1.61]
Transactional	.41	.12	3.54	<.01	[.18, .64]
	Outcome: Job Satisfaction				
Variable	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	*95% CI*
Constant	3.33	.31	10.66	<.01	[2.70, 3.96]
Transactional	-.04	.06	-.59	.56	[-.17, .09]
Org. Support	.69	.08	9.11	<.01	[.54, .84]
Unionized	-.06	.14	-.44	.66	[-.34, .22]
Transactional*Unionized	.52	.12	4.28	<.01	[.27, .77]
Org. Support*Unionized	-.43	.15	-2.81	.01	[-.73, -.12]
	Index of Moderated Mediation				
Moderator	*Index*		*SE*		*95%CI*
Unionized	-.18		.09		[-.36, -.03]
	Outcome: Organizational Support				
Variable	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	*95% CI*
Constant	.36	.62	.57	.57	[-.90, 1.61]
Transactional	.41	.12	3.54	<.01	[.18, .64]
	Outcome: Turnover Intentions				
Variable	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	*95% CI*

Constant	3.15	.80	3.93	<.01	[1.53, 4.77]
Transactional	.15	.16	.94	.35	[-.18, .48]
Org. Support	-.77	.19	-3.95	<.01	[-1.16, -.38]
Unionized	.01	.35	.02	.99	[-.71, .72]
Transactional*Unionized	-.41	.31	-1.32	.20	[-1.04, .22]
Org. Support*Unionized	.44	.39	1.14	.26	[-.35, 1.23]

	Index of Moderated Mediation		
Moderator	*Index*	*SE*	*95%CI*
Unionized	.18	.19	[-.17, .62]

N = 49; Confidence intervals (CI) are 95% bias-corrected estimates with bootstrap 5,000 samples displayed as [lower limit CI, upper limit CI]. State, job position, public/private, and tenure entered as control variables (not displayed in table; full results available upon request).

DISCUSSION

Results of the current study provide a step toward a better understanding of how constructive leadership styles, unionization, and perceptions of organizational support play a role in important employee outcomes in higher education institutions. Although each of these topics has received much attention in research in general, fewer studies have examined these factors simultaneously in the field of higher education specifically. Given the significant amount of resources devoted to leadership development (e.g., Center for Creative Leadership, 2019) and the mixed results regarding unionization in prior research (e.g., Wickens, 2008), the findings of this study provide an important contribution because improving our understanding of leadership styles on employee perceptions and associated outcomes, as well as potential differences between unionized and non-unionized environments, will help leaders and employees in higher education make effective decisions.

Consistent with the view that many leadership styles can be categorized into positive or constructive styles versus negative or destructive styles (e.g., Pletzer et al., 2024), we found that higher levels of transformational leadership and the contingent reward aspect of transactional leadership were associated with higher perceptions of organizational support, which in turn was associated with higher job satisfaction and lower turnover intentions among faculty and staff. This confirms that, even in higher education institutions in which the structure and enactment of leadership can be complex, leaders of academic units who engage in constructive leadership behaviors are more likely to have faculty and staff who are satisfied with their jobs and less likely to quit. Further, as a result of having a constructive leader, employees are more

likely to view the organization as a whole as supportive of their needs and well-being.

When examining the role of unionization on these relationships, the picture becomes more complex. For the direct relationships between leadership style and employee outcomes, we found that unionization was only a significant moderator for transactional leadership, but not for transformational leadership, and only for the outcome of job satisfaction, not turnover intentions. A possible explanation for this finding is that our measurement of transactional leadership specifically focused on the contingent reward behaviors aspect of this style, which is the degree to which the leader actively recognizes and rewards high performance (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Rubin et al., 2005). Given the role of unions in protecting and improving wages, benefits, and promotion opportunities and decision-making, it could be argued that considerable overlap exists between contingent reward behaviors enacted by leaders and perceived rewards provided by unions, whereas there is less overlap between the types of rewards or benefits received from transformational leadership styles which focus more on strategic vision and open communication (e.g., Rodrigues et al., 2025). As a result, employees in unionized environments tend to be more satisfied with their jobs than non-unionized employees when their leaders fail to engage in contingent reward behaviors characteristic of transactional leadership because they view the union as an alternative source of meeting their needs.

These results are consistent with findings from prior research in that both transformational and transactional leadership are positively associated with employee outcomes, but transformational leadership tends to have a stronger impact (e.g., see Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Kasalak et al., 2022; Rodrigues et al.., 2025). However, some studies have observed transactional leadership to have little to no effect (e.g., see Shaari et al., 2022), suggesting the potential for moderators that make transactional leadership more effective in some contexts than others. In the case of the current study, unionization appears to be one such contextual factor.

In our more complex moderated mediation models, we similarly found that unionization was a significant moderator of the relationship between perceptions of organizational support and job satisfaction but not turnover intentions, and only in the model involving transactional leadership and not the one involving transformational leadership. In the transactional leadership model, although the relationship between perceived organizational support and job satisfaction was positive for employees in both unionized and non-unionized environments, the positive effect was stronger for those in unionized environments. This suggests that unionization provides an additive effect such that employees are most satisfied when they perceive support from their institutions and from a

union compared to those in which the institution is not unionized, as they must rely on the organization alone.

This is also consistent with previous findings that, despite transformational and transactional styles being highly correlated with one another and with positive outcomes in general (Judge & Piccolo, 2004), they appear to operate through different mechanisms and/or have differing effects depending on the context or situation. For example, Rodrigues et al. (2025) found employee well-being to be a significant mediator of the relationship between transactional, but not transformational, leadership and turnover intentions. Similarly, Judge and Piccolo (2004) found that transformational leadership had stronger positive relationships with satisfaction with the leader and perceptions of leader effectiveness, whereas contingent reward leadership had stronger relationships with job satisfaction and leader performance and had a stronger effect in business settings compared to other contexts. This lends further credence to the idea that the effects of transactional leadership may be more susceptible to contextual factors and operate through different mechanisms compared to transformational leadership.

Taken together, the results of our study imply that transformational leadership can positively influence perceptions of organizational support and employee outcomes in higher education regardless of whether the faculty and staff work in a unionized or non-unionized environment. Transactional leadership also plays a similar role in these outcomes, but its effects depend on whether the institution is unionized or not, which is important for leaders to take into account when considering what behaviors and styles to enact in their academic units.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Although the current study builds upon the current literature on leadership, organizational support, and employee outcomes in higher education in several ways, there were also a few limitations. First, although our sample included both faculty and staff working full-time at public and private higher education institutions, some of which were unionized and some of which were not, the final sample included only 53 participants (33 faculty and 20 staff). As such, the results may not fully represent the broader population of faculty and staff in higher education. In addition, we cannot rule out the possibility that the lack of significant findings for some variables, such as the moderating effect of unionization on the relationship between transformational leadership and employee outcomes, could have been due to the small sample size. Future research can build upon our findings by assessing the focal variables with a larger number of faculty and staff from across the United States, and could further investigate potential cultural differences by expanding recruitment to multiple

countries. On a related note, it is possible that differences between the job roles and characteristics of faculty and staff members could influence the relationship between leader behaviors and employee outcomes. Although we controlled for job position in our statistical analyses, future studies with sufficient sample sizes from both groups could explore potential differences between faculty and staff members' experiences and outcomes.

The results of this study shed light on how unionization can influence the effectiveness of two constructive types of leadership behaviors, namely transformational leadership and the contingent reward behaviors of transactional leadership, but there are many other constructive and destructive styles of leadership that are also important to consider. To build upon our work, future studies could include additional constructive styles such as servant leadership, as well as destructive styles such as authoritarian and tyrannical leadership, to explore the degree to which unionization may enhance or undermine the effects of these leadership styles on employee perceptions and outcomes.

Our survey also utilized a cross-sectional design with a single time point. As such, our results do not address causality between the independent, mediator, and outcome variables. As a next step, a longitudinal design involving data collection across multiple time points would help clarify the ordering of the relationships. This would be particularly helpful given the questions surrounding causality in regard to the paradoxical findings about job satisfaction for unionized versus non-unionized employees. Another helpful design would be a qualitative or case study conducted in an academic unit(s) which has experienced a change in leadership, in which employees could assess the leadership styles of the previous dean or academic unit leader and the new leader, which would allow examination of how changes in leadership styles may result in changes in employee perceptions and outcomes. Likewise, data collected from higher education institutions prior to and after unionization would help elucidate the complex relationships among unionization, leader behaviors, and employee experiences.

Finally, it should be noted that both the measurement of leadership styles and assessment of employee outcomes in the current study were derived from ratings by the employee, and thus represent the employees' perceptions of leadership behaviors, which may or may not accurately reflect the actual behaviors of leaders. As such, future studies could deploy surveys of both employees and the leaders of their academic units and/or deploy multi-level study designs involving groups of employees who share the same leaders, which would allow for multiple sources for a more robust measurement of leadership styles.

CONCLUSION

The results reported in this paper confirm that leadership behaviors do matter in the workplace, and that higher education institutions are no exception. While transformational and transactional leadership were found to be associated with higher perceptions of organizational support and job satisfaction and lower levels of turnover intentions in general, the relationships involving transactional leadership and job satisfaction were significantly different for those in unionized versus non-unionized environments. These findings are consistent with the contingency theory of leadership (Fiedler, 1964; Tosi & Slocum, 1984) and imply that not all leadership styles, even those considered to be constructive, are universally effective at improving employee perceptions and outcomes. This research provides a step toward furthering our understanding of what factors, such as unionization, may impact leadership effectiveness and employee experiences in higher education institutions.

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