



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The Effect of Transformational Leadership and Organizational Justice on Job Satisfaction: The Mediating Role of Emotional Labor

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This study investigates how transformational leadership and organizational justice influence employee job satisfaction, with a focus on the mediating role of emotional labor. Drawing on a survey of 204 employees from Chinese enterprises, the research examines the effects of six key predictors—charisma, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, distributive justice, and procedural justice—on job satisfaction. The findings confirm that all six variables have significant positive effects on both emotional labor and job satisfaction. Furthermore, emotional labor was shown to partially mediate the relationship between both transformational leadership and organizational justice with job satisfaction. These results offer new theoretical insights into the emotional mechanisms underlying leadership effectiveness and organizational fairness, while also providing practical implications for enhancing employee well-being and organizational performance in the Chinese context.

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Chinese enterprises have placed increasing emphasis on employee job satisfaction. However, the lack of employee loyalty and well-being has revealed a disconnect between organizational justice and emotional labor, which hinders stable operations and sustainable development (Zhang & Liu, 2020). Against this backdrop, management scholars have begun to reexamine the moral responsibilities of corporate leaders and emphasize the importance of positive leadership—represented by transformational leadership—in shaping employee behavior and organizational climate (Kim & Kim, 2019; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999).

Transformational leadership is regarded as a morally driven leadership style that seeks to enhance employees' initiative and work engagement by means of charisma, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994). At the same time, organizational justice—comprising procedural and distributive fairness—has become a key topic in organizational behavior and human resource management, with ample evidence linking it to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior (Colquitt et al., 2001; Greenberg, 1990).

Although previous studies have separately examined the effects of transformational leadership and organizational justice on employee attitudes, integrative research exploring how these factors influence job satisfaction through emotional labor remains limited (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Glomb & Tews, 2004). Therefore, the present study aims to investigate how transformational leadership and organizational justice affect job satisfaction via the mediating mechanism of emotional labor, focusing on employees in Chinese enterprises.

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from five dimensions—transformational leadership, organizational justice, emotional labor, job satisfaction, and demographic characteristics—with a total of 70 measurement items. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 24.0, including exploratory factor analysis and reliability testing. Mediation effects were examined through Baron and Kenny's (1986) three-step regression procedure and tested using the Sobel test

(Sobel, 1982) to verify the indirect role of emotional labor between the independent variables and job satisfaction.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in integrating emotional labor into the joint mechanism of transformational leadership and organizational justice, thereby identifying its mediating role in affecting job satisfaction. This addresses a gap in prior research, which has often treated emotional labor only as an independent or outcome variable. The practical implication is to offer managerial insights for Chinese enterprises to improve employee satisfaction and foster a more positive organizational climate (Grandey, 2000; Zhang et al., 2021).

## **2. Theory and hypotheses**

### **2.1 Transformational Leadership**

Transformational leadership is defined as a leadership style that enhances employees' values and motivations, encouraging proactive behavior to achieve shared organizational goals (Bass, 1999). Guided by strong moral values and a compelling vision, transformational leaders inspire employees and nurture their potential to become future leaders. Bass identified four core components of transformational leadership: idealized influence, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation. Idealized influence refers to the leader's ability to articulate a compelling vision that motivates and persuades employees, serving as a key factor in enhancing organizational loyalty and work engagement. Individualized consideration reflects the leader's attentiveness to employees' unique needs and potential, offering developmental guidance. Intellectual stimulation encourages creative thinking and problem-solving, while inspirational motivation instills goal orientation and fosters a positive attitude toward shared objectives.

A substantial body of empirical research has confirmed the significant positive impact of transformational leadership on employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment. For instance, Terpstra (2022) conducted a meta-analysis of 87 studies across various organizational settings and found a strong positive correlation between transformational leadership and job satisfaction, satisfaction with leadership, and work motivation. Subsequent research has explored the moderating and mediating mechanisms underlying this relationship. Lutmar and Terris (2019) found that structural distance moderates the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment, with indirect leadership showing a stronger effect. Keels (2019) demonstrated that self-efficacy and collective efficacy function as mediators or moderators between transformational leadership and job performance; in particular, collective efficacy partially mediated the relationship between organizational commitment and job satisfaction in data collected from China and India.

Additionally, Kok et al. (2021) found that a clear goal orientation and an innovation-supportive climate partially mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction. Toby (2022) reported that in production teams, idealized influence and intellectual stimulation significantly affected employee motivation and commitment, whereas this effect was not observed in project teams. Moreover, Sanda et al. (2022) found that psychological empowerment served as a mediator between transformational leadership and employee attitudes. Specifically, inspirational motivation enhanced job satisfaction and organizational commitment through a sense of work meaningfulness and self-efficacy.

In sum, transformational leadership exerts a sustained and positive influence on employee work attitudes. This effect is not merely direct, but also unfolds through complex pathways involving emotional labor, efficacy beliefs, structural distance, and psychological empowerment. These findings carry significant theoretical and practical implications for leadership and organizational management research.

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

In this study, transformational leadership and organizational justice are conceptualized as independent variables, with job satisfaction as the dependent variable. The sub-dimensions include charisma, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, distributive justice, and procedural justice.

Transformational leadership, as a relational resource, plays a critical role in enhancing employees' motivation and reducing the perceived risks of seeking feedback by providing developmental support, psychological safety, and affective affirmation (Othman & Khrais, 2022). It facilitates job satisfaction by offering employees timely recognition, intellectual encouragement, and career guidance, which fulfill emotional needs for stability and belonging.

A growing body of research has confirmed the positive effect of transformational leadership on job satisfaction and performance outcomes. For example, Curado and Santos (2022) demonstrated that transformational leadership not only improves employee job satisfaction and performance but also promotes organizational citizenship behavior, which partially mediates this relationship.

Agus and Soewarto (2021) further revealed that psychological capital mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction, and that procedural justice moderates this effect. Their large-scale survey showed a consistent positive association between transformational leadership and both employee performance and satisfaction.

Based on these findings, this study hypothesizes that transformational leadership positively influences employees' job satisfaction, both directly and indirectly through psychological and relational mechanisms.

**Hypothesis 1: Transformational leadership will have a positive effect on job satisfaction.**

### 2.3 Organizational Justice and Job Satisfaction

Organizational justice has been widely recognized as a key predictor of job-related attitudes and behaviors. Diego et al. (2018) found that perceptions of fairness, particularly leadership-related fairness, significantly predict various organizational outcomes—including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, subjective performance, and organizational citizenship behavior—with the exception of pay satisfaction. Similarly, Abdulkarem et al. (2019) demonstrated that procedural and interactional justice exert a full mediating effect on the relationship between compensation practices and satisfaction with pay and benefits.

Research in both domestic and international contexts confirms that different dimensions of organizational justice—distributive, procedural, and interactional—play distinct roles in shaping job satisfaction. For instance, Jang and Kim (2022) showed that procedural and distributive justice positively affect emotional investment and interpersonal engagement, while interactional justice was the strongest predictor of knowledge workers' performance, largely mediated by perceived organizational commitment.

Eliyana et al. (2019) further revealed that procedural justice positively influences performance and satisfaction and also moderates the mediating role of psychological capital in the relationship between transformational leadership and job outcomes. When perceived justice is high, the indirect effect of leadership through psychological resources is amplified.

Sembiring et al. (2020) found that procedural and interpersonal justice significantly enhance work-related well-being among contract workers, whereas informational justice had no significant effect. Smith et al. (2018) identified job insecurity as a moderator that weakens the positive effects of procedural and interactional justice on work happiness, particularly for employees with high levels of perceived organizational injustice.

Taken together, these findings suggest that organizational justice not only directly enhances job satisfaction, but also strengthens the effects of leadership and psychological mechanisms on employee outcomes. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**Hypothesis 2: Organizational justice will have a positive effect on job satisfaction.**

### 2.4 Emotional Labor

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated a positive relationship between transformational leadership and employee outcomes such as job satisfaction and job performance (Zhu & Mu, 2016; Jordan & Troth, 2019). Transformational leaders are believed to satisfy employees' psychological needs and enhance their self-efficacy, which in turn motivates them to engage in more effective forms of emotional labor (Choi & Moon, 2017).

Jiang and Cheng (2022) further suggested that both transactional and transformational leadership styles are positively associated with deep acting—a form of emotional labor that aligns internal feelings with external emotional displays. Similarly, Psilopanagioti et al. (2021) found that transformational leadership significantly predicts deep acting and indirectly reduces turnover intentions, highlighting emotional labor as a potential mediating mechanism.

However, findings on the relationship between emotional labor and job satisfaction remain mixed. While some studies report a positive relationship between surface acting and job satisfaction (Huyghebaert et al., 2018; Lam et al., 2017), others suggest no significant effect or even a negative one (Alsakarneh et al., 2019). In contrast, deep acting tends to show a more consistent positive effect on job satisfaction (Hartanti, 2019), though conflicting evidence also exists (Jha & Bhattacharya, 2021).

These inconsistencies suggest that the mediating role of emotional labor in the relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction is not yet fully understood, indicating the need for further empirical investigation. Based on prior findings, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 3: Emotional labor will mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction.**

Numerous studies have identified organizational justice as a key predictor of job satisfaction. For example, Yum & Koo (2022) found that perceptions of justice positively influence job satisfaction, while Huyghebaert et al. (2018) demonstrated that procedural and interactional justice influence pay satisfaction and welfare satisfaction through the full mediating role of perceived organizational justice. Similarly, Lee (2018) showed that among contract workers, procedural and interpersonal justice significantly enhance work-related well-being, whereas informational justice has no significant effect.

Further supporting this view, Lee and Kim (2020) confirmed a positive association between procedural and interactional justice and employee well-being, reinforcing the link between organizational justice and job satisfaction. Yoo and Kim (2018) argued that organizational justice also positively influences emotional labor, especially deep acting, mediated by employees' psychological capital in service contexts such as airline crew. Kwak et al. (2018) added that a high level of perceived justice reduces the emotional resource depletion caused by surface acting, thus alleviating job stress and enhancing emotional functioning.

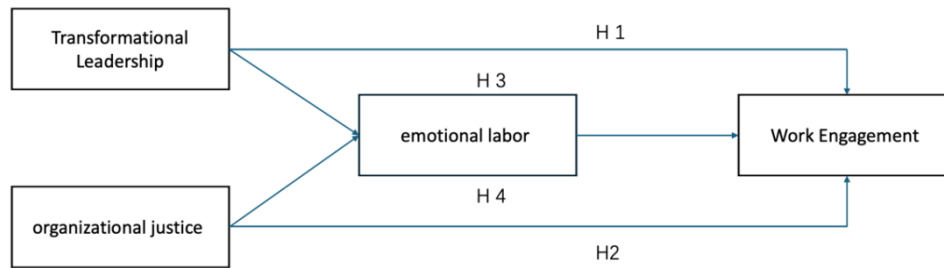
Taken together, these findings suggest that organizational justice not only exerts a direct positive effect on job satisfaction but also indirectly influences it through emotional labor. Employees who perceive higher fairness are more likely to engage in constructive forms of emotional regulation, which in turn promote greater job satisfaction. Based on the theoretical and empirical foundations, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**Hypothesis 4: Emotional labor will mediate the relationship between organizational justice and job satisfaction.**

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The present study proposes a conceptual research model to investigate the effects of transformational leadership and organizational justice on job satisfaction among employees working in Chinese enterprises. Specifically, transformational leadership is represented by four sub-dimensions: charisma, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation; while organizational justice is assessed through distributive justice and procedural justice. This study further examines the mediating role of emotional labor in the relationship between these independent variables and job satisfaction. Accordingly, based on the theoretical foundations and existing literature, the proposed conceptual model of this study is illustrated in

**Figure 1.**



**Figure 1. The proposed research model.**

### 3.1. Sample and data collection

This study conducted a survey targeting employees working in Chinese enterprises to examine the relationships among transformational leadership, organizational justice, emotional labor, and job satisfaction. The data were collected using Wenjuanxing, a widely used online survey platform in China. A total of 214 questionnaires were distributed, and 204 valid responses were retrieved, yielding a response rate of 95.33%.

SPSS 24.0 was used to analyze the demographic characteristics of the sample, including marital status, educational background, years of service, business registration type, industry sector, year of establishment, number of employees, company revenue, position level, and entrepreneurial experience.

Among the respondents, 47.55% were male and 52.45% female. In terms of age, the largest groups were in their 30s (37.25%) and 40s (34.31%). Most respondents were married (81.86%), while 18.14% were unmarried. Regarding tenure, the largest proportion had worked for 8–10 years (21.57%).

The educational background of participants showed the following distribution: high school (13.73%), associate degree (36.27%), bachelor's degree (32.35%), master's degree (13.24%), and doctoral degree (4.41%). For business registration type, 54.9% were corporate entities and 45.1% were individual proprietors. Company types were predominantly private (60.29%), while public enterprises accounted for 39.71%.

Participants were employed across various industries: manufacturing (21.08%), ICT (11.76%), services (24.51%), wholesale and retail (19.61%), distribution (11.76%), and construction (11.27%). Regarding the year of establishment, 43.65% of the companies had been established for 13–20 years, followed by 20+ years (37.25%), 8–13 years (13.73%), 5–8 years (3.43%), and 3–5 years (2.94%).

The majority of respondents (82.84%) worked in organizations with over 100 employees. In terms of annual revenue, 41.67% of firms earned between 5 billion and 10 billion KRW, followed by 10–50 billion KRW (28.43%), over 10 billion KRW (19.61%), 5–10 billion KRW (6.86%), 3–5 billion KRW (1.96%), and 1–3 billion KRW (1.47%).

Regarding entrepreneurial experience, 11.76% of participants had none, 31.37% had started a business once, 42.65% twice, and 14.22% three times. In terms of job position, the largest group was at the assistant manager level (43.63%), followed by staff level (26.96%), manager level (23.53%), deputy manager (4.41%), and department head or above (1.47%).

### 3.2. Measures

To empirically examine the proposed model, this study employed well-validated instruments from existing literature to measure the four core constructs: transformational leadership, organizational justice, emotional labor, and job satisfaction. All items were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"), with higher scores indicating higher levels of the respective constructs.

Transformational leadership was measured using 25 items adapted from Bass and Avolio (1995), covering four dimensions: charisma (7 items; e.g., “My supervisor makes me feel confident that I will be rewarded for my efforts”), individualized consideration (8 items; e.g., “My supervisor recognizes my abilities sincerely when I perform well”), intellectual stimulation (6 items; e.g., “My supervisor encourages me to solve problems creatively”), and inspirational motivation (4 items; e.g., “My supervisor motivates me to perform beyond expectations”).

Organizational justice was assessed using 12 items based on Moorman’s (1991) framework. This includes two sub-dimensions: distributive justice (5 items; e.g., “My compensation is fair considering my responsibilities”) and procedural justice (7 items; e.g., “The organization has procedures in place that consider employee input in performance evaluations”).

Emotional labor was measured using 10 items adapted from Fiedler (1974). The scale captures employees’ regulation of emotional expressions in the workplace, including aspects of both surface and deep acting, reflecting the extent to which employees manage their emotions to align with organizational display rules.

Job satisfaction was measured using a 10-item scale developed by Tett and Meyer (1993), adapted for Korean respondents by Seo (2013). Sample item: “I usually enjoy my work life and get along well with my colleagues.” Higher scores indicate greater satisfaction with one’s job.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 4-1 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations among the key variables. For hypothesis testing, job satisfaction was designated as the dependent variable. In the first step, charisma, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, distributive justice, and procedural justice were entered as independent variables. In the second step, emotional labor was included as a mediating variable.

**Table 4-1. Correlations among Variables**

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Job Satisfaction	3.265	0.85							
Emotional Labor	3.145	0.59	.468***						
Procedural Justice	3.26	1.026	.419**	.510***					
Distributive Justice	3.303	1.044	.412**	.466***	.365**				
Inspirational Motivation	3.371	1.026	.348**	.358***	.324**	.326***			
Intellectual Stimulation	3.38	1.018	.434***	.354***	.350**	.361***	.413***		
Individualized Consideration	3.325	1.013	.467***	.382***	.441***	.454***	.410***	.367***	
Charisma	3.284	1.022	.388**	.387***	.331**	.410***	.429***	.384***	.429***

### 4.2 Reliability and Validity Analysis

To examine the validity of the measurement instruments, this study conducted a principal component analysis (PCA) with factor extraction. As shown in Table 4-2, the items were grouped as follows: 7 items for charisma, 8 items for individualized consideration, 6 items for intellectual stimulation, 4 items for inspirational motivation, 5 items for distributive justice, 7 items for procedural justice, 10 items for emotional labor, and 10 items for job satisfaction.

To assess reliability, Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were calculated for each variable. The results indicate that all eight constructs exceeded the acceptable threshold, with Cronbach’s alpha values greater than .539, demonstrating satisfactory internal consistency and reliability for all measurement scales.

**Table 4-2 Results of Reliability and Factor Analysis**

Item	Factor							
Variable	Charisma	Individualized Consideration	Intellectual Stimulation	Inspirational Motivation	Distributive Justice	Procedural Justice	Emotional Labor	Job Satisfaction
Charisma_2	<b>.781</b>		.142	.164	.127	.121	.047	.064
Charisma_4	<b>.762</b>		.028	.143	.166	.072	.073	.094
Charisma_5	<b>.755</b>	.158	.093	.114	.096	.077	.131	.165
Charisma_6	<b>.748</b>	.151	.108	.139	.134	.139	.051	.043
Charisma_3	<b>.773</b>	.110	.063	.071	.145	.104	.117	.111
Charisma_1	<b>.793</b>	.175	.120	.068	.115	.055	.096	.112
Charisma_7	<b>.731</b>	.144	.116	.153	.132	.124	.101	.103
Individualized Consideration_3	.137	<b>.748</b>	.171	.131	.091	.040	.117	.084
Individualized Consideration_1	.022	<b>.783</b>	.080	.195	.101	.083	.113	.063
Individualized Consideration_2	.209	<b>.758</b>	.125	.124	.123	.058	.103	.143
Individualized Consideration_4	.181	<b>.745</b>	.213	.189	.078	.130	.093	.061
Individualized Consideration_8	.150	<b>.686</b>	.221	.137	.022	.133	.183	.181
Individualized Consideration_7	.280	<b>.717</b>	.094	.122	.088	.083	.121	.141
Individualized Consideration_5	.168	<b>.742</b>	.116	.154	.096	.132	.086	.138
Individualized Consideration_6	.175	<b>.727</b>	.207	.185	.114	.094	.077	.047
Intellectual Stimulation_6	.107	.015	<b>.711</b>	.190	.221	.039	.128	.183
Intellectual Stimulation_5	.128	.085	<b>.735</b>	.114	.175	.051	.171	.113
Intellectual Stimulation_4	.108	.159	<b>.746</b>	.134	.195	.139	.050	.132
Intellectual Stimulation_3	.115	.152	<b>.749</b>	.119	.190	.118	.178	.082
Intellectual Stimulation_2	.209	.086	<b>.807</b>	.121	.071	.007	.087	.096
Intellectual Stimulation_1	.120	.093	<b>.813</b>	.134	.097	.134	.079	.131
Inspirational Motivation_1	.101	.233	.094	<b>.684</b>	.287	.145	.010	.066
Inspirational Motivation_3	.004	.264	.133	<b>.640</b>	.235	.166	.025	.024
Inspirational Motivation_4	.035	.265	.135	<b>.617</b>	.271	.147	.094	.030
Inspirational Motivation_2	.027	.227	.040	<b>.656</b>	.321	.271	.042	.048
Distributive Justice_5	.093	.259	.029	.127	<b>.635</b>	.047	.080	.193
Distributive Justice_4	.085	.247	.033	.164	<b>.685</b>	.148	.024	.129
Distributive Justice_3	.130	.204	.064	.129	<b>.690</b>	.039	.155	.109
Distributive Justice_2	.001	.264	.115	.160	<b>.706</b>	.054	.103	.132
Distributive Justice_1	.137	.236	.105	.136	<b>.725</b>	.044	.134	.090
Procedural Justice_3	.110	.145	.074	.150	.170	<b>.764</b>	.089	.014
Procedural Justice_1	.098	.153	.098	.156	.130	<b>.796</b>	.098	.058
Procedural Justice_4	.220	.205	.101	.056	.101	<b>.755</b>	.110	.086
Procedural Justice_2	.043	.217	.112	.084	.123	<b>.792</b>	.045	.025
Procedural Justice_7	.238	.195	.077	.032	.133	<b>.716</b>	.053	.065
Procedural Justice_5	.172	.179	.162	.055	.044	<b>.755</b>	.038	.111
Procedural Justice_6	.159	.171	.005	.095	.215	<b>.717</b>	.012	.089
Emotional Labor_7	.395	.003	.156	.307	.029	.055	<b>.675</b>	.169

Emotional Labor_6	.455	.004	.156	.306	.025	.023	<b>.684</b>	.207
Emotional Labor_10	.418	.035	.175	.311	.036	.129	<b>.646</b>	.156
Emotional Labor_3	.439	.032	.095	.351	.067	.016	<b>.752</b>	.189
Emotional Labor_8	.465	.022	.189	.319	.013	.034	<b>.665</b>	.143
Emotional Labor_9	.240	.175	.146	.211	.033	.136	<b>.663</b>	.043
Emotional Labor_5	.192	.120	.107	.080	.072	.105	<b>.723</b>	.055
Emotional Labor_1	.096	.038	.058	.144	.134	.117	<b>.805</b>	.099
Emotional Labor_4	.094	.121	.162	.184	.079	.041	<b>.735</b>	.099
Emotional Labor_2	.160	.143	.151	.082	.084	.123	<b>.763</b>	.085
Job Satisfaction_9	.235	.050	.280	.045	.061	.300	.071	<b>.541</b>
Job Satisfaction_7	.156	.130	.350	.083	.133	.362	.009	<b>.624</b>
Job Satisfaction_8	.111	.048	.339	.245	.085	.257	.046	<b>.541</b>
Job Satisfaction_6	.145	.080	.416	.087	.081	.346	.004	<b>.633</b>
Job Satisfaction_10	.135	.018	.314	.088	.100	.334	.003	<b>.539</b>
Job Satisfaction_2	.114	.124	.108	.156	.076	.104	.081	<b>.794</b>
Job Satisfaction_5	.123	.170	.028	.083	.217	.065	.053	<b>.764</b>
Job Satisfaction_4	.052	.147	.149	.078	.139	.039	.117	<b>.781</b>
Job Satisfaction_3	.070	.161	.115	.182	.106	.083	.114	<b>.789</b>
Job Satisfaction_1	.127	.116	.158	.132	.093	.116	.032	<b>.815</b>
Cronbach's a	.926	.932	.916	.874	.899	.929	.806	.781

### 4.3 Hypothesis Testing

Based on the results presented in Model 2 of Table 4-3, all four subdimensions of transformational leadership were found to have significant positive effects on job satisfaction: charisma ( $\beta = .250$ ,  $p < .001$ ), individualized consideration ( $\beta = .180$ ,  $p < .01$ ), intellectual stimulation ( $\beta = .157$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and inspirational motivation ( $\beta = .145$ ,  $p < .05$ ). These findings indicate that each component of transformational leadership contributes meaningfully to enhancing employees' job satisfaction. Therefore, Hypothesis 1, which proposed that transformational leadership positively influences job satisfaction, was fully supported.

According to the results in Model 2 of Table 4-3, both dimensions of organizational justice showed significant positive effects on job satisfaction: distributive justice ( $\beta = .236$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and procedural justice ( $\beta = .149$ ,  $p < .05$ ). These findings confirm that employees' perceptions of fairness in outcomes and procedures are important predictors of their job satisfaction. Therefore, Hypothesis 2, which proposed that organizational justice positively influences job satisfaction, was supported.

**Table 4-3 Hierarchical Regression Analysis Results for Job Satisfaction**

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Control Variables			
Gender	-.045	-.071	-.062
Age	-.077	-.154	-.148
Marital Status	-.084	-.079	-.071
Years of Service	.077	.071	-.055
Education Level	.031	-.054	-.053
Business Registration Type	.014	.046	.042
Ownership Type	.066	.056	.060
Industry Type	-.087	-.049	-.058
Year of Establishment	-.023	.011	.000



Position	.114	.093	.098
Company Size	-.098	-.145	-.138
Annual Revenue	-.021	.023	.024
Entrepreneurial Experience	-.100	-.087	-.078
Independent Variables			
Charisma		.250***	.236***
Individualized Consideration		.180**	.169*
Intellectual Stimulation		.157*	.141*
Inspirational Motivation		.145*	.128*
Distributive Justice		.236**	.211**
Procedural Justice		.149*	.133*
Mediating Variable			
Emotional Labor			.154*
R <sup>2</sup>	.056	.473	.487
$\Delta R^2$	.000	.417	.431
F for $\Delta R^2$	.848	8.537***	8.561***

To examine the mediating role of emotional labor in the relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction, this study adopted the three-step regression approach proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986), supplemented by the Sobel test for significance verification. The results demonstrated that all four dimensions of transformational leadership—charisma, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation—had significant positive effects on both emotional labor and job satisfaction. When emotional labor was included in the final step of the regression analysis, its effect on job satisfaction remained statistically significant, and the strength of the direct effects of the leadership dimensions decreased, indicating partial mediation. Specifically, charisma ( $\beta = .328$ ,  $p < .001$ , Sobel  $Z = 3.881$ ,  $p < .01$ ), individualized consideration ( $\beta = .339$ ,  $p < .001$ , Sobel  $Z = 3.981$ ,  $p < .01$ ), intellectual stimulation ( $\beta = .360$ ,  $p < .001$ , Sobel  $Z = 3.884$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and inspirational motivation ( $\beta = .394$ ,  $p < .001$ , Sobel  $Z = 4.057$ ,  $p < .01$ ) all showed significant indirect effects through emotional labor. These findings, as summarized in Table 4-4 and Table 4-5, confirm that emotional labor serves as a psychological mechanism through which transformational leadership enhances job satisfaction, thus supporting the hypothesis that emotional labor partially mediates this relationship<sup>3</sup>.

**Table 4-4. Mediation Effects of Emotional Labor between Transformational Leadership Dimensions and Job Satisfaction**

Step	Path	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>
1	Charisma → Job Satisfaction	.418	.051	.503	8.263	.000	.249
2	Charisma → Emotional Labor	.213	.038	.366	5.885	.000	.129
3	Charisma → Job Satisfaction	.318	.051	.383	6.242	.000	.339
	Emotional Labor → Job Satisfaction	.468	.087	.328	5.356	.000	
1	Individualized Consideration → Job Satisfaction	.391	.052	.467	7.500	.000	.214
2	Individualized Consideration → Emotional Labor	.225	.038	.382	5.874	.000	.142

3	Individualized Consideration → Job Satisfaction	.283	.053	.357	5.340	.000	.309
	Emotional Labor → Job Satisfaction	.484	.090	.339	5.379	.000	
1	Intellectual Stimulation → Job Satisfaction	.362	.053	.434	6.851	.000	.185
2	Intellectual Stimulation → Emotional Labor	.207	.039	.354	5.374	.000	.121
3	Intellectual Stimulation → Job Satisfaction	.256	.053	.307	4.873	.000	.295
	Emotional Labor → Job Satisfaction	.513	.090	.360	5.707	.000	
1	Inspirational Motivation → Job Satisfaction	.288	.055	.348	5.274	.000	.117
2	Inspirational Motivation → Emotional Labor	.208	.038	.358	5.457	.000	.124
3	Inspirational Motivation → Job Satisfaction	.171	.054	.207	3.172	.002	.249
	Emotional Labor → Job Satisfaction	.562	.093	.394	6.049	.000	

**Table 4-5. Summary of Sobel Tests for Mediation Effects**

Mediated Path	Z	p
Charisma → Emotional Labor → Job Satisfaction	3.881	.000
Individualized Consideration → Emotional Labor → Job Satisfaction	3.981	.000
Intellectual Stimulation → Emotional Labor → Job Satisfaction	3.884	.000
Inspirational Motivation → Emotional Labor → Job Satisfaction	4.057	.000

To verify the mediating role of emotional labor in the relationship between organizational justice and job satisfaction, hierarchical regression analyses and Sobel tests were conducted. As shown in Table 4-6 and Table 4-7, both distributive justice and procedural justice significantly influenced job satisfaction, both directly and indirectly through emotional labor. Specifically, distributive justice had a significant positive effect on job satisfaction in the first step ( $\beta = .508$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and also significantly influenced emotional labor in the second step ( $\beta = .416$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In the third step, when both distributive justice and emotional labor were entered into the regression model, emotional labor remained a significant predictor of job satisfaction ( $\beta = .311$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The Sobel test further confirmed the partial mediating role of emotional labor in this relationship ( $Z = 3.903$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

Likewise, procedural justice was found to significantly predict job satisfaction ( $\beta = .419$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and emotional labor ( $\beta = .510$ ,  $p < .001$ ). When both procedural justice and emotional labor were included in the final model, emotional labor continued to exert a significant positive effect on job satisfaction ( $\beta = .344$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The Sobel test supported the existence of a partial mediating effect ( $Z = 4.240$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Taken together, these findings provide strong support for Hypothesis 4, which proposed that emotional labor partially mediates the relationship between organizational justice and job satisfaction.

**Table 4-6. Mediation Effects of Emotional Labor between Organizational Justice and Job Satisfaction**

Step	Path	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>
1	Distributive Justice → Job Satisfaction	.413	.049	.508	8.371	.000	.254
2	Distributive Justice → Emotional Labor	.237	.037	.416	6.496	.000	.169
3	Distributive Justice → Job Satisfaction	.308	.048	.378	6.455	.000	.331
	Emotional Labor → Job Satisfaction	.443	.090	.311	4.926	.000	
1	Procedural Justice → Job Satisfaction	.347	.053	.419	6.560	.000	.172
2	Procedural Justice → Emotional Labor	.296	.035	.510	8.421	.000	.256
3	Procedural Justice → Job Satisfaction	.202	.058	.244	3.464	.001	.256
	Emotional Labor → Job Satisfaction	.490	.100	.344	4.887	.000	

**Table 4-7 Summary of Sobel Tests for Mediation Effects**

Mediated Path	Z	p
Distributive Justice → Emotional Labor → Job Satisfaction	3.903	.000
Procedural Justice → Emotional Labor → Job Satisfaction	4.240	.000

## 5. DISCUSSION

This study underscores the importance of transformational leadership and organizational justice in influencing emotional labor and job satisfaction. First, all six predictors—charisma, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, distributive justice, and procedural justice—were found to positively affect emotional labor, supporting previous findings (Jain & Duggal, 2018; Kim et al., 2019). Second, the same variables significantly predicted job satisfaction, consistent with earlier research (Diego et al., 2018; Agus & Soewarto, 2021). Third, emotional labor was shown to partially mediate the relationships between these predictors and job satisfaction, aligning with prior studies emphasizing its mediating role (Yum & Koo, 2022; Psilopanagioti et al., 2021).

### 5.1 Theoretical Contributions

This study offers several theoretical contributions. First, it extends prior research by examining the relationship between transformational leadership, organizational justice, and job satisfaction. By doing so, it emphasizes the importance of understanding both the antecedents and outcomes of emotional labor in relation to transformational leadership and organizational justice within organizational settings.

Furthermore, the study identifies a dual-path mechanism in which both transformational leadership and organizational justice exert not only direct effects on job satisfaction but also indirect effects through the mediating role of emotional labor—an employee engagement variable. Emotional labor

has recently gained attention as an emerging topic in organizational behavior research, and this study contributes to the growing literature by highlighting its significance.

In particular, the findings underscore the critical role of transformational leadership and perceptions of organizational fairness as antecedents of emotional labor, while positioning job satisfaction as its outcome. The discovery that transformational leadership influences job satisfaction indirectly via emotional labor offers new theoretical insight into the affective mechanisms underlying leadership effectiveness. As such, this study enriches the academic discourse on how employee emotional processes mediate the relationship between leadership, justice, and job-related attitudes.

## 5.2 Practical Implications

The findings of this study offer several practical implications for organizational leaders and HR professionals. First, CEOs should actively cultivate transformational leadership within their organizations. As a leadership style that promotes ethical behavior, open communication, and shared decision-making, transformational leadership positively influences employee attitudes and organizational fairness, ultimately enhancing organizational performance (Lutmar & Terris, 2019; Diego et al., 2018). Particularly in the Chinese context, there is a growing demand for leaders who demonstrate integrity, authenticity, and moral responsibility. Transformational leaders are expected to model exemplary behavior, led by example, and adhere to fairness and transparency both in their professional and personal lives (Keels, 2019).

Second, organizational managers and HRD professionals should develop strategies to enhance employees' emotional labor, as high levels of emotional engagement contribute to job performance and organizational success. This includes offering continuous leadership training, fostering ethical awareness, and supporting employees' autonomy and commitment. Factors such as job characteristics, supervisory support, fair rewards, and perceived organizational justice are crucial for strengthening employees' emotional involvement.

Finally, founders and entrepreneurial leaders should recognize the value of transformational leadership in shaping a strong organizational culture. When founders lead ethically and inspire employees through shared values and emotional integrity, employees are more likely to show commitment, job satisfaction, and deeper emotional engagement in their roles (Jung & Kim, 2022).

## 5.3 LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

This study has two primary limitations. First, there are limitations related to the sample. The survey participants were all employees from Chinese enterprises, and due to time constraints during data collection, the sample size was limited to 200. Moreover, the distribution of participants across different industry sectors was uneven, which may affect the generalizability and representativeness of the findings.

Second, there are limitations concerning the measurement instruments. Most of the scales used to assess transformational leadership and other constructs were originally developed by foreign scholars and may not fully reflect the cultural and contextual realities of Chinese organizations. Factors such as regional economic conditions, cultural values, and localized norms should be taken into account, suggesting that further refinement of the measurement tools is necessary.

Future research should consider incorporating additional psychological variables—such as organizational commitment, psychological empowerment, organizational citizenship behavior, and turnover intention—as mediators or moderators to enrich the understanding of the mechanisms through which leadership and justice influence employee outcomes.

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