

Transformational Leadership and Organizational Productivity in the Nigerian Public Service

Kazeem Adebayo Oladimeji^a, Abdulrazaq Kayode Abdulkareem^b
& Toheeb Temitope Taofeeq^b

^aDepartment of Political Science and Public Administration, Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Nigeria

^bDepartment of Public Administration, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria Corresponding Author:

^aCorresponding author: oladimeji.ka1@gmail.com

Abstract

This study investigated the effect of transformational leadership on organizational productivity in the Nigerian public sector. Transformational leadership theory and social exchange theory framed the research. A survey was conducted among 115 administrative staff in the House of Assembly in Kwara State, Nigeria. The results showed individualized consideration, idealized influence, intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation positively influenced organizational productivity, supporting the study hypotheses. The findings align with past evidence that transformational leaders enhance productivity by inspiring followers to higher levels of capability. The study makes key theoretical contributions by validating transformational leadership theory within the underexamined context of Nigerian public sector organizations. Practical implications are that public sector leaders should be developed on transformational leadership behaviours to leverage employee motivation and reciprocation. Organizational policies and culture also need realignment to enable transformational leadership practices. Overall, the study provides original empirical insights on transformational leadership's role in improving organizational outcomes in developing countries' public institutions.

Keywords: Idealized influence, Intellectual stimulation, Transformational leadership, Inspirational motivation, Organizational productivity, Individualized consideration

Introduction

Leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping organizational outcomes including productivity, performance, innovation, and employee satisfaction and engagement. The style of leadership adopted within an organization can have a significant impact on these key indicators of organizational success. Among contemporary leadership theories, transformational leadership has emerged as a highly effective approach for motivating followers and spearheading positive organizational change and innovation (Bass & Riggio, 2010)

Transformational leaders exhibit behaviours that inspire, empower, and intellectually stimulate their employees to achieve extraordinary outcomes that go beyond expectations (Avolio & Bass, 1995). They articulate an appealing vision, provide inspirational motivation, encourage creative problem-solving, and offer individualized support and mentoring to nurture their followers. This motivates the employees to exert greater efforts and align their values with the collective interests of the organization (Saboe et al., 2015).

The core focus of transformational leadership is on developing followers into leaders. Transformational leaders are attentive to their employees' needs and support their growth and advancement (Bui et al., 2017). By establishing trust and meaningful engagement, they elicit intrinsic motivation from their followers, foster knowledge sharing, and enable them to reach their full potential (Faupel & Süß, 2019). This leadership approach relies on influencing change from the bottom-up by elevating, empowering, and aligning followers to the organization's objective and vision.

Extensive previous researches have demonstrated the positive effects of transformational leadership on key organizational performance indicators including productivity, efficiency, quality, innovation, and employee retention across different cultural and organizational contexts (Dwivedi et al., 2020; Faupel & Süß, 2019; Nguyen & Luu, 2019; Piwowar-Sulej & Iqbal, 2022). Transformational leaders empower followers to achieve ambitious performance targets by linking organizational objectives to collective values and intrinsic motivations (Saboe et al., 2015). This leadership approach has been associated with higher levels of organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and knowledge creation and sharing among employees (Bui et al., 2017).

Despite the well-established benefits of transformational leadership, its application within public sector organizations in the Nigerian context remains limited (Oladimeji & Abdulkareem, 2022). The public sector in Nigeria continues to grapple with challenges related to weak leadership, ineffective governance, and poor service delivery (Lawan et al., 2020). Adopting transformational leadership could potentially address these systemic organizational and productivity issues. However, there is insufficient empirical research examining transformational leadership dynamics within Nigeria, particularly, as it regards the public sector organizations. Investigating the implications of transformational leadership style for the Nigerian public sector can uncover insights to guide leadership development initiatives and enhance organizational productivity, innovation, and overall performance.

This study aims to bridge this knowledge gap by assessing the effects of transformational leadership on organizational productivity in the Kwara State House of Assembly, Nigeria. Examining this relationship can expand scholarly understanding of transformational leadership's potential in the Nigerian public sector context. The findings can also inform practical recommendations and reform efforts to build transformational leadership capabilities within public sector institutions as a strategy for improving organizational outcomes. Thus, this study carries valuable implications for theory, policy, and practice related to leadership, good governance and productivity in the Nigerian public sector.

The Kwara State House of Assembly plays a pivotal role in policymaking and upholding democratic governance in the state. However, it continues to face challenges related to leadership, good governance, and service delivery, which negatively impact organizational productivity (Abdulkareem, 2022). This study will assess how transformational leadership dimensions including intellectual stimulation, idealized influence, individualized consideration, and inspirational motivation (Bass, 1985) influence the productivity of the Kwara State House of Assembly.

The outcomes of this study will contribute to the scholarly understanding of transformational leadership dynamics within public sector organizations in the Nigerian context. In addition, the findings will provide practical recommendations to leaders, managers, and policymakers on leveraging

transformational leadership to enhance organizational productivity, performance, and good governance practices within the Kwara State House of Assembly.

Literature Review: Transformational Leadership and Organizational Productivity

Transformational leadership is a style of leadership that aims to inspire and motivate followers to achieve higher levels of performance and satisfaction, as well as to create positive changes within an organization. Transformational leaders are often characterized by their charisma, vision, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and moral values. They can influence the fundamental attitudes and assumptions of their followers, creating a shared vision and a sense of collective identity. Transformational leadership has been widely studied in various contexts and domains, such as business, education, health care, military, and sports (Dema et al., 2023).

One of the main effects of transformational leadership on organizational productivity is that it enhances the performance of followers and teams (Bui et al., 2017; Dwivedi et al., 2020; Faupel & Süß, 2019; Nguyen & Luu, 2019; Saboe et al., 2015). According to Jones and Rudd (2008), transformational leadership usually generates higher performance than transactional leadership, which is founded on contingent rewards and penalties. This is because transformational leaders can stimulate the intrinsic motivation of their followers, by appealing to their higher-order needs, values, and ideals. For example, transformational leaders can inspire their followers with a compelling vision of the future, challenge them to think critically and creatively and encourage them to pursue personal and professional growth. These factors can increase the followers' self-efficacy, self-determination, and self-regulation, which are essential for high performance (Zhang et al., 2012).

Transformational leaders also foster a climate of trust, empowerment, and innovation, which enables followers to take initiative, exercise creativity, and overcome challenges (Nübold et al., 2015). For instance, transformational leaders can delegate authority and responsibility to their followers, provide them with feedback and recognition, and support them in taking risks and learning from failures. These factors can enhance the followers' autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which are important for high performance (Fernet et al., 2015). Furthermore, transformational leaders promote collaboration and cooperation among followers and teams, by creating a sense of interdependence, shared responsibility, and mutual support. For example, transformational leaders can facilitate communication and information sharing among their followers, resolve conflict, build consensus, and cultivate a culture of teamwork and diversity. These factors can improve the followers' social capital, social identity, and social exchange, which are beneficial for high performance (Chen et al., 2014).

Transformational leadership exerts a profound and far-reaching impact on organizational productivity by significantly enhancing the satisfaction and well-being of its followers and teams. This leadership style is more than just a set of strategies; it represents a dynamic process characterized by mutual stimulation and elevation, where leaders and followers collectively propel each other toward higher levels of morality and motivation. One of the remarkable facets of transformational leadership lies in its ability to cater to the psychological needs of its followers. According to Deci and Ryan (2000), these needs encompass autonomy, competence, relatedness, and self-actualization. Transformational leaders

excel in fostering an environment where individuals feel empowered to exercise their autonomy, exhibit their competence, establish meaningful connections with others, and embark on journeys of self-discovery and growth. Consequently, followers under the guidance of such leaders experience a profound sense of fulfilment and contentment.

Furthermore, transformational leaders are adept at nurturing positive affective states among their followers. These states encompass an array of positive emotions, such as enthusiasm, optimism, and unwavering commitment. The research conducted by (Bono et al., 2007) underscores how transformational leaders can inspire a sense of purpose and dedication in their teams, resulting in a workforce that is not only highly motivated but also exuberant and optimistic about their collective endeavours.

In addition to fostering positive emotions, transformational leaders play a pivotal role in mitigating the adverse effects of work-related stress. The studies conducted by Boamah (2022); Kloutsiniotis et al. (2022) converge on the finding that transformational leadership effectively reduces burnout, turnover intention, and social loafing. This implies that under the guidance of transformational leaders, employees are better equipped to cope with the rigours of their roles, leading to reduced burnout rates, decreased turnover intentions, and a notable decrease in unproductive behaviours like social loafing. The influence of transformational leadership on satisfaction outcomes is well documented across various levels of analysis, including the individual, group, and organizational levels. Empirical studies, such as those by Budur and Poturak (2021); Hussain and Khayat (2021); Purwanto et al. (2021), have consistently affirmed the strong and positive relationship between transformational leadership and satisfaction outcomes. This signifies that transformational leaders not only enhance the well-being of individual team members but also contribute significantly to the overall satisfaction and cohesion within teams and organizations.

In essence, transformational leadership has significant effects on organizational productivity. Transformational leaders can improve the performance and satisfaction of their followers and teams, by inspiring them with a compelling vision, stimulating them intellectually, considering them individually, and modelling them morally.

Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by two key theories - transformational leadership theory and social exchange theory.

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership theory was initially conceptualized by James MacGregor Burns in his seminal work in 1978, which focused on political leadership. Bernard M. Bass then expanded on Burns' theory to extend it to organizational contexts in 1985 (Bass & Riggio, 2010). This theory focuses on how leaders can inspire, empower and intellectually stimulate followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes that exceed expectations (Avolio & Bass, 1995). Transformational leaders exhibit behaviours that motivate higher performance and commitment from followers. They articulate an appealing vision of the future that generates enthusiasm and encourages followers to prioritize collective interests over self-interests. By questioning assumptions and reframing problems, they stimulate creativity and new

perspectives. They provide individualized consideration, acting as mentors and coaches to support the development needs of each follower (Asbari, 2020).

Transformational leaders uplift and inspire followers to transform themselves and the organization through four key dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Idealized influence refers to leaders serving as ethical role models that followers aspire to emulate. Inspirational motivation involves communicating an optimistic vision that energizes followers. Intellectual stimulation means challenging assumptions and soliciting new ideas and solutions. Individualized consideration represents paying attention to individual follower needs and supporting their growth (Dwivedi et al., 2020).

This study utilizes transformational leadership theory to explain how the constructive behaviours encompassed within these four dimensions can enhance outcomes such as organizational productivity, performance, innovation, and commitment. The theory provides a lens to understand how transformational leaders positively influence follower attitudes, motivation, empowerment and organizational culture to foster improved organizational effectiveness and success.

Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory proposes that social relationships are fundamentally based on subjective cost-benefit analysis and comparison of alternatives (Ahmad et al., 2023; Cropanzano et al., 2017). Individuals evaluate whether the tangible and intangible benefits derived from a relationship outweigh the costs. They also assess available alternatives to determine the most rewarding exchange relationships. A core tenet of social exchange theory is that relationships evolve into trusting, loyal and mutually committed associations through the reciprocal exchange of benefits (Settoon et al., 1996). When individuals receive economic and socioemotional resources from groups or organizations, they feel obligated to reciprocate in positive ways (Gouldner, 1960). This fosters high-quality relationships characterized by mutual support and positive actions towards collective interests.

This study applies social exchange theory to understand how transformational leaders can elicit increased engagement and productivity from followers. Transformational leaders empower followers by delegating responsibilities, supporting their needs, and valuing their contributions (Bass, 1985). Followers receive both task-related and socioemotional benefits through this empowering leadership approach. In line with social exchange principles, followers reciprocate these benefits by exerting greater effort, exhibiting organizational citizenship behaviours, and demonstrating higher levels of performance and commitment (Wang et al., 2005).

Therefore, social exchange theory provides a framework for explaining why followers respond positively to transformational leaders who empower them, resulting in reciprocal beneficial behaviours and attitudes such as increased productivity and organizational commitment. This reciprocation is based on employees' subjective cost-benefit evaluations, comparisons to alternative leaders, and the evolution of mutual loyalty and trust within the transformational leader-follower relationship.

Hypotheses

- H1: The idealized influence of leaders significantly influences organizational productivity.
H2: The inspirational motivation of leaders significantly influences organizational productivity.
H3: The intellectual stimulation of leaders significantly influences organizational productivity.
H4: The individualized consideration of leaders significantly influences organizational productivity.

Methodology

This study utilized a quantitative approach with a descriptive survey research design. The survey method allowed for the collection of quantitative data to describe the characteristics of the population through a representative sample. This design was deemed appropriate for examining the connection between transformational leadership dimensions and organizational productivity indicators. The administrative staff in the Kwara State House of Assembly formed the target population, estimated at 169 employees based on official records. To determine the sample size, Cochran's formula was applied with a 5% margin of error and 95% confidence level. This yielded a sample size of 118 respondents, suitable for the statistical analyses required. A simple random sampling technique was used to select respondents from the target population. This minimized potential sampling bias.

Data was collected using structured questionnaires administered to the sample. The questionnaire had three sections - respondent demographics, transformational leadership measures, and organizational productivity measures.

Transformational leadership dimensions were measured using the established Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Bass & Avolio, 1990). Organizational productivity indicators were assessed through measures of efficiency, effectiveness, quality and innovation adapted from prior studies (Mihaiu et al., 2010; Peralta et al., 2015). To ensure validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by experts in public administration who assessed its content validity. Reliability was evaluated through a pilot study on 30 respondents and calculating Cronbach's alpha values, with 0.7 set as the acceptable reliability coefficient threshold.

The quantitative data was analysed using Partial Least Square- Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). Descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations, percentages and frequencies were produced for respondent demographics and survey measures. Inferential statistics were conducted to investigate the connection between transformational leadership and organizational productivity. All tests were one-tailed with a 95% confidence level and a 5% significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$).

Analysis

Demographic Characteristics

The demographic characteristics of the respondents is summarized in Table 1. The findings show that the majority of respondents were between 46-55 years old (48.1%), male (61.7%), held HND/bachelor's degrees (61.7%), and had 11-15 years of experience (64.2%). This indicates that

respondents overall had substantial work experience and educational qualifications to provide meaningful insights on transformational leadership and organizational productivity.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

		Frequency	Percentage
Age	18-24 years	26	23.3
	25-34 years	17	15
	35-44 years	12	10
	45-54 years	55	48.1
	55 years and above	4	3.5
	Total	115	100
Gender	Male	71	61.7
	Female	44	38.3
	Total	115	100
Educational Qualification	First School Leaving Certificate	5	4.5
	Secondary Schools	25	21.8
	OND/NCE	14	12
	H.N.D/Bachelor's degree	71	61.7
	Total	115	100
Length of Service	1 - 5 years	3	2.5
	6 - 10 years	29	25.9
	11 - 15 years	74	64.2
	Above 15 years	9	7.4
	Total	115	100

Measurement Model

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to assess the measurement model using SmartPLS 4.0.9.5 software. The results in Table 2 show that the majority of the factor loadings were above the recommended 0.705 threshold, indicating convergent validity. Construct reliability was confirmed based on Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability and average variance extracted values exceeding recommended cut-offs of 0.7, 0.7 and 0.5 respectively .

Table 2. Measurement Model Results

Constructs	Items	Loadings	Mean	Std Dev	CA	CR	AVE
Idealized Influence	IDF1	0.671	4.15	1.02	0.758	0.714	0.585
	IDF2	0.872	3.91	0.96			
	IDF3	0.789	3.98	0.91			

	IDF4	0.825	4.01	1.13			
	IDF5	0.885	4.12	1.18			
	IDF6	0.751	4.17	1.14			
Intellectual stimulation	ITS1	0.752	4.00	0.85	0.776	0.721	0.553
	ITS2	0.755	3.88	0.98			
	ITS3	0.776	3.86	0.96			
	ITS4	0.847	3.95	1.16			
	ITS5	0.819	3.97	1.22			
Inspirational Motivation	INM 1	0.860	3.99	0.97	0.842	0.861	0.56
	INM 2	0.711	4.17	0.89			
	INM 3	0.713	4.13	1.14			
Organizational Productivity	OGP 1	0.820	4.03	1.12	0.802	0.823	0.634
	OGP 2	0.863	4.01	1.03			
	OGP 3	0.851	4.05	1.08			
	OGP 4	0.628	4.11	0.99			
Individualized Consideration	IDC1	0.987	3.98	0.95	0.852	0.813	0.579
	IDC2	0.783	3.96	1.06			
	IDC3	0.882	4.12	1.01			
	IDC4	0.814	3.99	0.95			

Discriminant validity was established using heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) analysis as shown in Table 3. All HTMT values were below the conservative threshold of 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015), confirming the distinctiveness of the constructs.

Table 3. Heterotrait -Monotrait (HTMT) Analysis

	Idealized Inf.	Insp Mot	Org Prod	Ind Cons	Intel Sim
Idealized Inf.					
Insp Mot	0.572				
Org Prod	0.602	0.681			

Ind Cons	0.425	0.655	0.524	
Intel Sim	0.337	0.473	0.552	0.696

Structural Model

The structural model was assessed using SmartPLS software. As shown in Table 4, idealized influence ($\beta=0.169$, $p<0.001$), inspirational motivation ($\beta=0.123$, $p<0.001$), intellectual stimulation ($\beta=0.309$, $p<0.001$) and individualized consideration ($\beta=0.387$, $p<0.001$) all had significant positive effects on organizational productivity. Therefore, H1, H2, H3 and H4 were fully supported. The findings confirm transformational leadership dimensions are important antecedents to enhancing productivity in public sector organizations.

Table 4. Structural Model Path Coefficients

	β	Stand dev	T -value	P values	Remark
Idealized Inf. -> Org Prod	0.169	0.037	4.536	0.000	Supported
Ind Cons -> Org Prod	0.387	0.029	13.248	0.000	Supported
Insp Mot -> Org Prod	0.123	0.021	5.883	0.000	Supported
Intel Sim -> Org Prod	0.309	0.036	8.671	0.000	Supported

Discussion

The findings of this study provide empirical support for the significant positive relationship between transformational leadership and organizational productivity in the public sector context. All four transformational leadership dimensions were found to positively influence organizational productivity within the Kwara State House of Assembly, Nigeria. Specifically, the results align with past research evidencing the positive effects of idealized influence on performance outcomes (Choudhary et al., 2013). Leaders who act as role models and build trust and confidence can enhance follower motivation and commitment towards achieving organizational goals (Avolio & Bass, 1995). This supports the tenets of transformational leadership theory regarding inspiring followers through high standards of moral conduct (Bass, 1985). Similarly, the positive link between inspirational motivation and productivity concurred with (Ndwiga & Ngaithe, 2016) who found inspirational leaders improve performance by articulating an appealing vision. Through inspirational communication, leaders can foster meaning, optimism, enthusiasm and purpose among followers, energizing them towards productivity aims (Bass & Riggio, 2006). This provides empirical backing for the emphasis of transformational theory on motivating followers by linking organizational goals to values and collective interests (Dwivedi et al., 2020). The finding that intellectual stimulation enhances productivity aligns with evidence of this dimension promoting innovation, learning and problem-solving which translate to organizational outcomes (Bui et al., 2017). By encouraging new perspectives and ideas from followers, leaders can enable the organization to adapt effectively to change (Faupel & Süß, 2019). This highlights the role of transformational leaders in building capacity for innovation through intellectual stimulation (Afsar & Umrani, 2020). Additionally, the positive impact of individualized consideration corroborates the conclusions by Chiang et al. (2021) that responding to follower needs through mentorship and coaching advances performance. The findings lend credence to transformational theory's proposition that leaders can elevate followers to higher levels of potential through individualized consideration.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

The findings support the applicability of transformational leadership theory and social exchange theory in explaining the influence of leadership behaviours on organizational productivity within the Nigerian public sector context. Also, the study provides empirical evidence substantiating the relationships between transformational leadership dimensions (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration) and organizational productivity. The results expand understanding of how constructively oriented leadership approaches can positively shape employee attitudes, motivation, and performance to improve organizational outcomes. Similarly, this research bridges a knowledge gap regarding transformational leadership dynamics in public sector organizations in developing countries, on which limited prior studies exist. The findings can inform future research on leadership-productivity linkages using transformational leadership theory and social exchange theory. The context-specific insights can aid further studies in Nigeria and similar developing countries.

Practical Implications

The confirmations of transformational leadership's positive impacts highlight its potential for improving organizational performance and public service delivery. Public sector leaders ought to emphasize the various dimensions of transformational leadership to motivate employee productivity and organizational growth. Leadership training initiatives for public administrators can integrate components of transformational leadership to cultivate constructive leadership skills. Hiring/selection of public sector managers can assess transformational leadership propensities to staff key positions effectively. Performance management and reward systems can embed transformational leadership behaviours such as recognizing employee achievements, contributions, and growth. Organizational policies should enable intellectual stimulation, open communication, participative decision-making and mentoring to support transformational leadership. A supportive organizational culture is needed to foster transformational leadership practices for enhanced productivity and innovation.

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