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The influence of leadership on job performance: a study at the GEPE of Angola's Ministry of National Defense

A influência da liderança no desempenho laboral: um estudo no GEPE do Ministério da Defesa Nacional de Angola

La influencia del liderazgo en el desempeño laboral: un estudio en el GEPE del Ministerio de Defensa Nacional de Angola

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Abstract:
This study examines the influence of leadership on employee job performance within the Office of Studies, Planning and Statistics (GEPE) of the Ministry of National Defense, Former Combatants and Veterans of the Homeland in Angola. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining descriptive and explanatory designs, based on a questionnaire administered to a sample of 30 employees. The theoretical model conceptualized leadership as the independent variable, job performance as the dependent variable, and motivation, job satisfaction, and organizational communication as mediating variables. The results, obtained through correlation and regression analyses, indicate that participative leadership has a positive and significant effect on job performance ($\beta = 0.65$; $p < 0.01$), while centralized leadership shows a negative impact ($\beta = -0.41$; $p < 0.05$). Furthermore, partial mediation effects were identified, increasing the explanatory power of the model to 58%. The findings suggest that leadership influences performance both directly and indirectly through psychosocial mechanisms. The study contributes to the literature on leadership in public sector organizations, particularly in African contexts, and highlights the importance of participative leadership practices, effective communication, and employee motivation as key drivers of organizational performance.

Keywords:
Leadership; Job performance; Employee motivation; Organizational communication; Job satisfaction; Public sector; Angola.

Resumo:
O presente estudo analisa a influência da liderança no desempenho laboral dos funcionários do Gabinete de Estudos, Planeamento e Estatística (GEPE) do Ministério da Defesa Nacional, Antigos Combatentes e Veteranos da Pátria, em Angola. Adoptou-se uma abordagem mista, de natureza descritiva e explicativa, com aplicação de questionário a uma amostra de 30 colaboradores. O modelo teórico considerou a liderança como variável independente, o desempenho laboral como variável dependente e a motivação, a satisfação no trabalho e a comunicação organizacional como variáveis mediadoras. Os resultados evidenciam que a liderança participativa exerce um efeito positivo e significativo no desempenho ($\beta = 0,65$; $p < 0,01$), enquanto a liderança centralizadora apresenta impacto negativo ($\beta = -0,41$; $p < 0,05$). Verificou-se ainda um efeito de mediação parcial das variáveis psicossociais, elevando o poder explicativo do modelo para 58%. Conclui-se que a liderança constitui um factor estratégico essencial para a melhoria do desempenho no sector público.

Palavras-chave:
Liderança; Desempenho laboral; Motivação; Comunicação organizacional; Satisfação no trabalho.

Resumen:
El presente estudio analiza la influencia del liderazgo en el desempeño laboral de los funcionarios del Gabinete de Estudios, Planificación y Estadística (GEPE) del Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, Excombatientes y Veteranos de la Patria, en Angola. Se adoptó un enfoque mixto, de carácter descriptivo y explicativo, mediante la aplicación de un cuestionario a una muestra de 30 colaboradores. El modelo teórico consideró el liderazgo como variable independiente, el desempeño laboral como variable dependiente y la motivación, la satisfacción laboral y la comunicación organizacional como variables mediadoras. Los resultados muestran que el liderazgo participativo ejerce un efecto positivo y significativo sobre el desempeño ($\beta = 0,65$; $p < 0,01$), mientras que el liderazgo centralizador presenta un impacto negativo ($\beta = -0,41$; $p < 0,05$). También se observó un efecto de mediación parcial de las variables psicosociales, que elevó el poder explicativo del modelo al 58 %. Se concluye que el liderazgo constituye un factor estratégico esencial para mejorar el desempeño en el sector público.

Palabras clave:
Liderazgo; Desempeño laboral; Motivación; Comunicación organizacional; Satisfacción laboral.

1. Introduction

Leadership has been widely recognized as one of the main determining factors of organizational performance, assuming a central role in the articulation between institutional objectives and employee behavior.

However, contemporary literature has been questioning traditional approaches focused exclusively on formal authority, emphasizing the need for more adaptive, relational and human development-oriented leadership models (NORTHOUSE, 2022; YUKL, 2013).

In this sense, while classical approaches tend to value hierarchy and control as organizational efficiency mechanisms, more recent perspectives argue that the effectiveness of leadership depends on the ability to mobilize, inspire and involve employees. BASS and RIGGIO (2006) argue that transformational leaders are able to generate higher levels of performance by promoting intrinsic motivation and alignment with organizational goals. In contrast, authors such as YUKL (2013) warn that the effectiveness of leadership lies not in a single style, but in the ability to adapt to the organizational context.

In the African context, this discussion takes on particular contours, since public organizations often operate under the strong influence of hierarchical structures inherited from traditional administrative models. Studies conducted in African countries indicate that overly centralized leadership practices tend to limit innovation and employee participation (NKOMO, 2011; BOLDEN & KIRK, 2009).

Thus, the present study seeks to analyze the influence of leadership on job performance in the specific context of the GEPE, contributing to the debate on the modernization of public management in Angola.

2. Theoretical perspective

2.1 Leadership: between authority and influence

The evolution of the concept of leadership reveals a transition from authority-centered models to more relational approaches. While classical theories emphasized individual traits of the leader, contemporary approaches highlight leadership as a social and dynamic process (NORTHOUSE, 2022).

YUKL (2013) argues that effective leadership results from combining task-oriented and relationship-oriented behaviors, suggesting that the dichotomy between authority and participation should be overcome. In this sense, leadership cannot be reduced to a fixed set of characteristics, but must be understood as a contingent process.

In the African context, NKOMO (2011) stresses that leadership is often influenced by cultural, institutional and historical factors, which requires contextualised approaches. Thus, the uncritical import of Western models may not produce the expected results, requiring adaptation to local realities.

2.2 Leadership styles: theoretical convergences and tensions

The literature on leadership styles shows different perspectives on what constitutes an effective leadership.

Transformational leadership, widely defended by BASS and RIGGIO (2006), emphasizes the leader's ability to inspire and motivate employees, promoting innovation and commitment. However, YUKL (2013) criticizes the tendency to idealize this model, arguing that it is not always applicable in highly structured organizational contexts.

On the other hand, transactional leadership, based on rewards and control, has been considered effective in predictable and routine contexts, but limited in terms of innovation and organizational development (BURNS, 1978).

Servant leadership, proposed by GREENLEAF (2002), introduces an alternative perspective focused on employee development. However, some authors argue that this model may face implementation difficulties in contexts where formal authority is strongly valued.

In the African context, BOLDEN and KIRK (2009) argue that effective leadership should integrate participatory elements with respect for existing cultural and institutional structures. This perspective suggests that the dichotomy between authoritarian and participative leadership can be overcome through hybrid models.

2.3 Job performance: a systemic perspective

job performance has traditionally been associated with productivity and efficiency.

However, contemporary approaches advocate a more comprehensive view, which includes behavioral and contextual dimensions (CHIAVENATO, 2014; CAMPBELL, 1990).

CAMPBELL (1990) argues that performance should be analyzed in multiple dimensions, including task performance, contextual behavior and organizational adaptation. This perspective is particularly relevant in complex institutional contexts such as the public sector.

In addition, studies conducted in African contexts indicate that factors such as recognition, equity and interpersonal relationships play a key role in job performance (NKOMO, 2011). This reinforces the importance of leadership as a mediating element between organizational structure and employee behavior.

2.4 Leadership and performance: an integrative debate

The relationship between leadership and performance has been widely documented, but not without controversy. While some authors advocate a direct and positive relationship (Bass&Riggio, 2006), others argue that this relationship is mediated by contextual factors such as organizational culture, structure and available resources (YUKL, 2013).

In this sense, leadership must be understood as a necessary factor, but not sufficient to ensure organizational performance. The effectiveness of leadership depends on its ability to articulate with other elements of the organizational system.

In the African context, BOLDEN and KIRK (2009) highlight that effective leadership is often associated with the ability to balance authority and participation, tradition and

innovation. This perspective is particularly relevant to public organizations undergoing modernization, such as those in Angola.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research approach and design

This study adopts a mixed (quali-quantitative) approach combining quantitative analysis techniques and qualitative interpretation, with the aim of providing a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study. This methodological option is justified by the complexity of the relationship between leadership and job performance, which involves objective and subjective dimensions (CRESWELL & PLANO CLARK, 2018).

As for the design, the research assumes a descriptive and explanatory character, insofar as, on the one hand, it seeks to describe the leadership practices existing in the GEPE and, on the other hand, to analyze the relationships between variables, testing the hypotheses derived from the proposed theoretical model (GIL, 2017).

3.2 Theoretical model

Leadership → (Motivation, Satisfaction, Communication) → job performance.

Leadership directly and indirectly influences performance through mediating variables.

3.2.1 Research hypotheses

H1: There is a positive relationship between participative leadership and job performance.

H2: Participative leadership positively influences motivation.

H3: Motivation positively influences performance.

H4: Organizational communication mediates the relationship between leadership and performance.

H5: Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between leadership and performance.

H6: Centralizing leadership has a negative effect on performance.

The study follows a deductive logic, based on theoretical assumptions previously established for the formulation of hypotheses that are subsequently confronted with empirical data.

3.3 Study setting

The research was conducted at the Office of Studies, Planning and Statistics (GEPE) of Angola's Ministry of National Defense, Former Combatants and Veterans of the Homeland. This organizational unit performs strategic functions in support of decision-making and is characterized by a formal hierarchical structure and institutionalized organizational processes.

This context is particularly relevant for the study of leadership, since it combines traditional management elements with contemporary requirements of efficiency, innovation and participation.

3.4 Population, sampling and participants

The study population consists of 50 GEPE employees. The sample comprises 30 participants, selected based on accessibility and availability criteria, configuring a non-probabilistic convenience sampling.

Although this type of sampling limits the generalization of results, it is often used in exploratory and contextual organizational studies, especially when access to the population is conditioned (CRESWELL & PLANO CLARK, 2018).

Participants present different levels of academic training and professional experience, which allows different perceptions of leadership practices and job performance.

3.5 Data collection instrument

Data collection was carried out through a structured questionnaire composed of closed and open questions.

The instrument was organized into three main sections:

- Sociodemographic characteristics of the participants;
- Perception of leadership styles, including dimensions such as participation, communication and recognition;

- Evaluation of job performance, including satisfaction, motivation and perception of effectiveness.

The closed-ended questions were structured using Likert-type scales, making it possible to measure participants' degree of agreement with different statements.

The construction of the questionnaire had as reference previous studies on leadership and performance, ensuring the validity of the instrument's content.

3.6 Data collection procedures

The questionnaire was applied in person, in an institutional context, ensuring the clarification of doubts and maximization of the response rate.

Participants were informed in advance about the study objectives and assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses, in accordance with the ethical principles of scientific research.

3.7 Data analysis techniques

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including:

- Absolute and relative frequencies
- Percentages
- Comparative analysis between variables

Additionally, considering the theoretical model and the formulated hypotheses, the analysis may be further developed through:

- Correlation between variables (e.g. leadership and performance)
- Linear regression analysis to evaluate the impact of independent variables on the dependent variable
- Mediation analysis to examine the role of motivation, satisfaction and communication

Qualitative data (open-ended responses) were analyzed using content analysis, making it possible to identify patterns of perception and complement the interpretation of the quantitative results.

3.7 Validity and reliability

The validity of the study was ensured through the theoretical basis of the instrument and consistency between objectives, hypotheses and variables analyzed.

The reliability of the questionnaire can be assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, especially in the scales used to measure leadership and performance.

Methodological triangulation (quantitative and qualitative data) contributes to strengthening the robustness of results.

3.9 Study limitations

The study has some limitations that should be considered in the interpretation of the results:

- use of non-probabilistic sampling;
- Small sample size;
- Focus on a single institution;

Possible influence of subjective perceptions of participants.

Despite these limitations, the study offers relevant contributions to the understanding of leadership in the context of Angolan public administration.

3.10 Ethical considerations

The study complied with the ethical principles of scientific research, namely:

- Informed consent of the participants;
- Guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality;
- Use of data exclusively for academic purposes.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Results

4.1.2 Scale reliability

The internal consistency of the scales used was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient:

- Participative leadership: $\alpha = 0.87$
- Motivation: $\alpha = 0.82$
- Organizational communication: $\alpha = 0.79$
- Satisfaction at work: $\alpha = 0.81$
- Job performance: $\alpha = 0.85$

These values indicate good internal reliability, since all coefficients are above 0.70, as recommended in the literature.

4.1.3 Correlation analysis

Pearson's correlation analysis was performed to evaluate the relationships between the variables:

- Participative leadership ↔ Performance: $r = 0.68$ ($p < 0,01$)
- Leadership ↔ Motivation: $r = 0.72$ ($p < 0,01$)
- Motivation ↔ Performance: $r = 0.64$ ($p < 0,01$)
- Communication ↔ Performance: $r = 0.59$ ($p < 0,01$)
- Satisfaction ↔ Performance: $r = 0.61$ ($p < 0,01$)

Interpretation:

Correlations are positive and statistically significant, indicating moderate to strong relationships between the variables.

4.1.4 Hypothesis testing (linear regression)

Model 1 – Direct effect of leadership on performance

$\beta = 0.65$

$R^2 = 0.42$

$p < 0.01$

H1: confirmed

Participative leadership explains 42% of the variability in job performance.

Model 2 – Effect of leadership on motivation

$\beta = 0.72$

$R^2 = 0.52$

$p < 0.01$

H2: confirmed

Leadership strongly influences employee motivation.

Model 3 – Effect of motivation on performance

$\beta = 0.60$

$R^2 = 0.36$

$p < 0.01$

H3: confirmed

Motivation has a significant impact on performance.

4.1.5 Mediation analysis

A model with mediating variables (motivation, communication and satisfaction) was tested:

Direct effect of leadership → performance (reduzido para $\beta = 0,38$)

Significant indirect effect via motivation and communication

Overall model R^2: 0.58

Interpretation:

The reduction of the direct coefficient indicates partial mediation, i.e., part of the effect of leadership occurs through the mediating variables.

H4: confirmed (communication as a mediator)

H5: confirmed (satisfaction as a mediator)

4.1.6 Effect of centralizing leadership

$\beta = -0.41$

$p < 0.05$

H6: confirmed

Centralizing leadership has a significant negative impact on performance.

4.2 Discussion

The results confirm that participative leadership has a significant impact on job performance, both directly and indirectly. The high correlation between leadership and motivation reinforces the perspective that effective leaders act as catalysts for employee engagement (BASS & RIGGIO, 2006).

The evidence of partial mediation is aligned with contemporary approaches that conceptualize leadership as a relational phenomenon, whose impact is materialized through psychosocial variables (YUKL, 2013; NORTHOUSE, 2022).

On the other hand, the negative effect of centralizing leadership confirms that authoritarian practices can compromise performance, especially in contexts that require participation and adaptability. This result is consistent with studies conducted in African contexts, which point to the need for more inclusive leadership models (BOLDEN & KIRK, 2009; NKOMO, 2011).

The results obtained confirm that leadership exerts a significant influence on job performance, but also evidence the complexity of this relationship.

The presence of participatory practices suggests an approximation to transformational leadership models, as described by BASS and RIGGIO (2006). However, the persistence of centralized practices indicates that the organization still maintains traditional leadership characteristics, which corroborates YUKL (2013)'s perspective on the coexistence of leadership styles.

The lack of structured feedback and professional recognition reinforces the idea that leadership in the studied context does not yet fully incorporate relational and motivational dimensions. This result is aligned with African studies that point to challenges in the transition from hierarchical models to participatory models (NKOMO, 2011).

Thus, the results suggest that the leadership in GEPE is in a state of transition, reflecting tensions between traditional and contemporary models.

5. Conclusion

The empirical results of the study confirm, based on statistical evidence, that leadership exerts a significant influence on the job performance of GEPE employees. Confirmation of hypotheses H1 to H6 reinforces the robustness of the proposed theoretical model and highlights the relevance of the mediating variables in explaining organizational performance.

In particular, participative leadership demonstrated a significant direct effect on performance ($\beta = 0,65$; $p < 0,01$), as well as indirect effects through motivation, communication and satisfaction, increasing the explanatory power of the model to 58% of the variability in job performance. These results confirm that the effectiveness of leadership is not limited to its formal dimension, but depends on its ability to influence psychosocial processes in the work environment.

The identification of partial mediation reinforces the idea that leadership acts as a structuring factor that conditions other organizational variables, which, in turn, influence performance. This finding is in line with contemporary theoretical approaches that defend the systemic and relational nature of leadership (YUKL, 2013; NORTHOUSE, 2022).

On the other hand, the negative effect of centralizing leadership ($\beta = -0,41$; $p < 0,05$) shows that authoritarian practices can significantly compromise performance, limiting employee motivation and participation. This result is particularly relevant in the context of Angolan public administration, where hierarchical organizational structures persist.

On the theoretical level, the study contributes to the empirical validation of models that integrate leadership and mediating variables, reinforcing the need for more complex approaches in the analysis of organizational performance. At the practical level, the results show the need to promote participative leadership styles, invest in employee motivation and strengthen organizational communication.

In summary, the study demonstrates that leadership is a central strategic element for improving organizational performance, and is essential for the modernization of public administration in Angola.

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