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A review of transformational leadership and its impact on team, group, and departmental levels

Elizabeth Oluwakemi Ayandibu *

Commerce Foundation, Economics Department, Faculty of Commerce, Administration and Law, University of Zululand, South Africa

Abstract

This review article explores the impact of transformational leadership at multiple organizational levels, including team, group, and departmental contexts. Drawing on a wide range of literature, the review synthesizes findings on how transformational leadership influences employee performance, motivation, and organizational outcomes. The article examines key dimensions of transformational leadership idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration and assesses their effectiveness in achieving innovation, enhancing team cohesion, and improving job satisfaction. While transformational leadership has demonstrated positive effects across various sectors, the review also highlights the challenges of implementing this leadership style, particularly in structured or hierarchical organizations. Furthermore, this article identifies gaps in current research, such as the need for further studies on the moderating role of culture and personality traits in leadership effectiveness. The review concludes by discussing practical implications for leadership development programs and outlining areas for future research in the field of transformational leadership.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership; Employee Performance; Organizational Outcomes; Innovation; Team Cohesion; Job Satisfaction; Leadership Development Programs; Culture and Personality Traits

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* Corresponding author. *E-mail address:* AyandibuE@unizulu.ac.za oluwakemi.ayandibu@gmail.com

1. Introduction

In the current globalized and competitive environment, the need for effective leaders could not have been more important for the survival and success of organizations. A good leader is one who can take any group or organization to a much higher level than it is (Blanchard, 2018). They can influence others and work towards a change in the perspectives and behaviors of their followers. There is no doubt that leadership is the key to success for many high-performing organizations. Transformational leadership has been associated with a variety of positive outcomes, including better work performance, followers' commitment to the organization, a clear path towards the vision of the leader, the satisfaction of the followers, and more importantly, a learning experience for the followers (Eliophotou-Menon and Ioannou, 2016). All of which are vital for the success of an organization. Although the qualifications to this evidence from a meta-analysis study show that the effects are much stronger in private than public sector organizations.

Management styles have played a crucial role in the organizational setting, and the success of an organization depends on the functionality and the repercussions of the style implemented therein (Abubakar et al., 2019). This research helps in explaining what the impacts of transformational leadership style would be if it were implemented at different levels of the organization. Transformational leadership has been defined as a leadership style in which an individual influences others, makes them understand the importance of the mission and goals of the group as well as the organization (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2005). These leaders create a change from the old perspective of the organization, and most importantly, they consider the interests of the employees as well as the organization as a whole. This leadership style is very different from transactional leadership, whereby the leader recognizes what subordinates want and then exchanges it with them for tasks to be done or rewards. Up to date, most studies on leadership and organizations have focused on the influence of leaders on subordinates and the way in which this influence helps organizations achieve their goals (Dickson, 2022; Ladouceur, 2024).

2. Transformational leadership style

Individual consideration is when the leader gives personal attention to the followers by acting as a coach, a mentor, or a listener. This behavior is well-suited for the development of each follower (Eliophotou-Menon and Ioannou, 2016). Intellectual stimulation consists of the leader stimulating creativity and innovative thinking in the followers. This behavior promotes problem-solving capabilities of the followers (Ogola et al., 2017). Inspirational motivation is when the leader motivates and inspires the team to high performance, usually as a result of a vision introduced by the leader (Bakker et al., 2023). Lastly, Idealized influence is described as the behavior of the leader to be admired and followed by the followers. This is the basis of the transformation of followers. The leader sets an example for followers to adopt as their own ideal.

3. Theoretical framework

Transformational leadership is critical in organizations for its ability to inspire employees, encourage innovation, and enhance organizational performance. Rooted in the Full Range Leadership Theory (Bass and

Avolio, 1994), this leadership style emphasizes four key dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Transformational leaders create a shared vision, motivate employees to surpass expectations, and provide personalized support to help them grow. This approach is particularly effective in promoting team cohesion, innovation, and job satisfaction (Bass and Riggio, 2006). Additionally, the theory highlights the importance of leaders acting as role models, encouraging creativity, and encouraging a sense of purpose among employees. For example, organizations employing transformational leadership often report improved adaptability and employee engagement, particularly in industries requiring continuous innovation (Judge and Piccolo, 2004). By aligning with the Full Range Leadership Theory, this leadership style provides a robust framework for addressing the dynamic needs of modern organizations.

4. Four I's of transformational leadership

Bass (1998) suggested that there are certain characteristics or behaviors of transformational leaders. They identified these behaviors into four dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration.

From the standpoint of supply chain management, transformational leadership shall be defined as engaging and inspiring internal and external customers, suppliers, and logistics providing partners towards a common vision and shared values through the dynamic execution of supply chain process and information reengineering (Birasnav, 2013).

5. Impact of transformational leadership at the team level

This is a significant factor in the long-term performance and development of teams. A particular case is within the health sector. There has been a large drive and many strategies enforced to improve nursing team performance and patient outcomes. A recent study identified transformational leadership as having a significant impact on creating work environments that promote the health and safety of staff and, in turn, improves patient outcomes conducted (Ystaas et al., 2023). This was accomplished primarily through the leaders' ability to inspire and motivate teams to cultivate a supportive work climate.

At the team level, transformational leadership style has been demonstrated to leverage formally articulated leader roles within work groups (Lehmann-Willenbrock et al., 2015). It is concerned with group goals, group identity, and the interdependencies among group members. Transformational leadership has a close bearing on team performance as it dictates how the resources are leveraged in order to achieve the outcomes (Engelen et al., 2015). It encourages a climate of trust, care, and collective identity and establishes the systems which develop and reinforce required behaviors for better performance. These infrastructures aim to facilitate improved coordination, cooperation, and cohesion which augments the performance of teams in many industries. Transformational leaders are able to communicate their visions in a manner that creates intrinsic task motivation and orients the team to the environment (Coleman, 2018).

6. Impact of transformational leadership at the group level

This can be seen to parallel the transformational effect that has been described at the individual level. Study of a key British company undergoing successive and separate change initiatives at shopfloor and white-collar levels, describes how the improved attitudes and behaviors of managers filtering down to shopfloor level created a change in organizational climate triggering a move to the next level of culture, this time at shopfloor level (Wang and Howell, 2010). This higher level of culture was characterized by a change in employee attitudes and behaviors to reflect those they saw in their superiors. This, in effect, moved the shopfloor employees into becoming leaders of their own subordinates (the shopfloor being seen as a group, and the supervisors as leaders). The consistent nature of the positive change in leader behaviors and subgroup outcomes through training and the creation of coach the group with the necessary skills should result in the formation of an improvement subunit, complete with its own improved culture (Li, et al., 2016). This validates how transformational leadership creates higher levels of leadership in order to develop subunits of the organization. Such situations have important implications for the overall leader-subordinate structure of the organization and may, at times, lead the team or group into taking on 'group level' leadership to change some level of the wider organization. This later case may be a reason for a leader giving up own team or group to influence the wider environment. He and his group feel their leadership is for the best interests of the organization. This would not have occurred without the leader influenced by the higher-level culture and the improved perceptions of the desired organizational state.

Transformational leadership, with its articulation of vision, intense and high behavior, high levels of personal and work consideration, and intellectual motivation, would out to generate greater subordinate leader in the group (Díaz-Sáenz, 2011). This would be expected to provide a better understanding of how their own work fits into the larger organizational picture and to generally develop more autonomy in how work is to be done.

7. Impact of transformational leadership at the departmental level

Departments generally have specific tasks aligned with organizational objectives. The department leader has to take the teams to the desired position to accomplish those tasks. Transformational leadership may influence teams. A team is an example of groups. Department leaders will be required to encourage teamwork (Chin, 2024). Transformational leaders encourage camaraderie among his/her employees, and this leads to a friendly work environment as the teams start to identify with each other (Huang et al., 2016). This can lead to teams attaining higher levels of effectiveness in terms of successful task completion. The leader's expectations will have higher achievements of teams, and they may provide teams with extra resources to get the job done. A high level of team effectiveness in terms of commitment and productivity may give an indication of the particular leadership style being effective (Mesu et al., 2015). This style will encourage teams for different projects and development of the employees in that team. As this leadership style gives more consideration to the individual followers, the team members may increase their level of trust and respect for their leader and become more loyal to both their leaders and the organizations (Lo et al., 2013).

Transformational leaders have a greater impact on the departmental level. At this level, teams have a common task and various groups of employees in an organization. Departmental leaders may be required to influence others and make a contribution to the business as a whole (Hawkins, 2021).

Departmental level is the 3rd level in the organizational hierarchy. A department is a group of individuals who perform a specific task. It consists of various groups of employees. A transformational leader has a greater impact at the departmental level (Mesu et al., 2015). At this level, this leadership style will play a greater role in the success and future of the company.

8. Factors influencing the effectiveness of transformational leadership

Leadership effectiveness has been defined as the extent to which a leader effects the follower and the extent to which intended influence is carried out (House and Podsakoff, 2013). It is proposed that leadership effectiveness be judged based on outcomes at multiple levels, referring to the work unit as well as the effects on the organization at higher levels (Yadav et al., 2022). They measure effectiveness in terms of outcomes such as follower satisfaction and performance, but to address the full question of what makes transformational leadership effective, we must consider the factors affecting whether or not it will produce these sorts of outcomes. In line with the nature of transformational leadership as a process theory, we are concerned with moderators and mediators.

It's like this whole transformational leadership thing just won't go away. According to popular transformational leadership theory and research, the greatest impact of charismatic leadership is to be found in its potential to markedly influence individual and organizational effectiveness (Van Knippenberg and Sitkin, 2013). This refers to the partially tacit assumption in most of this literature that transformational leadership will generally be positively associated with whatever leadership or organizational outcomes are being considered. This is reasoned by the fact that charisma is such a powerful and positively connoted form of influence. However, over the years, an increasing number of studies have been conducted investigating the effectiveness and impact of transformational leadership on various outcomes (Davis and Gardner, 2012; Mhatre and Riggio, 2014; Supratman et al., 2021). So, the next question is likely to be, why does this work sometimes and not others?

9. Relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance

Transformational leaders will drive followers to transcend their own self-interests for the good of the group. This is important because most of the organizational performance is a result of group effort. By putting the followers' interests ahead of their own, it will effectively increase their effort to perform well because they are doing it for the sake of the group or team (Ayandibu and Ayandibu, 2023). Moreover, the promise of rewards like better job assignments, promotions, or just simple praise and recognition from the leader can also drive employees to perform well.

Bass (1985) has already mentioned that followers' attributions and self-efficacy are behavioral mediators of transformational leadership work. This is due to the confidence that followers have in their ability. The more confident they are, the better their performance will be. The enhancement in followers' attributions is caused

by the leader's ability to influence their perception and interpretation of the work environment and work characteristics.

Transformational leaders can raise the performance of their followers to extraordinary heights (Hargreaves et al., 2014). This is very important for organizations as it will influence their survival and ability to compete in this hyper-competitive business environment. The role of a leader in influencing employee performance means that the leader should increase the followers' confidence in their ability to perform well (Darshan, 2011). This is important because it can lead to an increase in the expected level of performance. If followers have high confidence in their ability to reach these expectations, they will be motivated to mobilize the effort to achieve them.

10. Relationship between transformational leadership and employee satisfaction

Intellectual Stimulation - In congruence with coursework, intellectual stimulation can be related to motivation. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, those with unfulfilled needs at a certain level will be motivated to firstly fulfill the basic need (Virginia and Satria, 2022). Once this is achieved, they will then be motivated by the opportunity of fulfilling the next level of needs. By intellectually stimulating employees, a transformational leader can meet higher-level needs and thus increase motivation and job satisfaction (Darshan, 2011). This has been supported in reference to MBA students in a study by Hater and Bass, which found intellectual stimulation to be a strong predictor of job satisfaction. This relationship is also supported by a study of school principals, as transformational leadership has been shown to increase teachers' job satisfaction by providing the opportunity for decision making and leadership.

11. Relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement

The most crucial part of this theme would be providing evidence about the relationship. Employee engagement is essentially defined as the ability of the employee to involve himself in the tasks assigned to him and the emotional involvement will then create a higher level of engagement which will then indicate a higher level of employee involvement (Saks and Gruman, 2014). This will affect the employee job performance and in the context of this study, it will affect the productivity level of the team, group or department. Higher employee job performance would then lead to increased levels of customer satisfaction and thus affect the financial performance of the team, group or department (Chang et al., 2021). This would provide a clear path for the team, group or department to be able to achieve the goals they have set. The previous studies have given a lot of evidence that there is a significant relationship between transformational leadership and employee involvement. Employee involvement is basically the same concept as employee engagement and this gives a good framework for us to understand that transformational leadership does affect employee engagement. A study by Bass, 1985, has also proven that there is a significant relationship with job performance and transformational leadership. Job performance is like employee engagement as mentioned in the definition in the beginning, where if there is a higher level of employee engagement he will have a higher level of job performance. The recent meta-analysis study by Dumdum et al. (2013), has confirmed the relationship between transformational leadership and job performance. The study has shown that the mean corrected

correlation between transformational leadership and job performance is ρ = 0.41. This is a very significant level and the higher the job performance level, the easier it is for the team, group or department to attain their goals. Transformational leadership style has also been known to be able to trigger emotion among the followers. This is because the leadership is based on the build of leader-member rapport and the work that concerns the follower. As employee engagement develops a positive attitude toward one's work, it will be easier for an employee to do the tasks that will lead to better organizational performance (Dumdum et al., 2013). Transformational leadership, particularly on the charisma behavior, has shown to be able to increase follower affective commitment towards the organization. This commitment is a good indicator towards an employee engagement level and a study by Pradhan and Pradhan (2015), has shown a significant relation between charisma and affective organizational commitment. Affective commitment will develop a sense of responsibility to ensure that the task given would be done well and thus this will increase job performance of the employee. Lastly, transformational leadership has an ability to influence over the followers and it uses the influence to inspire the followers to make a change, especially for the intellectual stimulation behavior. A study by Ondari, 2019, has shown that there is a significant correlation between transformational leadership and its influence tactics with task performance. This will eventually benefit the organizational performance and attainment of goals because task performance is what a team, group or department is doing to achieve the specific goals to enhance the organization.

12. Challenges in implementing transformational leadership

During the transition, there is a phase in sustaining at a moderate level before taking another upward shift in change. At the high point of a past success period, change is harder to implement. The change agent must be cautious not to implement change too swiftly where the organization will revert back to its known state out of failure learning and perceived low self-efficacy. The change process can also be threatened by unexpected changes in the internal and external environments (Madi Odeh et al., 2023). It is typical for changes in direction to occur amidst evidence of poor performance, and this can hinder progress on current change efforts. Stepwise change can also be frustrating to the transformational leader who wishes to inspire followers to create a revolutionized future state.

The change process itself can involve multiple layers of change agents and project groups and can be chaotic. This can lead to the organization reverting back to old habits if the change isn't seen through effectively to the end. Transformational leaders often change the cultures of organizations; this can take considerable amounts of time and can be a great challenge (Al-Subaie et al., 2021). Organization culture is described as the way we do things around here, this can involve the deep-rooted assumptions and values held by members of the organization (Hughes et al., 2012). Change to this culture can undermine the identities and purposes of various groups within the organization.

Implementing the ideas of transformational leadership can be a remarkably difficult process, as it involves the shared leadership style and the cooperation of other team members (Ghorbani et al., 2023). In organizations that are high in structure in nature, this can thwart the efforts of the transformational leader who attempts to work around organizational politics and complexities. Indeed, a study revealed that only 10% of CEOs that undertake a transformational leadership style succeed (Díaz-Sáenz, 2011).

13. Strategies for implementing transformational leadership

The social-cognitive theory also suggests that the leader should use his or her own behavior to influence follower self-leadership, thereby creating a more empowered organization (Ahmad et al., 2022). This will involve training and development programs that aim to foster specific leader and follower behaviors, many of which are detailed in transformational leadership theory.

In any discussion about strategies for employing a particular leadership style, it is logical that the leadership style be conceptualized in terms of some framework that gauges follower outcomes because of leader influence. Transformational leadership has such a framework and specific scales to measure leadership and its impact on follower and organizational outcomes. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire has become the most widely used instrument to evaluate transformational and transactional leadership across a broad range of contexts and has measures of numerous leadership and follower outcomes (Bajcar and Babiak, 2022).

Empirical findings and the key framework to identify and measure current and future leadership in a team, group, or organization have been delineated (Bajcar and Babiak, 2022; Bakker et al., 2023). Several researchers have described leadership as a process of influence in which the leader's behavior is strategic in influencing a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. This is consistent with the definition of social influence, and we have seen that the essence of leadership is to achieve outcomes by mobilizing and satisfying follower needs.

14. Examples of successful implementation of transformational leadership

The researcher has selected the following examples for this study:

- *President Harry Truman and Transformational Presidency:* This example will provide insight into how a leader utilized transformational leadership to turnaround an organization. President Truman took over as the President with very little preparation and in a time of crisis. He developed and brought the United States out of the greatest depression ever. His charisma and intellectual stimulation resulted in many organizational changes and spiraled the American economy to new heights.
- *Arthur Martinez of Sears, Roebuck and Co.:* This example illustrates the development of leaders using transformational leadership and the impact it had on their followers. Arthur Martinez was instrumental in converting an ailing organization, which had a bureaucratic culture, into a leading company in the competitive environment. The changes under his leadership provided an excellent example of how a leader can change the culture and work ethics of an organization through idealized influence. This example will also show how the subordinates of such leaders are highly motivated individuals and how they contribute to the organization.

We have studied transformational leadership style in a somewhat academic way until now. After fully understanding the style, its components, characteristics, approaches to develop, and its impact on subordinates and the organization, it is now time to apply it to real-life situations. The best way to know whether a particular medicine cures a disease is to test it on a patient suffering from the disease.

15. Conclusion

In addition, the current paper provides clear evidence to support the transformational leadership style at team, group, and departmental levels within the organization. The evidence is substantial and is supported by both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the present study. Specifically, in the context of organizational teams, it was found that the transformational leadership style was highly effective within both public and private sector organizations. During the course of the study, the team leaders interviewed continuously stressed the importance of having a strong leadership figure to ensure teams were acting in the best interests of themselves and also the wider organization. This point is supported by responses from team members who continuously gave feedback that their leaders were significant in terms of maximizing their personal motivation and job satisfaction using inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. Overall, this helped to reinforce the specific leader and team leadership identity and enhances a collective team spirit and work ethos.

Transformational leadership is the most widely adopted leadership style within the organization to bring a positive change. It was deliberated from the data collected that transformational leadership style has a very good impact towards the followers and the organization. It is research-based evidence because it was supported by the questionnaires feedback and the researcher found that the subordinates were really comfortable and satisfied with their leader's leadership style. It is also supported by literature which states that transformational leadership style has a significant impact towards the followers and the organization.

16. Recommendations for further research

There is a need to conduct more research on moderators that either strengthen or attenuate the relationship between transformational leadership and its outcomes. While there is existing research on some moderators such as culture and team cohesiveness, not all the possible moderators have been examined. For example, there has been no research on the effect of leadership style in conjunction with employee personality, yet there are studies that show personality moderates the relationship between other leadership styles and the job satisfaction of employees. This area of research would be highly beneficial in understanding why the same leader may be effective in some situations yet ineffective in others. Understanding this would enable leaders to know when and where to apply a certain leadership style.

For the researchers to develop a more holistic view of the transformational leadership and its implications, it is essential to incorporate multiple measures from different sources such as objective measures, subordinate's ratings, and self-ratings of leaders. This is important as incorporating multiple measures of both the leadership and the outcomes reduces single-source bias that may inflate relationships because they are influenced by common method variance.

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