



Transformational leadership and employee performance in public sector organizations: A PRISMA-based systematic review of empirical evidence published from 2020 to 2026

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ABSTRACT

Transformational leadership has received growing attention because of its potential to improve employee motivation, commitment and performance. However, recent evidence from public-sector organizations remains dispersed across countries, sectors and methodological traditions. This systematic literature review synthesized studies published between 2020 and 2026 on the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance in public-sector and closely related organizational settings. The review followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework. Searches were conducted in Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight and Google Scholar. Eighty-one records were initially identified. After duplicate removal, title and abstract screening, full-text assessment and quality appraisal, 25 studies remained for thematic and narrative synthesis. The findings indicate that transformational leadership generally has a positive association with employee performance, although its influence is frequently transmitted through work engagement, public-service motivation, self-efficacy, organizational commitment, perceived organizational support, trusts and organizational citizenship behaviour. Organizational culture, role clarity, bureaucracy and team relationships also shaped the strength of the relationship. The review concludes that transformational leadership is most effective when inspirational leadership behaviours are supported by employee participation, clear organizational systems, fair treatment and a supportive work climate. Public organizations should therefore combine leadership development with institutional reforms that strengthen communication, autonomy, recognition and employee-support mechanisms.

Keywords: Employee Performance; Transformational Leadership; Public-Sector Organizations; Public-Service Motivation; Work Engagement

I. INTRODUCTION

Public-sector organizations play a central role in promoting social welfare, economic development and national stability through the provision of essential services. They are expected to deliver dependable services, manage public resources responsibly, uphold accountability and respond effectively to increasingly complex social demands. Their success, however, depends not only on formal structures, policies and administrative procedures, but also on the capacity of leaders to inspire employees and align their efforts with a shared public purpose. In environments characterised by rigid procedures, limited resources, political oversight and high public expectations, leadership can determine whether employees simply comply with minimum requirements or demonstrate initiative, creativity, commitment and discretionary effort (Lai et al., 2020).

Transformational leadership has become particularly relevant in this context because it emphasizes vision, inspiration, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. Rather than depending exclusively on authority, rules or material rewards, transformational leaders seek to connect organizational objectives with employees' values, professional aspirations and sense of purpose. By communicating a compelling vision, encouraging innovative thinking, recognizing individual contributions and supporting employee development, such leaders can create conditions that strengthen performance. Recent studies suggest that transformational leadership improves employee outcomes by enhancing work engagement, motivation, trust, self-efficacy and organizational commitment (Amor et al., 2020; Lai et al., 2020; Jiatong et al., 2022).

Public-sector organizations differ from private firms in several significant respects. They commonly operate under legal mandates, hierarchical structures, political accountability, standardized procedures and close public scrutiny. These conditions may restrict managerial flexibility and slow decision-making, but they can also increase the value of

leaders who provide clarity, meaning, confidence and psychological support (Chau et al., 2022). Transformational leadership may therefore help public employees understand the wider importance of their duties, remain committed during organizational change and respond more effectively to citizens' needs. Evidence from Malaysia, Ghana, Vietnam, Oman and other settings indicates that transformational leadership can contribute to stronger employee and organizational outcomes, although its influence is often indirect and dependent on organizational culture, role clarity, employee participation and institutional support (Ahmad et al., 2020; Donkor et al., 2022; Ahmed et al., 2023).

Despite the growing body of literature, existing evidence remains fragmented. Some studies examine task performance, while others focus on contextual performance, innovative work behaviour, employee engagement, organizational citizenship behaviour or broader organizational effectiveness. There is also considerable variation in the mediating and moderating variables investigated, as well as in the sectors, countries and institutional conditions represented. As a result, it remains difficult to determine the overall pattern of the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance, the mechanisms through which this relationship operates and the conditions under which it becomes stronger or weaker.

A systematic review is therefore necessary to organize recent evidence, identify areas of consistency and disagreement, and clarify the practical relevance of transformational leadership in public-sector organizations. This review covers studies published between 2020 and 2026, a period shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic, rapid digitalization, remote and hybrid working arrangements, increased service demands and growing pressure on public institutions to remain responsive and efficient. The review follows a PRISMA-based structure comprising the introduction, literature review, methodology, results, discussion, conclusion and references. Through this approach, the study seeks to provide a clear and current synthesis of how transformational leadership influences employee performance in public-sector organizations

1.1 Research Objectives

- i. To examine the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance in public-sector organizations.
- ii. To identify the principal mediating and moderating mechanisms linking transformational leadership to employee performance.
- iii. To compare the relationship across national, sectoral and organizational contexts.
- iv. To identify methodological and empirical gaps for future research.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

This review was principally guided by transformational leadership theory, which explains how leaders influence employees by communicating an inspiring vision, modelling desirable values, encouraging innovative thinking and responding to individual developmental needs. From this perspective, transformational leaders improve performance by raising employees' motivation, confidence and identification with organizational goals. Recent studies support this explanation by showing that transformational leadership is associated with stronger work engagement, organizational commitment and job performance across different organizational settings (Amor et al., 2020; Lai et al., 2020; Jiatong et al., 2022). In public organizations, the theory is particularly relevant because leaders can connect employees' routine responsibilities with the wider mission of serving citizens and creating public value.

Social exchange theory and the job demand resources perspective provide complementary explanations of the leadership–performance relationship. Social exchange theory proposes that employees who receive support, recognition, fairness and developmental assistance from their leaders are likely to reciprocate through stronger commitment, organizational citizenship behaviour and additional work effort. The job demands–resources perspective considers transformational leadership an important organizational resource that can provide meaning, autonomy, feedback and psychological support, thereby reducing work strain and strengthening engagement. Together, these perspectives suggest that transformational leadership does not influence performance in isolation; its effects are transmitted through mechanisms such as perceived organizational support, trust, self-efficacy, engagement and public-service motivation, and may vary according to organizational culture and working conditions (Astuty & Udin, 2020; Donkor et al., 2022; Qalati et al., 2022; Tran & Hoang, 2024)

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership refers to a pattern of leadership through which leaders articulate a compelling vision, model desired values, challenge employees to rethink established practices and attend to individual development needs. It is commonly represented by four dimensions: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual

stimulation and individualized consideration. These dimensions are expected to promote performance because they provide direction, meaning and confidence while encouraging employees to exceed routine expectations.

In public organizations, transformational leadership may be particularly useful where employees must reconcile formal procedures with the need for responsive service delivery. Inspirational motivation can connect routine duties to a broader public mission, while intellectual stimulation encourages problem-solving within regulatory boundaries. Individualized consideration can also strengthen employees' perception that the institution recognizes their contribution.

Transformational leadership refers to a leadership approach through which leaders communicate a compelling organizational vision, model desirable values, encourage employees to question established practices and respond to their individual development needs. It is commonly represented by four interconnected dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. Through these dimensions, leaders provide direction, meaning and confidence, while encouraging employees to extend their effort beyond routine job requirements. Recent empirical evidence shows that transformational leadership can improve job performance by strengthening work engagement, meaningfulness and employees' willingness to contribute beyond their formally assigned duties (Amor et al., 2020; Lai et al., 2020).

In public organizations, transformational leadership may be particularly valuable because employees must often balance formal procedures, regulatory requirements and hierarchical accountability with the need to provide responsive public services. Inspirational motivation can help employees connect routine responsibilities to the broader mission of serving citizens, while intellectual stimulation encourages constructive problem-solving and innovation within existing regulatory boundaries. Individualized consideration may also strengthen employees' perception that their institution values their contribution, professional development and welfare. Evidence from Ghanaian and Vietnamese public-sector organizations indicates that transformational leadership is positively associated with employee and organizational performance, although its influence may depend on organizational culture and other institutional conditions (Donkor et al., 2022; Chau et al., 2022).

2.2.2 Employee Performance in Public Organizations

Employee performance is a multidimensional outcome that reflects the extent to which employees complete their assigned responsibilities effectively, efficiently and consistently. It includes the quality, quantity and timeliness of completed work, together with employees' ability to meet organizational standards and achieve expected results. Performance also incorporates contextual behaviours, such as supporting colleagues, demonstrating initiative, sharing knowledge and contributing to activities that improve the wider organization. Recent studies therefore distinguish between task performance, which concerns formally prescribed duties, and contextual or extra-role performance, which supports the social and organizational environment in which those duties are undertaken (Lai et al., 2020; Qalati et al., 2022).

Within public organizations, employee performance extends beyond productivity or the volume of completed work. Public employees are expected to demonstrate responsiveness, accountability, service orientation, ethical conduct and commitment to institutional objectives. Their performance must therefore be evaluated in relation to both operational results and their contribution to the creation of public value. Employees who perform effectively not only complete assigned tasks but also respond appropriately to citizens, observe administrative procedures, use public resources responsibly and support the organization's public-service mission. Evidence from Ghanaian and Vietnamese public organizations indicates that employee performance is influenced by leadership practices, employee motivation and the institutional environment in which public services are delivered (Donkor et al., 2022; Chau et al., 2022).

Employee performance in public organizations should consequently not be understood solely through output indicators. A comprehensive assessment should consider task accomplishment, service quality, innovation, organizational citizenship behaviour and employees' willingness to contribute beyond minimum job requirements. Transformational leadership can support these outcomes by strengthening work engagement, commitment and employees' confidence in their ability to perform effectively (Lai et al., 2020; Jiatong et al., 2022).

2.2.3 Mechanisms Linking Leadership and Performance

Recent research increasingly explains the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance as a process rather than a simple direct association. Work engagement is among the most frequently examined mechanisms because transformational leaders can increase employees' energy, dedication and concentration by communicating a meaningful vision, recognising individual contributions and providing developmental support. When employees perceive their work as valuable and feel psychologically involved in organizational goals, they are more likely to invest additional effort and perform beyond routine expectations. Empirical studies have consistently shown that work engagement mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance, indicating that leadership improves performance partly by strengthening employees' emotional and cognitive connection to their work (Amor et al., 2020; Lai et al., 2020; Jiatong et al., 2022).

Other important mechanisms include self-efficacy, organizational commitment, perceived organizational support, trust, public-service motivation and organizational citizenship behaviour. These variables help explain why similar transformational leadership practices may produce different performance outcomes across institutions. Employees who believe in their ability to complete demanding tasks, feel supported by their organization and trust their leaders are more likely to respond positively to transformational leadership. In public organizations, public-service motivation and employee participation are particularly important because they connect individual effort with a wider commitment to serving citizens and achieving institutional objectives. Organizational citizenship behaviour also strengthens performance by encouraging employees to assist colleagues, share knowledge and contribute beyond formal job descriptions (Astuty & Udin, 2020; Donkor et al., 2022; Qalati et al., 2022; Tran & Hoang, 2024).

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Review design

The study adopted a systematic literature review design and followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) approach. PRISMA was used to make the identification, screening, and eligibility assessment and inclusion process transparent. The reporting of the search process was also informed by PRISMA-S guidance.

3.2 Eligibility framework

Table 1

Eligibility Criteria for Study Selection

Component	Review specification
Population	Employees and managers in public-sector organizations and organizational settings directly relevant to employee performance.
Exposure	Transformational leadership, including studies in which it was compared with related leadership styles.
Comparison	Alternative leadership styles, lower levels of transformational leadership or differences across organizational conditions.
Outcome	Employee performance, job performance, contextual performance, innovative work behaviour or closely related organizational outcomes.
Period	January 2020 to July 2026.
Study type	Peer-reviewed empirical quantitative, qualitative and mixed-method studies; recent systematic reviews were used for contextual synthesis.
Language	English.
Access	Full text available with sufficient methodological detail.

3.3 Information sources and search strategy

The literature search covered Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight and Google Scholar. Boolean operators were used to combine the terms: (“transformational leadership” OR “transformational leader*”) AND (“employee performance” OR “job performance” OR “work performance” OR “innovative work behaviour”) AND (“public sector” OR “public organization” OR “government” OR “public service”). Additional searches combined transformational leadership with work engagement, public-service motivation, organizational commitment, self-efficacy, perceived organizational support and organizational citizenship behaviour. The initial search produced 81 records: Scopus (24), Web of Science (18), ScienceDirect (15), Emerald Insight (9) and Google Scholar (15). The reference lists of potentially relevant papers were also checked for additional studies.

3.4 Selection process

Fourteen duplicate records were removed, leaving 67 records for title and abstract screening. Twenty-eight records were excluded because they did not focus on transformational leadership, did not examine employee-related performance or were clearly outside an organizational setting. Thirty-nine full-text articles were assessed for eligibility. Fourteen were excluded: five used outcomes unrelated to employee performance, four lacked sufficient relevance to public or organizational performance, three provided inadequate methodological detail and two could not be accessed in full. Twenty-five studies remained for qualitative synthesis.

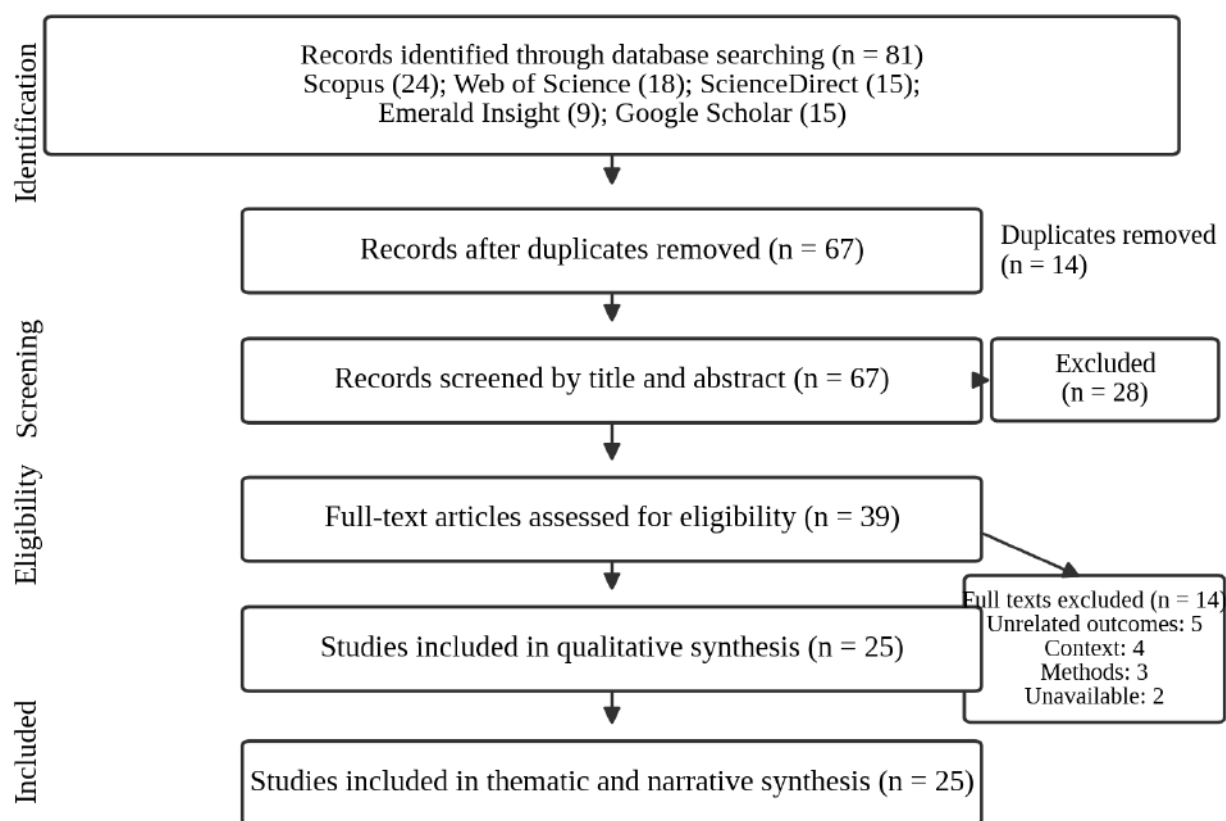


Figure 1
PRISMA Flow Diagram for the Study-Selection Process

3.5 Quality appraisal

Methodological quality was assessed using criteria adapted from the Joanna Briggs Institute appraisal approach. The assessment considered clarity of the research question, suitability of the design, sampling procedures, validity of measurement, treatment of confounding factors, appropriateness of analysis and consistency between the findings and conclusions. Studies were classified as high, moderate or low quality. Low-quality studies were excluded, while moderate-quality studies were retained but interpreted cautiously.

3.6 Data extraction and synthesis

A structured extraction matrix captured authorship, year, country, organizational context, design, sample, performance measure, mediators or moderators and principal findings. Because the studies differed considerably in samples, measurements and analytical models, a statistical meta-analysis was not undertaken. Findings were integrated through descriptive, thematic and narrative synthesis. Recurrent results were grouped into direct positive effects, mediated effects and context-dependent or mixed effects.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Characteristics of the included studies

The 25 included studies were published between 2020 and 2025, with the search window remaining open to July 2026. Most used quantitative cross-sectional designs and regression or structural equation modelling. The evidence covered public administration, public services, healthcare, state-owned enterprises, banking, hospitality, information technology and small and medium-sized enterprises. Studies outside the conventional public sector were retained only where they provided transferable evidence on mechanisms connecting transformational leadership and employee performance.

Table 2*Characteristics and Principal Findings of the 25 Included Studies*

Study	Year	Country	Context	Method	Main finding
Ahmad et al.	2020	Malaysia	Public sector	PLS-SEM	Positive effect on employee performance
Amor et al.	2020	Spain	Organizational employees	SEM	Engagement and empowerment pathways
Astuty & Udin	2020	Indonesia	Organizational employees	Survey/SEM	Support and commitment mediated performance
Bastari et al.	2020	Indonesia	State-owned enterprise	Survey/SEM	Motivation mediated job performance
Lai et al.	2020	Taiwan	Organizational employees	Survey/SEM	Engagement mediated job performance
Donkor et al.	2022	Ghana	Public-sector organizations	Survey	Positive effect on employee performance
Donkor et al.	2022	Ghana	Public organizations	SEM	Self-efficacy and commitment were mechanisms
Chau et al.	2022	Vietnam	Public services	Survey/SEM	Public-management culture shaped performance
Lauritzen et al.	2022	Denmark	Public services	Multilevel survey	Leadership and team relations jointly mattered
Thanh et al.	2022	Vietnam	Public sector	Survey	Transformational leadership improved engagement
Jiatong et al.	2022	Asian organizations	Employees	SEM	Engagement mediated commitment and performance
Qalati et al.	2022	Pakistan	SMEs	SEM	Citizenship behaviour mediated performance
Nasir et al.	2022	Pakistan	SMEs	Survey/SEM	Innovation and creativity shaped performance
Meiryani et al.	2022	Indonesia	Remote work	Survey/SEM	Leadership supported performance during COVID-19
Teoh et al.	2022	Malaysia	Hospitality	PLS-SEM	Transformational dimensions improved performance
Shahzad et al.	2022	Multiple firms	Organizational firms	Quantitative	Sustainability and knowledge-sharing pathways
Bakker et al.	2023	Norway	Public-service trainees	Diary study	Daily leadership increased initiative
Ahmed et al.	2023	Oman	Public sector	Survey/SEM	Leadership moderated role clarity effects
Vuong et al.	2023	Vietnam	Banking	Survey/SEM	Engagement transmitted leadership effects
Yudiatmaja et al.	2023	Indonesia	Public employees	Survey/SEM	Trust supported innovative behaviour
Dinesh et al.	2024	India	IT sector	Survey/SEM	Ambidextrous leadership supported innovation
Liu et al.	2024	Ethiopia	Sports organizations	Survey	Transformational leadership outperformed passive leadership
Tran & Hoang	2024	Vietnam	Public employees	Survey/SEM	Participation and public-service motivation mediated performance
Hundie & Habtewold	2024	Ethiopia	Healthcare	Survey	Readiness for change supported performance
Agazu et al.	2025	Global	Multiple sectors	PRISMA review	Most studies reported positive performance effects

4.1.1 Overall Relationship between Transformational Leadership and Employee Performance

The most consistent finding was a positive association between transformational leadership and employee performance. Nineteen of the 25 studies reported a clear positive direct or total effect. Four studies reported predominantly indirect effects through mediating variables, while two emphasised that the strength of the relationship depended heavily on organizational structure, role clarity or contextual conditions. None of the included studies concluded that constructive transformational leadership had a consistently negative influence on employee performance.

Table 3

Main Relationship Patterns Identified in the Review

Relationship pattern	Number of studies	Percentage	Summary of findings
Positive direct or total effect	19	76%	Higher task, contextual or innovative performance.
Predominantly mediated effect	4	16%	Influence operated mainly through engagement, motivation, commitment, trust or self-efficacy.
Context-dependent or mixed effect	2	8%	Organizational systems or culture determined the strength of the relationship.

4.1.2 Work engagement as a central pathway

Work engagement was the most recurrent explanatory mechanism. Transformational leaders encouraged employees to invest greater energy and attention in their work by communicating purpose, recognising individual contribution and stimulating initiative. Lai et al. (2020), Jiatong et al. (2022), Thanh et al. (2022) and Vuong et al. (2023) showed that engagement either mediated or strengthened performance outcomes. Inspirational behaviour therefore appears most effective when employees experience meaningful involvement in their roles.

4.1.3 Motivation, self-efficacy and organizational commitment

Motivation and self-efficacy explained how leadership translated into sustained effort. Bastari et al. (2020) reported that work motivation transmitted the effect of transformational leadership on job performance in a state-owned enterprise. Donkor et al. (2022) similarly showed that general self-efficacy and normative commitment were important in public organizations. Transformational leadership therefore improves performance partly by helping employees believe that they can complete demanding tasks and by strengthening their attachment to the organization.

4.1.4 Public-service motivation and participation

Evidence from public-sector settings indicated that the public mission matters. Tran and Hoang (2024) found that employee participation and public-service motivation helped explain public employee performance. Transformational leadership appears to be more influential when employees are not treated as passive recipients of instructions, but are invited to contribute to decisions and connect their work with service to citizens.

4.1.5 Organizational support, trust and citizenship behaviour

Perceived organizational support, organizational trust and citizenship behaviour were also prominent. Astuty and Udin (2020) showed that employees responded positively when transformational leadership was accompanied by organizational support. Yudiatmaja et al. (2023) linked transformational leadership with innovative behaviour through organizational trust among public employees. Qalati et al. (2022) demonstrated that organizational citizenship behaviour provided a pathway to improved performance. Employees are more willing to contribute beyond formal requirements when leadership signals fairness, reliability and reciprocal support.

4.1.6 Contextual conditions

The evidence did not support a universal, context-free effect. Ahmed et al. (2023) found that leadership in the Omani public sector moderated the relationship between job-description clarity and employee performance. Chau et al. (2022) showed that public-management cultural orientations shaped organizational performance, while Lauritzen et al. (2022) found that co-worker and team relations remained important alongside leadership. Transformational leadership cannot therefore compensate indefinitely for unclear roles, weak systems or unsupportive team climates.

4.1.7 Quality of evidence

Eighteen studies were rated as high quality and seven as moderate quality. Most clearly described their constructs, samples and analytical methods. The main limitations were cross-sectional designs, self-reported performance, single-country samples and limited control of confounding variables. Only a small number used diary,

multilevel or longitudinal approaches. The review therefore provides strong evidence of association but more limited evidence of long-term causality.

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 Interpretation of findings

The findings show a broadly positive relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance across public administration, state-owned enterprises, healthcare, banking and other service-oriented organizations. Evidence from Malaysia, Ghana and Vietnam indicates that leaders who communicate a compelling vision, provide individual support and encourage employees to think beyond routine procedures can strengthen both task and contextual performance (Ahmad et al., 2020; Donkor et al., 2022; Chau et al., 2022). Comparable results have been reported in healthcare and other organizational settings, where transformational leadership was associated with readiness for change, innovation and improved work outcomes (Hundie & Habtewold, 2024; Dinesh et al., 2024).

The evidence nevertheless suggests that the relationship is rarely explained by inspirational behaviour alone. Work engagement repeatedly emerged as an important pathway because employees tend to invest greater energy and persistence when leaders make work meaningful and recognise individual contributions (Lai et al., 2020; Jiatong et al., 2022; Thanh et al., 2022; Vuong et al., 2023). Motivation, self-efficacy and organizational commitment also helped translate leadership behaviour into performance. For example, work motivation mediated performance in a state-owned enterprise, while self-efficacy and normative commitment explained employee responses in public organizations (Bastari et al., 2020; Donkor et al., 2022). These results support a process-based interpretation in which transformational leadership creates psychological and relational conditions that enable employees to perform effectively.

4.2.2 Implications for public-sector management

Public institutions should therefore avoid treating transformational leadership as a fixed personal quality possessed only by a few senior officials. The evidence indicates that it can be developed through observable practices, including communicating a clear public-service purpose, involving employees in problem-solving, recognizing effort, supporting professional learning and modelling ethical conduct. Employee participation and public-service motivation were found to strengthen public employee performance, suggesting that staff involvement is an important part of effective transformational leadership (Tran & Hoang, 2024). Daily leadership behaviour also matters: frequent encouragement and constructive guidance can stimulate initiative and performance rather than waiting for occasional formal interventions (Bakker et al., 2023).

Leadership development should, however, be linked to institutional reform. Inspirational leadership is unlikely to generate sustained performance where roles remain unclear, communication is one-directional, resources are unavailable or employees perceive organizational systems as unfair. Evidence from Oman shows that leadership may operate by strengthening the effect of job-description clarity rather than acting as an independent performance driver (Ahmed et al., 2023). Similarly, team relations and organizational culture can either reinforce or weaken leadership effects in public-service organizations (Lauritzen et al., 2022; Chau et al., 2022). Public organizations therefore require a combined strategy that improves leadership capability, role clarity, teamwork and organizational support.

4.2.3 Implications for Tanzania and comparable settings

For Tanzanian public organizations, the international evidence has several practical implications. Leaders in local government authorities, public universities, health facilities and regulatory agencies may improve employee performance by connecting routine duties to citizens' welfare, providing employees with a voice in operational decisions and recognizing contributions transparently. Studies from African and other developing-country public sectors show that transformational leadership is more effective when it strengthens employees' confidence, commitment and identification with a public mission (Donkor et al., 2022; Chau et al., 2022; Tran & Hoang, 2024). This is particularly relevant during administrative reforms, digital transformation and periods of resource constraint, when employees require both clear direction and psychological reassurance.

These implications should not be transferred to Tanzania without attention to institutional context. Highly centralised decision-making, rigid procedures and limited managerial discretion may reduce the influence of inspirational leadership. Research in structured public settings shows that role clarity, cultural orientation and supportive organizational systems shape the extent to which leadership improves performance (Ahmed et al., 2023; Chau et al., 2022). Tanzanian public institutions should therefore pair transformational leadership development with clearer delegation, supportive supervision, fair appraisal, reliable feedback and opportunities for employee participation. This recommendation is an inference from the reviewed international evidence rather than a direct finding from a Tanzania-specific study.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This PRISMA-based systematic review examined recent evidence on the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance. From the 81 records initially identified, 25 studies were retained after duplicate removal, screening, full-text assessment and quality appraisal. The findings indicate that transformational leadership is generally associated with improved employee performance. However, this relationship is rarely entirely direct, as work engagement, public-service motivation, self-efficacy, organizational commitment, perceived organizational support, trust and organizational citizenship behaviour frequently explain how leadership influences employee outcomes.

The effectiveness of transformational leadership also depends on the organizational environment in which it is practised. Clear responsibilities, supportive teams, meaningful employee participation, fair management systems and adequate organizational support strengthen its influence, while rigid bureaucracy and weak institutional arrangements may limit its benefits. Public organizations should therefore combine leadership development with practical workplace reforms that enable employees to respond positively to inspirational and supportive leadership. In Tanzania and comparable public-sector contexts, this integrated approach offers a practical pathway towards stronger employee performance, improved institutional effectiveness and more responsive public-service delivery.

5.2 Recommendations

Public-sector organizations should develop behaviour-based leadership programs that emphasize clear vision communication, ethical role modelling, employee coaching, intellectual stimulation and inclusive decision-making. These programs should be supported by regular consultation, collaborative problem-solving and feedback mechanisms that allow employees to contribute meaningfully to organizational decisions. Leadership development should also be accompanied by supportive organizational systems, including clear job responsibilities, fair performance appraisal, transparent communication, appropriate recognition and adequate working resources. Managers should further strengthen public-service motivation by linking employees' responsibilities to citizen welfare, institutional purpose and the broader creation of public value rather than relying mainly on compliance and external rewards.

Future research should adopt stronger designs, including longitudinal, experimental, mixed-method and multi-source approaches, to provide clearer evidence on how transformational leadership influences employee performance over time. Researchers should combine employee surveys with supervisor assessments, interviews, administrative records and organizational performance indicators, while also reporting sector-specific results. More comparative research is particularly needed in Tanzania and other African countries to examine how cultural values, administrative systems, organizational structures and resource conditions shape leadership effectiveness across public institutions such as local government authorities, public universities, healthcare organizations, regulatory agencies and state-owned enterprises.

Declaration of Interest

The author declares that he does not have any known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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