

Literature Review on Transformational Leadership and Organizational Commitment on Employee Performance in Iraq's Banking Sector

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Abstract

The review of the current body of literature demonstrates that transformative leadership does have an impact on both employee commitment and performance. Nevertheless, prior research has not thoroughly investigated the processes by which this impact takes place, and which dimension has an effect on employee commitment and performance. Hence, the objective of this study is to investigate the effect of transformational leadership dimensions on organizational commitment and employee performance, specifically in the context of Iraq's foreign banks. The study also seeks to explore the mediating effect of organizational commitment on the relationship between transformational leadership dimensions and employee performance. A comprehensive analysis of the theoretical and practical literature, the study's findings demonstrated a positive correlation between transformative leadership dimensions and both organizational commitment and personnel performance. Moreover, the findings indicated that organizational commitment acts as a mediator in the connection between transformative leadership dimensions and employee performance. This study encompasses both theoretical and practical consequences, as well as limitations, suggestions, and directions for future research.

Keywords: *Transformational Leadership, Organizational Commitment, Employee Performance, Iraq's Banking Sector*

1. Introduction

The corporate climate of the twenty-first century is marked by swift changes, leading to increased risk and instability in all sectors. Organizations need to react quickly to immediate and developing changes to satisfy the increasing expectations of customers for superior products and services (Al-refaei et al., 2023; Feng & Ali, 2024; Ateeq et al., 2024). To meet these requirements, organizations have to speed up their procedures for creating new products and services. To keep up with the rapid rate of progress, organizations need highly skilled and knowledgeable personnel who can help achieve their goals and ensure long-term success (Al-refaei et al., 2019; Zumrah et al., 2021; Saad et al., 2022; Al-Zubaidi et al., 2023).

As a result, business organizations are unlikely to keep going in competing using traditional methods. In order to adapt to evolving environmental conditions, organizations must make adaptations to their activities, processes, strategies, techniques, and leadership styles (Al-Muhrani et al, 2021). These changes are necessary due to rapid technological advancements that impact marketing orientation and roles. The studies conducted by Ali, Haitao, & Ping (2024), Ateeq et al (2024), and Haitao, Ali, & Ping

(2024) highlight the importance of responding to these changes. Similarly, the research conducted by Al-Azzam & Al-Jedaiah (2015), Abdulsamad et al (2021), Iwadi & Ali (2024), and Nasser et al (2024) emphasize the need for organizations to adapt in order to remain competitive. External environmental changes act as drivers for organizational change, necessitating a reaction and adaptation to new conditions, such as globalization, which has intensified competition among companies (Xu et al, 2024; Al-Sharif et al, 2023). The growing rivalry in the market presents numerous opportunities for firms, emphasizing the importance of implementing a systematic scientific approach in organizational development and growth to overcome challenges (Lifang & Ali, 2024). Implementing the concepts of transformational leadership can enhance the overall performance of organizations (Al-Azzam & Al-Jedaiah, 2015). Transformational leadership is crucial for fostering growth in businesses, since it necessitates leaders to elevate employee performance and boost organizational results.

Various internal and external variables in the contemporary environment promote employee involvement and ownership, resulting in the effective achievement of

personal and professional goals. The function of leadership is crucial in shaping an employee's overall commitment, satisfaction and the growth of their commitment levels (Liu & Chan, 2017). Efficient and inspiring leadership is crucial in enabling employees to engage in self-assessment and gain the required motivation for enhanced productivity. Leadership is an essential element of organizational operations that necessitates the appropriate amount of inspiration and motivation to guide people in making significant contributions to both their own advancement and the development of the company. Leadership covers a multitude of aspects and viewpoints that have the potential to greatly enhance employee enthusiasm and productivity. Transformational leadership entails a leader's capacity to recognize crucial talents and competencies in team members and nurture them to their maximum potential, all while attaining results for the team and organization (Yousif et al., 2015). This form of leadership is extremely beneficial in increasing attention and contentment levels among employees, particularly in the banking sector in Iraq, where there is a lack of extensive studies on the topic. The objective of the organization in Iraq is to cultivate highly skilled graduates who can make significant contributions to the organization and to the country's economic development (Salim, 2024).

Due to the ongoing transformation and change processes in Iraq, including environmental, political, economic, and social changes, the banking sector in Iraq must promptly adapt to the changing environment and do so with the required quickness (Issa & Abbaszadeh, 2023; Ali, Bouabid, & Farhani, 2023). Iraqi banks should prioritize all aspects of transformative leadership, as highlighted by Habeeb, Ismail, and Nor (2014) and Al-Husseini and Elbeltagi (2016). In order to keep up with environmental and local developments, Iraqi banks must embrace the idea of change. It is believed that the effectiveness of this transition relies on the level of dedication from the banks' leadership.

Leadership is essential in bringing about positive change in bank sectors when they encounter internal organizational changes as well as domestic and international challenges (Pasaman et al., 2019; Al-Sharif et al., 2023) because transformational leadership can guide staff members in the direction of the bank's vision and mission and inspire commitment, which in turn can lead to improved performance (Pasaman et al., 2019; Al-Refaei, Zumrah, & Al-Shuhumi, 2019). When there is a lack of leadership within the company, workers might not change their attitudes and behaviors and may even go through negative changes that hinder the company's ability to adapt and perform in order to meet its objectives (Alsamawi, Darun, & Panigrahi, 2019; Al-refaei & Zumrah, 2019; Ghumiem, & Alawi, 2022). In order to improve employee performance and achieve organizational goals,

transformational leadership is therefore essential. This is especially true in an unstable environment like the Iraqi banking sector.

However, there is a lack of research on how transformational leadership affects job performance and organizational commitment in Iraq's banking industry. Previous studies have looked at how transformational leadership affects employees' job performance and training in higher education (Al-Harthy et al., 2016) as well as how it affects work performance in governmental companies (Salim Al Zefeiti, 2017). But research on leadership in the Middle East and North Africa is still significantly lacking (Mendenhall et al., 2008; Pless et al., 2011; Rao & Abdul, 2015). The lack of research on leadership in the banking sector and the applicability of different styles of leadership has been identified as a significant issue (Ghasabeh et al., 2015). To better understand the relationship between transformative leadership, organizational commitment, and job performance—especially in the context of the Iraqi banking sector—more study is needed. Thus, the current study looks into the relationship between transformative leadership, organizational commitment and employee performance directly, as well as the relationship between transformative leadership and employee performance indirectly—that is, through organizational commitment acting as a mediator in the banking industry in Iraq. This study may provide insightful information about how transformative leadership may enhance job performance and organizational commitment in this particular setting.

2. Theoretical Underpinnings and Hypothesis Development

Transformational leadership theory formulated by Bass (1985). This theory highlighted the ability of a leader to inspire and motivate subordinates by effectively communicating the importance of the work at hand and integrating the developmental requirements of the subordinates. Bass outlined the requirements that must be met, these requirements were summarized by Salim (2024) as the following:

- A leader should enhance subordinates' understanding of the importance of the task.
- A leader should prioritize organizational goals as the main focus for subordinates.
- A leader should be cognizant of subordinates' higher-order needs, such as self-efficacy, self-actualization, and job performance.

However, transformational leadership refers to the ability to effectively match the aims and desires of subordinates with the objectives of the business, leading to increased commitment and performance in the workplace (Bass, 1999). Furthermore, this leadership style promotes a culture of transparent communication, whereby followers are actively motivated to articulate their perspectives and recommendations (Surjanti & Kistyanto, 2022). Additionally, it functions as a source of motivation, questioning existing conventions and promoting individual development and progress (Bass, 1999).

Bass (1990; 1997) suggests that when people are aware of the importance of their task, their motivation increases, leading to improved performance. enhancing performance can also help minimize job dissatisfaction. Bass (1987) suggested that organizational performance can be enhanced through teamwork, as the pooled efforts of employees contribute to greater performance. This theory facilitates substantial transformation in followers, enhances their expertise, recognizes their distinct capabilities and constraints, and aligns their goals with the organization's mission. Crucially, transformational leaders serve as role models and motivate their followers to achieve significant and attainable goals (Surjanti & Kistyanto, 2022). The theory of transformational leadership includes four key components: idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1990).

Idealized influence: idealized influence refers to the capacity of a leader to exhibit exemplary behavior that fosters a sense of identification among followers, as described by Judge and Piccolo (2004). Lowe et al. (1996) suggest that the concept of idealized power is strongly linked to the perception of a charismatic leader. This might be ascribed to the optimistic attitude that followers hold for their leader. According to Bass and Avolio (1994) and Giddens (2018), leaders are seen as having high ethical standards and displaying outstanding moral behavior. They also possess the capacity to create trust, confidence, admiration, respect, pride, and optimism in their subordinates. Leaders who demonstrate idealized influence are perceived as having these characteristics.

Inspiring motivation: inspiring motivation is the second characteristic of transformational leadership, as defined by Bass and Avolio (1994), is inspiring motivation. This refers to a leader's ability to effectively connect, express, inspire, and motivate their subordinates in regard to a certain vision. Furthermore, these activities not only engage subordinates but also foster collaboration, synergy, a sense of unity, and a positive attitude towards their organization (Bass & Avolio, 1994). In addition, leaders inspire and convince their subordinates to embrace the organization's objective (Giddens, 2018). According to Bass and Avolio (1994), transformational leaders are individuals who establish clear goals that inspire and encourage their subordinates to attain and exhibit excellence.

Intellectual Stimulation: The concept of intellectual stimulation can be defined as an environment wherein leaders question established conventions within the organization, foster divergent modes of thought, and motivate staff members to implement inventive approaches (Agyemang, 2017). Intellectual stimulation has also been regarded as a quality possessed by transformational leaders that enables their subordinates to approach issues from a variety of angles, without fear of repercussions for openly sharing their thoughts. (Luque, 2023). According to Sandvik et al, (2018) Transformational leaders inspire their followers to enhance their creativity, leading to improved decision-making abilities. They focus on the rationale behind each decision, guiding their supporters towards problem-solving in a logical manner rather than relying on traditional approaches. By encouraging individuals to generate new ideas, these leaders facilitate the open expression of inner thoughts and unique perspectives. Transformational leaders inspire individuals to embrace creativity and innovation by challenging conventional ideas, adopting unusual methods to conservative situations, and encouraging their followers' support through intellectual stimulation.

Individualized Consideration: This leadership attribute motivates leaders to mentor and guide their subordinates, encouraging them to gain valuable experiences. In individualized consideration, leaders demonstrate sensitivity towards each individual, fostering feelings of contentment and reassurance among their followers due to the personalized attention they receive from their leader (Listiani, 2020). Acting as mentors, leaders strive to coach subordinates towards achieving the company's objectives and goals, thereby enabling employees to reap rewards in terms of both monetary compensation and personal growth (Musa, 2018). Effective communication is a key component of this leadership style. Through clear communication between leaders and followers, leaders can inspire their employees and cultivate a conducive work environment conducive to achieving organizational goals and objectives.

2.1 Transformational Leadership and Employees performance

A comprehensive analysis of the correlation between transformative leadership and employee performance through a study of existing literature. A study conducted by Basit, Sebastian, and Hassan (2017) revealed that transformational leadership has a beneficial impact on employee performance. Among all leadership styles, only supportive and transformational leadership were found to positively influence workers' work performance. According to a study conducted by Jiang, Zhao, and Ni (2017), transformational leadership has been found to have a positive impact on employees' long-term performance, ensuring consistent high performance. Furthermore, a study conducted by Al-Amin (2017) has found that transformational leadership has the ability to enhance employee performance by actively including people in organizational activities. A study conducted by Surjanti and Kistyanto (2022) on employees of KUD in Indonesia discovered that transformational leadership had a beneficial impact on employee performance. Therefore, considering all of this information, the present study proposes a hypothesis that is directly linked to these findings. In a study conducted by Dahleez and Abdelfattah (2022), it was shown that transformational leadership had a beneficial effect on the business performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Oman. The findings indicate that leaders should employ intangible qualities to enhance several aspects of organizational performance. Additionally, the research suggests that cultivating revolutionary skills in leaders, such as foresight, transparent communication, employee motivation, and fostering innovation, can significantly influence an organization's effectiveness. Thus, the present investigation assumed that:

H1. *Idealized influence positively affects employees' performance in the Banking sector.*

H2. *Inspiring motivation positively affects employees' performance in the Banking sector.*

H3. *Intellectual Stimulation positively affects employees' performance in the Banking sector.*

H4. *Individualized Consideration positively affects employees' performance in the Banking sector.*

2.2 Transformational leadership and organizational commitment

Transformational leaders inspire and motivate individuals to surpass the organization's minimum expectations by addressing their emotions, emphasizing their interests, fulfilling their unique developmental requirements, and fostering a drive for personal progress (Bass et al, 2003). The interdependent effects of transformational leaders and their followers can be examined through the framework of social exchange and the concept of reciprocity (Dahleez & Abdelfattah, 2022; Al-refaei et al, 2024). The core components of this mutual relationship include financial benefits, trust, and the achievement of goals over a prolonged duration. Transformational leaders inspire their followers to prioritize long-term objectives over personal gains (Udin, 2020a), hence driving them to achieve higher levels of performance (Al-refaei, et al, 2024).

Previous research has shown that transformational leadership positively affects different aspects of employee attitudes and behaviors, including job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), trust, knowledge sharing, commitment, and task performance (Suhana et al., 2019; Udin, 2020b). Transformational leaders often possess a leadership approach that is characterized by creativity and imagination. This kind of leadership inspires their followers to make intelligent choices and advance in their roles (Abouraia & Othman, 2017). Additionally, there exists a clear relationship between transformative leadership and organizational commitment across several settings (Abouraia & Othman, 2017; Dahleez & Abdelfattah, 2022). Building upon the prior debate, the present investigation assumed that:

H5. *Idealized influence positively affects organizational commitment.*

H6. *Inspiring motivation positively affects organizational commitment.*

H7. *Intellectual Stimulation positively affects organizational commitment.*

H8. *Individualized Consideration positively affects organizational commitment.*

2.3 Organizational Commitment and Employee Performance

Organizational commitment, which refers to the extent of an individual's identification with and engagement in their organization, has an impact on employee performance. Individuals who possess a strong sense of organizational commitment tend to fully adopt the ideals of the organization and actively strive to achieve its objectives.

Studies have shown that there is a direct correlation between the level of commitment an employee has toward their organization and their willingness to share information with others (Rahmatullah et al., 2022; Ryu & Moon, 2019). Organizational commitment refers to an employee's loyalty to the organization and their unwavering determination to accomplish its objectives sustainably (Kurniasari et al., 2018).

Empirical evidence suggests that organizational commitment positively and significantly impacts employee performance (Renyut et al., 2017; Napitupulu, 2019). Companies with highly committed employees typically face fewer challenges with employee turnover. Conversely, insufficient employee commitment can impede the company's performance development. Therefore, it is essential to keep committed employees in today's highly competitive service sectors such as the banking sector (Al-refaei et al, 2024). Low employee commitment may significantly impact an organization's effectiveness and performance (Zumrah et al, 2021). Studies conducted by Al-refaei et al, (2023) demonstrate a direct relationship between employee dedication and their levels of effort and performance within an organization. However, under certain conditions and among specific groups of employees, organizational commitment may negatively affect performance (Wibowo, 2014; Pandaleke, 2016; Lestari, & Djastuti, 2023). Therefore, the current study assumed that:

H9. Organizational commitment positively affects employees' performance in the Banking sector in Iraq.

H10. Organizational commitment mediates the effects of Idealized influence on employees' performance in the Banking sector in Iraq.

H11. Organizational commitment mediates the effects of Inspiring motivation on employees' performance in the Banking sector in Iraq.

H4. Organizational commitment mediates the effects of Intellectual Stimulation on employees' performance in the Banking sector in Iraq.

H4. Organizational commitment mediates the effects of Individualized Consideration on employees' performance in the Banking sector in Iraq.

3. The Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study includes three constructs, transformational leadership with its four dimensions (idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and individualized consideration), employee performance, and organizational commitment, the first variables serve as the independent variable, employee performance serves as a dependent variable, and organizational commitment serves as the mediating variable (see Fig. 1)

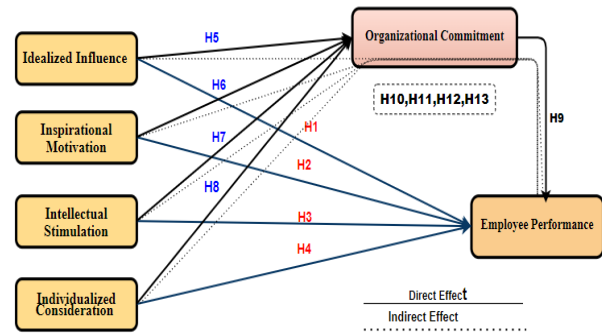


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework Of the study

4. Conclusion

This study investigates the direct influence of transformational leadership on both organizational commitment and employee performance, focusing specifically on the banking sector in Iraq. The findings of the comprehensive analysis of both theoretical and practical literature indicate the significant and positive impact of transformational leadership on both organizational commitment and employee performance, specifically within the banking industry in Iraq. Implementing transformational leadership by bank leaders in Iraq has the potential to enhance organizational commitment and employee performance. Moreover, the extent to which transformational leadership is practiced is directly correlated with the amount of organizational commitment and the quality of staff performance. As a result, this enhances the performance of the Iraqi financial system.

This finding aligns with transformational leadership theory, as Bass indicates that idealized influence or leader charisma provides vision and a sense of mission, instills pride, and garners respect and trust. This process involves the leader influencing followers by evoking strong emotions and fostering identification with the leader (Bass, 1990). Leaders psychologically motivate their followers to transcend their self-interest in support of organizational goals (Bass, 1985; Bass, 2008). Furthermore, leaders' ability to provide personal attention, treat each individual uniquely, mentor their followers, offer advice, and provide support, encouragement, and developmental experiences motivates employees to exert their utmost efforts to achieve performance beyond expectations (Bass, 1990; Avolio & Bass, 2004).

5. Limitations and future directions

The results of this study suggest that transformational leadership dimensions are a reliable indicator of employee job performance, and organizational commitment plays a role in mediating this relationship. Although this study enhances our comprehension of leadership in the field, it does have limitations. Future research should specifically

investigate alternative leadership styles, such as transactional leadership. Additional mediation variables that could be examined include OCB (Organizational Citizenship Behavior), organizational identification, and work engagement. Furthermore, the study's emphasis on Iraq banks emphasizes the necessity for a more comprehensive representation across different geographical locations and sectors, to uncover leadership styles and characteristics that influence employee performance. Additionally, an empirical investigation could explore the comparative impact of each aspect of transformational leadership on employee performance to have a more profound comprehension of which aspects have the greatest influence on improved performance. It is crucial to explore mediators other than organizational commitment

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