

The Effect of a Transformational Leadership Style on the Performance of Universities in Nigeria

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KEY WORDS

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the effect of a transformational leadership style on the performance of universities in Nigeria. Efforts are being made by government, accreditation agencies and other higher education organisations to improve quality and performance of higher institutions in Nigeria, yet the Nigerian universities are left behind based on the statistics of universities that merit the world ranking table. The performance of the university system in Nigeria is a reflection of its leadership and management. Data were collected by means of a structured questionnaire survey using the entire census. Partial Least Squares (PLS) algorithm and bootstrap techniques were used to test the hypothesis of the paper. The result revealed that a transformational leadership style had a significant positive effect on university performance. Therefore, the management of universities should adopt the principles and assumptions of a transformational leadership theory for better performance. Improved university performance can address the problem of low-quality universities in Nigeria.

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Introduction

The increasing levels of education have contributed to economic growth, through both a productivity effect and a participation effect, with the latter being particularly important (Karmel, 2014). Nations and governments are advised to keep education on top priority in public policies as higher education develops high skill labour for nation building that contributes positively to economic growth (Khattak, 2012). Additionally, scientific discoveries prompt modern advancements, through scholarly turn off, and give an excellent picture of universities contributing to economic development (Hatakenaka, 2015).

Also, education has set a top priority in many countries; with quite a number striving to associate with flagship universities (Luxbacher, 2013). Also, the resent global economic changes have exposed the importance of tertiary education that serves as a foundation for national development (Bajunid, 2011; Hallinger, 2014). Furthermore, universities can play a less immediate yet vital role to the society by putting forward the social, cultural, and scholarly tone of a local area (Hatakenaka, 2015). In addition, reputable universities that are research-oriented are considered key in entering the current knowledge-driven economy that leads to economic growth and productivity of both developed and developing countries (Altbach, 2009).

Despite this importance of higher education, Nigerian universities are not performing strongly in global comparisons. University performance and rankings have become a significant part of the tertiary education landscape both locally and around the globe. In this landscape, rankings have risen in importance and proliferated in unimaginable ways (Marmolejo, 2015).

Efforts are being made by Nigerian government, through the accreditation agencies and other higher education organisations to improve quality and performance of higher institutions in Nigeria. However, Nigerian universities are left behind based on the statistics of universities that merit the world ranking table. Dearlove (1995) has pointed lack of strong leadership that carries the entire stakeholder along in higher institutions in a report from The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The report spelled out clearly that it is broadly true that institutional leadership is not very effective in higher education in Africa with Nigeria inclusive and around the world (Dearlove, 1995). In addition, Daramola and Amos (2016) reported that the performance of the university system in Nigeria is a reflection of its leadership and management.

By the foregoing, this paper will be guided by research questions: what is the effect of transformational leadership style on the performance of universities in Nigeria? Transformational leadership is the style of leadership in which the leader identifies the needed changes, creates a vision to guide the change through inspiration, and executes the change with the commitment of the members of the group (Carless, Wearing & Mann, 2000).

Previous research has addressed some aspects of transformational leadership and performance of manufacturing and other service organisations that are profit oriented in nature (Al-Abrow, 2013; Ali, Jan, Ali, & Tariq, 2014; Bacha, 2014; Birasnav, 2014; Chen, Bian&Hou, 2015; Fernet, Trepanier, Austin, Gagne & Forest, 2015; Masa'deh, Obeidat & Tarhini, 2016; Soane, Butler& Stanton, 2015; Sun, Xu & Shang, 2014).

Other studies also exist in the area of higher institution performance with quite a number focusing on student academic performance in universities (Arulampalam, Naylor & Smith, 2012; Christiana, 2014; Kostopoulos, Kotsiantis & Pintelas, 2015; Joe, Kpolovie, Osonwa, & Iderima, 2014; Nzewi, Chiekezie & Ikon, 2016; Ogedebe, Emmanuel & Musa, 2012; Richardson, Abraham & Bond, 2012). Some have a narrow scope, concentrating on single university (Ali & Musah, 2012; Christiana, 2014; Hilman& Siam, 2014; Kasim & Noh, 2012; Joe et al., 2014) where respondents have common demographic and cultural attributes. Literature suggests a use of wider scope regarding the number of universities and region for a better result (Ali & Musah, 2012). Other scholars, attempted to outline features of best universities (Abdulkareem, & Oyeniran, 2011; Altbach, 2009; Collins & Ho, 2014; Mpaata, 2010; Salmi, 2009 & 2015; Shin & Jang, 2013) with a very little attention to the leadership style.

In addition, others like Kasim and Noh (2012) and McCormack, Propper and Smith (2013) for example make use of individual staff and/or student as a unit of analysis in assessing the performance of the entire university which ordinarily the management staff would have been more appropriate due to their managerial knowledge and experience. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to determine the effect of transformational leadership style on performance of universities in Nigeria from the strategic management perspective with the institutions as unit of analysis and the management staff as respondents.

The rest of the paper is structured in four major part namely literature review; methodology; result and discussion and finally concluding remark.

Literature Review

Transformational Leadership

Significant consideration has been given to the investigation of transforming leadership since initially presented by James MacGregor Burns more than three decades back. Burns (1978) identified transactional and transformational as the essential sorts of initiative in leadership style. Both transactional and transformational leadership style explained relationship amongst leaders and their followers. The former focused on exchange of resources, and the later emphasised on mutual stimulation and elevation of the follower. He also added that transformational leader goes extra mile to search for potential motives in followers and seeks to satisfy their higher

needs.

Consequently, Bass (1985) contrasted with Burns in three ways in spite of the way that his work was dedicated to Burns and propelled the thought of leadership transformation by building the theory of transformational leadership. In any case, he did not agree that transactional and transformational leadership are extremes of a solitary continuum, rather suggested that leaders are both transactional and transformational in varying degree. Again, Bass perceived that initiative results may turn to be positive or negative and still be transformational. He finally, incorporated building up followers' portfolio of necessities as an essential of transformational initiative.

In the study of 70 senior executives, Bass (1986) reported that respondents compared the transformational leader to a kind father who propelled them to work for long periods of time to meet the leader's desires and expectations. The transformational leader empowered self-advancement by permitting the followers to work freely, yet stayed open to give the adherent support, recognition, and advice. The transforming leader engendered admiration, loyalty, trust, and respect.

Bass (1985) performed exploratory factor analysis on information gathered from 104 military officers going to Army War College. The research identified individualised consideration, intellectual stimulation and charismatic leadership as transformational leadership dimensions. Avolio, Waldman and Yammarino (1991) later included another component to transformational leadership dimensions as inspiration motivation.

These variables have been affirmed in empirical studies, and they dictate the general understanding of transformational leadership (Bass, Avolio, Jung & Berson, 2003). Hence, this study adopts this understanding as these factors collectively generate what Bass (1985) referred to as performance beyond expectation. Transformational leadership can be measured with the scale adapted from Carless et al. (2000) with confirmed acceptable reliability. The study reports the development of a short measure of transformational leadership called Global Transformational Leadership scale (GTL). The following subsection discusses its relationship with performance.

Transformational Leadership and Performance

Transformational leadership is said to have a significant relationship to a wide range of organisational outcomes. In particular, transformational leadership significantly increases employee's organisational commitment (Ali et al., 2014; Breevaart, Bakker, Demerouti, Sleebos & Maduro., 2015; Top, Akdere, & Tarcan, 2015), enhanced job satisfaction and motivation (Breevaart et al., 2015; Bushra, Usman & Naveed, 2011; Wright, Moynihan & Pandey, 2012), reduced absenteeism (Fernet et al., 2015) and higher quality output (Bacha, 2014). Other scholars relate transformational

leadership to the employee, leader and organisational performance (Carter, Armenakis, Field & Mossholder, 2013; Garcia-Morales, Jimenez-Barrionuevo & Gutierrez-Gutierrez, 2012; Soane et al., 2015).

Transformational leadership is strategic and entrepreneurial in nature; it significantly affects individual employee creativity (Mittal & Dhar, 2015) and engagement (Freeborough & Patterson, 2015). Transformational leadership play a vital role in encouraging and supporting employees to develop new items or product and to enhance work methodology for the advantage of the organisation (Moriano, Molero, Topa & Mangin, 2014).

Sun et al. (2014) analyse the impact of team transformational leadership on team performance during the new product development process and the mediating role of team climate. The study collected data from 184 new product development projects of Chinese high-tech firms. And results show that team transformational leadership is positively related to team performance of a new product development. Besides, team climate mediates the association of most dimensions of new product development team transformational leadership (inspirational motivation, charisma, individualised consideration and intellectual stimulation) and team performance.

Chen et al. (2015) studied the impact of transformational leadership on subordinate's emotional intelligence and work performance, and the study found that emotional intelligence had a positive relationship with work performance; meanwhile, perceived leader's transformational leadership positively moderated the relationship between subordinate's emotional intelligence and work performance.

In addition, Fernet et al. (2015) studied the relationship between transformational leadership and employee functioning. The result reveals that transformational leadership identifies with ideal occupation working (mental wellbeing, work states of mind and performance) by adding to a positive view of employment attributes (more assets and fewer requests) and excellent work inspiration and motivation (more independent inspiration and less controlled inspiration) in representatives.

From the service industry, Birasnav (2014) examines a comprehensive model comprising of various relationships between transformational and transactional leadership, knowledge management process, and organisational performance. The results indicate that transformational leadership has strong and positive effects on knowledge management process and organisational performance. Moreover, knowledge management process partially mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and organisational performance.

From the public-sector point of view, transformational leadership is an organisational factor associated with higher public service motivation and mission valence. It has an important indirect effect on mission valence through its impact on clearing up organisational objectives and encouraging

public service incentive (Wright et al., 2012). Similarly, Ali et al. (2014) using individual staff as a unit of analysis and examined the effect of transformational and transactional leadership on job satisfaction, employees' perceived performance, organisational commitment, organisational citizenship behaviour and turnover intention of public sector universities' teachers of Malakand division of Pakistan. It was found that transformation leadership was significantly associated with organisational commitment, job satisfaction, turnover intention and perceived performance.

Soane et al. (2015) examine leadership performance in sporting arenas. The authors theorised that follower personality would influence perceptions of leadership and that perceived effective leadership would be associated with performance. The authors drew on Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), Transformational Leadership and personality theory to develop a research model designed to assess leadership effectiveness and performance. Quantitative data were gathered concerning participants' personality, their perceptions of transformational leadership and boat performance. Qualitative data on transformational leadership and leadership effectiveness were gathered from a subsample of crew members. The findings showed that transformational leadership was associated with leadership effectiveness and performance. Personality influenced perceptions of leadership and, for moderate performing boats; there were associations between perceptions of leadership and performance.

Also, Al-Abrow (2013) investigates the influence of transformational leadership style on organisational performance depending on both the organisational learning and intellectual capital in the public healthcare sector in the United Arab Emirates. Utilising questionnaire survey, data was collected from 189 employees within 10 hospitals in the United Arab Emirates. The survey data were analysed with the use of structural equation modelling to test for relationships among the main constructs of the conceptual framework of the study, and results demonstrated that transformational leadership has a significant positive effect on organisational performance, and this relationship was moderated by both organisational learning and intellectual capital. Furthermore, the study demonstrated a significant positive relationship between organisational learning, intellectual capital and organisational performance.

Nguyen, Mia, Winata and Chong (2017) provided another perspective on the choices in the design of management control systems by examining: how transformational-leadership style influences the choice of the design of a comprehensive Performance-Measurement System (PMS) and reward system; how subordinate managers' reliance on Broad-Scope Accounting (BSA) information facilitates their managerial decision-making processes and managerial performance. The findings suggest that transformational-leadership style has a significant positive and direct effect on managerial performance. The results also show that transformational-leadership style

has a significant positive and direct effect on the use of BSA information and comprehensive PMS, but has no significant effect on reward systems. It has also found that transformational-leadership style has a partial indirect effect on managerial performance via three mediators, namely, comprehensive PMS, reward systems, and BSA information.

Masa'deh et al. (2016) studied the associations among transformational leadership, transactional leadership, knowledge sharing, job performance, and firm performance. Data collected from 179 employees at the higher council of youth in Jordan were empirically tested using structural equation modelling. The findings revealed that both transformational and transactional leadership styles have a significant impact on job performance and the latter on firm performance. Also, it was found that transactional leadership impacted knowledge sharing, whereas transformational leadership did not.

In another development, Katou (2015) investigate the serially mediating mechanisms of organisational justice, organisational trust, and employee reactions in the relationship between transformational leadership and organisational performance. The study is based on a national sample of 133 organisations from the public and private sectors in Greece and on data obtained from 1,250 employees at three hierarchical positions. The statistical method employed is structural equation modelling. The findings of the study suggest that responsive and supportive transformational leadership behaviour have a positive impact on organisational growth. Additionally, this impact is mediated by organisational procedural justice, organisational trust integrity and dependability, and organisational commitment.

Again, in the context of small scale enterprises, Obiwuru, Okwu, Akpa and Nwankwere (2011) investigated the effects of leadership style on organizational performance. The major objective was to determine effect of leadership styles on performance in small scale enterprises. Transformational and transactional leadership styles were considered in the study. Transformational leadership behaviours and performance/outcome considered relevant in the study were charisma, inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation/individual consideration; and effectiveness, extra effort, and satisfaction, respectively. Transactional leadership behaviours and performance/outcome variables were constructive/contingent reward and corrective/management by exception; and effort, productivity and loyalty/commitment, respectively. The result showed that while transactional leadership style had significant positive effect on performance, transformational leadership style had positive but insignificant effect on performance. The study further concluded that transactional leadership style was more appropriate in inducing performance in small scale enterprises than transformational leadership style.

Furthermore, Nordin (2013) in response to the previous studies and also looking at the context of local public universities, examine the relationship

between transformational leadership behaviour and its augmentation effects among the academics in a Malaysian higher educational institution. Using a stage cluster sampling, a total of 169 academic staff from Universiti Teknologi MARA participated in the study. The result revealed that a positive and moderate relationship between transformational leadership and leadership outcomes. The finding suggests that augmentation effect of transformational leadership has an effect on performance over and above the effect of transactional leadership.

Having gone through this literature, this paper will further research on the relationship between transformational leadership and performance in the context of higher education, Nigerian universities to be precise. Using the organisation as a unit of analysis as most of the previous studies examined the different context and used employees as a unit of analysis. Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated for testing:

H₀₁: There is a positive effect of Transformational Leadership Style on University Performance.

Methodology

The research design for this paper is cross-sectional. The population includes ninety-nine (99) accredited Nigerian universities by National Universities Commission (NUC) 2015, comprising the Federal, State and Private universities. And the entire census was considered for data collection. A structured questionnaire was sent to the management of each university on the basis of one questionnaire one university as the institution was chosen to be the unit of analysis. The choice of the management/chief executives as the respondents is due to their knowledge and experience about university leadership and performance. Hence, their views on the variables of study will help in the realisation of the set objective of this paper. A total of 67 universities responded to the survey, constituting 69.7% response rate after a double follow-up. This response rate is considered sufficient going by the suggestion that a response rate of 30% is considered adequate for a survey (Hair, Black, Babin, Andersen & Tatham, 2010; Sekaran, 2003). No missing data was recorded and 3 responses were termed outliers after running Mahalanobis analysis in SPSS and the result was judged against the chi-square table values (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Therefore, 64 responses were utilised for the analysis.

The measurement items for transformational leadership are seven (7) key leadership behaviour developed by Carless et al. (2000) with original Cronbach's alpha of 0.90. They are popularly known as Global Transformational Leadership (GTL), they are valid, reliable and easier to administer. While, performance of university was measured with the combine but synthesized university performance indicators adapted from Academic Ranking World University (ARWU); Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) world university rankings; Times Higher Education (THE) world university

ranking; and Ranking web of universities (Webometrics) based on teaching, internationalisation, research, size, impact and prestige. In line with previous studies, we used a five-point Likert-type scale to measure the items with the options of “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.”

Results and Discussion

Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS SEM) was utilised through SmartPLS 3.0 software (Ringle, Wende & Becker, 2015) to analysing both the measurement and structural models (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Validity and reliability measures were ascertained before testing the hypothesized relationships using algorithm and bootstrapping techniques (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2014; Ramayah, Lee, & Boey, 2011).

Descriptive Analysis of Respondents' Profile

The demographic information of the respondents reveals that 68.75% of the respondents are male and female constitute 31.25%. This is an indication that majority of the chief executive/management staff of the Nigerian universities are male. In terms of their age, none of the respondents' falls below the age of 40 years. The age of 76.56% respondents' was above 50 years. This gives confidence that grown up, experienced and knowledgeable personalities form most the respondents as expected due to the fact that almost all the chief executive of the universities rose through the ranks.

On the positions of the respondents in their respective institutions, 9.38% of the respondents are the vice chancellors, 53.12% are deputy vice chancellors and 37.50% are other management staff of the universities. Therefore, responses are from top management who have adequate knowledge on the management of universities and are in better position to give valid information on the leadership style and performance.

Measurement Model Evaluation

Measurement model was evaluated using two validity criteria: convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity is determined by examining the factor loadings, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE) (Gholami, Sulaiman, Ramayah & Molla, 2013). Each construct of this paper has achieved the loadings above 0.7, Alpha coefficient of both the variable appeared excellent, Composite Reliability (CR) of all the constructs were all higher than 0.7 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is above 0.5 as recommended by Hair et al. (2014) (see Table 1). However, 4 items out of 19 were eliminated in total for low loading, these are TLS2 and TLS6 from construct transformational leadership style and UP2 and OP11 from the university performance scale (see Table 1 and Figure 1).



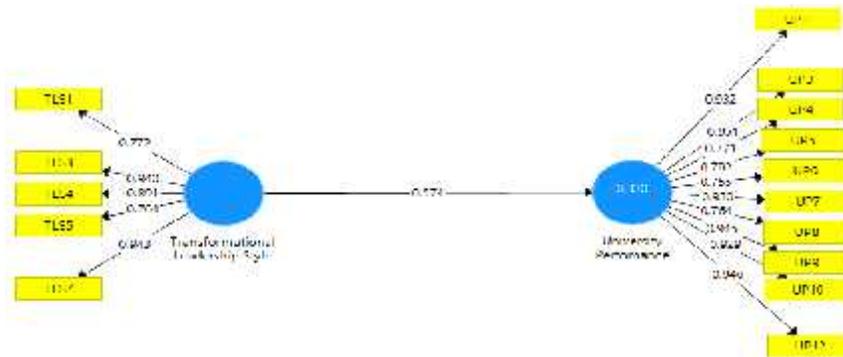


Figure 1: Smart PLS Algorithm Graph

Table 1
Convergent validity

Variables	Indicators	Loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Transformational Leadership	TLS1	0.772	0.922	0.937	0.750
	TLS3	0.940			
	TLS4	0.891			
	TLS5	0.764			
	TLS7	0.943			
University Performance	UP1	0.932	0.966	0.970	0.766
	UP3	0.951			
	UP4	0.771			
	UP5	0.792			
	UP6	0.755			
	UP7	0.930			
	UP8	0.764			
	UP9	0.945			
	UP10	0.929			
	UP12	0.946			

Structural Model Evaluation

Standard beta, t-values and R² were evaluated in assessing the structural model (Hair et al. 2014). A bootstrapping procedure with 5000 resample was applied utilising Smart PLS 3.0 software (Ringle et al., 2015). Therefore, the bootstrapping result from the Smart PLS on the effect of transformational leadership style on university performance shows acceptance for the hypothesis. The result revealed that path coefficient from transformational leadership style to university performance (TLS->UP) is statistically significant with a beta () value of 0.574, t-value of 7.444 and a p-value of 0.000 significant at the p<0.01 (see Table 2 and Figure 2).

Table 2
Path Coefficients

Hypothesis	Relationship	Beta ()	Standard Error	t Statistics	p value	Decision	R ²
H1	TLS -> UP	0.574	0.077	7.444	0.000	Supported	0.330

It was suggested that; a good parsimonious model is the one with high R² value explained by relatively fewer independent latent variables. As in this case of this study, the R² value is 0.330 with adjusted R² of 0.319 and it deemed satisfactorily since it has exceeded 1.5% as argued by Falk and Miller (1992). Additionally, the model has only one independent variable and one dependent variable.



Figure 2: Smart PLS Bootstrap Graph for the study

Discussion and Implications

This paper empirically assessed a structural model of the relationships between transformational leadership style and university performance. The perceptions of university management, vice chancellors and their representative of Nigerian universities to be precise were the sources of information for testing the study hypotheses and the model of the study. It was also tested using partial least squares structural equation modelling, utilising Smart PLS 3.0 software (Ringle et. al., 2015) and the findings shows positive significant relationship between transformational leadership style and university performance. Transformational leadership style is the type of leadership in which the leader identifies the needed changes, creates a vision to guide the change through inspiration, and executes the change with the commitment of the members of the group.

The implication of this finding is that the vice chancellors/management of Nigerian universities supported the contribution of transformational leadership style to the success of universities. By extension, the finding of this paper implies that for universities to compete favourable in the industry it need to have a visionary leader; a leader that have the ability to create and sustain a vision for the university and also calls for discipline and creativity. In other words, if a university can have a leader with a passion, strength of

will, and necessary knowledge to achieve the long-term strategic goals may have a positive impact on the performance.

In addition, a university does not only need a visionary leader with passion and desire to achieve a goal but also the one who can inspire his team to reach the university goals. This is because the commitment of other members of the working class of the university matters a lot in attaining the long-term strategic goal of the institutions as they form the major support for the leader.

In a nutshell, it was found in the result that, the more the university vice chancellors adapt the concept and principles of transformational leadership style the more likely it is to enhance university performances. This finding is consistent with previous studies (Al-Abrow, 2013; Katou, 2015; Masa'deh et al., 2016; Soane et al., 2015; Sun et al., 2014).

Conclusion and Recommendation

The effect of transformational leadership style on university performance was examined in the context of Nigerian universities. The paper has established empirically a positive effect among the study variables. Therefore, the paper has further validated the theory of transformational leadership style and concludes that transformational leadership style has a positive effect on university performance, just like the way it does to the performance of manufacturing and other service organisations that are profit oriented in nature. Therefore, based on the empirical evidence, the paper recommends that the management of universities should adopt the principles and assumption of transformational leadership theory for better performance.

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