

Transformational Leadership and Performance of Public Universities in Kenya

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ABSTRACT : This study was on transformational leadership and performance of public universities in Kenya. The study was based on four specific objectives namely, idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and inspirational motivation. To strengthen the conceptual framework the study employed the use of theories such as transformational leadership theory, social exchange theory, leader member exchange theory and goal setting theory. This study adopted a quantitative research design. Survey research designs provide a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population. The study findings showed that variables idealized influence and intellectual stimulation have no significant effect on performance of public universities in Kenya, whereas variables individualized consideration and inspirational motivation have a significant effect on performance of public universities in Kenya. The study recommends that Human Resources should develop policies and practices relating to transformational leadership and performance. This can be done by developing training and development programs for leaders or managers in public universities that allow for teamwork and knowledge sharing with subordinates to increase employee engagement to their organizations. Organization leaders should arouse their employees' curiosity about work and enhance their performance through intellectual stimulation. The following specific recommendations are made in line with the findings of the study; Managers in public universities intending to boost their organizations performance through transformational leadership should focus on the three transformational leadership behaviors of inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration which were found to be significant for organizational performance.

I. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Leadership is the action of equipping and developing of followers, as well as providing direction on issues and deployment of resources towards an organization's goals and objectives (Kirui, 2016). The performance and sustainable success of organizations rests on the leadership. Daft mentions that there exist different types of leadership, such as visionary, charismatic, transactional, autocratic, and transformational. In transactional leadership, the leader promotes compliance by followers through various tactics such as rewards and punishment. In charismatic leadership, the leader provides guidance through charm and persuasion. For transformational leadership, the leader works with subordinates or followers to identify needed change, creates a vision to guide the change through inspiration, and executing the change in close collaboration with committed members of a team (Nyokabi, 2019). Transformational leadership style results in progressive change in individuals and social systems.

Transformational leaders exhibit the four characteristics of idealized influence, inspiration motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration (Northouse, 2014). Globally, Matthias and Eline (2012) mention that various studies carried out have demonstrated that transformational leadership is linked to good individual and organizational performance. Organizations, as well as individuals, both have goals and objectives that they exist to pursue in line with their vision and mission. The realization of these goals, and or objectives comes through great effort, which leadership must put into consideration. In their study on when change becomes transformational among Medicaid offices in New York City, Sparer and Brown (2012) point out that the probability of success levels in organizations will and is always pegged on effective and transformational leadership.

Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2014), in their review of leadership styles in India, pointed out that various leadership styles and their influence on organizational success have been advanced and studied. One such style is the transformational leadership style, which according to Bushra, Usman and Naveed (2011), acts as a driving force for organizational performance and innovation. Transformational leadership enhances employee job

satisfaction as the transformational leader interacts with subordinates to motivate them to achieve maximum output in their work responsibilities (Jalal, Khawaja, Kamariah, Fosa, Muhd & Ahmad, 2012).

Public universities are regarded as institutions of higher learning created under the Acts of parliament of Kenya with an aim of providing education services (Ministry of Education, 2019). Since independence in Kenya, universities have been offering certificate, diploma and degree programs intended to promote social-economic development. Due to changes in the higher education sector in Kenya which have been accelerated by repealing of the higher Education Act, new universities have been created due to the increased demand of education services (Ministry of Education, 2018). The change of 7-4-2-3 education system to 8.4.4 education system did not only increase the demand of higher education services but also resulted to transformation of technical colleges into public universities in order to address the overwhelming demand of education services in Kenya (Council of Legal Education of Kenya, 2018).

Due to weaknesses of Commission for Higher Education (CHE), a new commission which is Commission for University Education (CUE) was formed in 2012 to address issues associated with the quality of higher education services (Council of Legal Education of Kenya, 2018). Despite efforts of CUE in Kenya, majority (91%) of the public universities in Kenya are experiencing numerous challenges that range from capacity development, competition, deteriorating service delivery and issues of corporate governance (CUE, 2018). With increased enrolment of students in public universities, this study will focus on public universities in Nyeri County in order to establish how quality management enablers can influence performance thus bridging the information gaps in the university context.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Public universities in Kenya and more specifically in Nyeri County are not only experiencing challenges of underfunding by the ministry of education but also shortage of teaching and non-teaching staff to provide services (Magutu et al., 2018). Issues of employee strikes and inadequate physical facilities such as hostels, lecture halls and playgrounds are some of the aspects which have hindered service delivery in the university context (CUE, 2018). Further, inability of the graduates to secure formal jobs immediately after graduating is attributed to compromised quality of service delivery in public universities thus the need for management of public universities to rethink on quality management enablers to improve performance (Federation of Kenya Employers, 2019).

Commission for University Education (2018) indicates that service delivery in public universities in Kenya is an issue of concern that needs novel approaches rather than the linear models. Similarly, UNESCO (2016) indicates that service delivery in institutions of higher learning institutions is questionable thus the need for this study. In spite of the efforts by the government to offer quality higher education services, public universities have been underperforming over the years. Issues of change management, periodical employee strikes have not only ignited reactions from parents, students, employers and the government but also hampered universities from realizing their long-term goals.

These continued challenges disrupt vital services offered to the citizens causing much suffering and inconveniences, and if not controlled may hamper the achievement of the Governments vision 2030 goals through public universities contribution. According to Gaiti and Kiiru (2021) there was still a need to boost strategies to achieve the sustained 10 percent desired growth rate. Kenya's economic growth is still not good enough to achieve Vision 2030 goals (Datche, 2015). The study sought to explore relevant HR strategies that can be used turn around the challenges facing public universities in Kenya to facilitate improved performance.

Although transformational leadership has been found to relate to organizational outcomes, past research has been predominantly on overall transformational leadership rather than its dimensions (Kim & Park, 2020) and there is lack of understanding on the mediators through which transformational leadership relates to these outcomes (Engelbrecht & Olorunjuwon, 2019). This study sought to evaluate the influence of four transformational leadership behaviors on organizational performance of public universities in Kenya.

universities in Nyeri County, Kenya

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

3.1 General Objective

To examine the influence of transformational leadership on performance of public universities in Kenya.

3.2 Specific Objectives

1. To determine the effect of idealized influence on performance of the public universities in Kenya.
2. To examine the effect of intellectual stimulation on performance of the public universities in Kenya.
3. To evaluate the effect of individualized consideration on performance of the public universities in Kenya.
4. To establish the effect of inspirational motivation on performance of the public universities in Kenya.

4.0 Hypotheses

This study was guided by the following null hypotheses:

H₀₁: Idealized influence has no significant effect on performance of the national assembly of Kenya.

H₀₂: Intellectual stimulation has no significant effect on performance of the national assembly of Kenya.

H₀₃: Individualized consideration has no significant effect on performance of the national assembly of Kenya.

H₀₄: Inspirational motivation has no significant effect on performance of the national performance of Kenya.

V. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

5.1 Transformational Leadership Theory

The theory was pioneered by Downton (1970) and later advanced by other scholars like Burns (1978). The theory argues that leaders and followers in any organizational set up can influence each other and advance to higher levels of morality and motivation in achieving organizational goals by implementing marketing strategies formulated (Bass, 1998). The theory argues that transformational leaders can inspire employees to change attitudes, perceptions and motives thus improved service delivery. Transformative leaders are considered to more futuristic thinkers than transactional leaders who reward individuals rather than behaviour. Rotherme and LaMarsh (2012) acknowledge that transformative leadership is purely dependent on the leader's personality traits to energize followers and articulate the vision, mission and goals of the firm.

The theory opines that any organizational that is committed to quality service delivery, leaders not only need to have skills of influencing workers but also techniques of transforming the organization from an old state to a new state that is characterized by minimal resistance to change, creativity among workers, new product development, diversification, knowledge management and ability to align and realign its policies to changing business trends (Rajala, Ruokonen & Ruismäki, 2012). As organizations strive to survive in the changing business environment, Scott (2014) contends that transformative leadership should not only embrace policies that promote employee skills and knowledge but also identify new ways of motivating workers, integrating technology in service delivery and identifying models of implementing new changes in the organization. This theory underpinned this study based on the assumption that public universities are likely to experience improved performance in terms of employee and customer satisfaction, service efficiency and effectiveness if they embrace transformational leadership practices such as employee empowerment, employee motivation, technological initiatives and change management.

Transformational leaders are active leaders that have four distinguishing characteristics; idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration (Bass, 1985; Conger, 1999). Such leaders devote significant energy to leading their employees and also respect the gifts and abilities of their workers. The four leadership dimensions stated enable leaders to behave as strong role models fostering followers' transformation into more successful and productive individuals (Hay, 1995). Transformational leaders thus display behaviors that can potentially impact the level of engagement of their employees.

5.2 Social Exchange Theory

A stronger rationale for explaining engagement is found in Social Exchange theory. SET argues that obligations are generated through a series of interactions between parties who are in a state of reciprocal interdependence. A basic tenet of SET is that the relationship revolves over time into trusting, loyal and mutual commitments as long as the parties abide by the rules of exchange (Cropanzo and Mitchell, 2005). Rules of exchange usually involve reciprocity or payment, such that actions by one party, leads to response or action by other party. For example, when individuals receive economic and socio-emotional resources from their organization, they feel obliged to respond in kind and repay the organization (Cropanzo and Mitchell, 2005). This is consistent with Robinson et al., (2004) which describes engagement as a two-way relationship between the employer and employee.

One way for individuals to repay their organization is through their level of engagement; that is employees will choose to engage themselves in varying degrees in response to the resources they receive from their organizations (Saks, 2005). In summary, SET provides a theoretical foundation to explain why employees choose to become engaged or less engaged in their work and organization. In Kahn's (1990) definition of engagement, employees feel obliged to bring themselves more deeply into their role performances as repayment for resources they receive from their organizations, good leadership included.

5.3 Leader Member Exchange (LMX) theory

Leader member exchange is another employee engagement theory in line with the SET theory. LMX theory provides how leaders in groups maintain their position through a series of tacit exchange and agreements with their members (Salmon & Robinson, 2008). LMX thus focuses on the relationship between leader and follower. Graen (1975) developed this model operating on the premise that all subordinates are not treated equally. Because of time restraint and human nature, leaders often spend more time with one group of subordinates' than with others. This then become the in - group who are seen to perform at a higher level than their counterparts in the out – group (Shrieberg & Shrieberg, 2011).

According to Batista-Taran et al., (2009) LMX focuses on the dyadic and quality of the relationship between leader and followers, and where members feel as a part of a group and of which they have more responsibilities, take proactive decisions and have high access to organizational resources. When the members feel the opposite where leader offers low levels of support to follower, the subordinates feel less motivated and this influences their ability to perform effectively.

5.4 Goal Setting Theory

Goal setting theory provides that performance in organizations is enhanced when goals are set. The goals act to direct both leaders and employees in organizations towards certain performance targets. Organizational goals also provide performance standards and are what is measured to establish achievement of objectives. Leaders in organizations should not only set goals, but the said goals should be specific and challenging if they are to provide meaning and stimulation to employees. According to Locke and Latham (2006) more challenging goals can be used by organizational leaders to motivate employees towards performance in both their individual tasks and hence organizational performance. Specific goals should be set at individual, team and organization at large. Using the goal setting theories leaders can enhance their follower's engagement and performance by setting clear, challenging and meaningful goals. Such goals will not only stimulate the subordinates' thinking but will also provide opportunities for creativity and learning. Goal setting theory therefore posits that conscious and well-defined goals are important if managers are to attain a particular standard for their employees and organizations (Woodcock, 2012).

6.0 Conceptual Framework

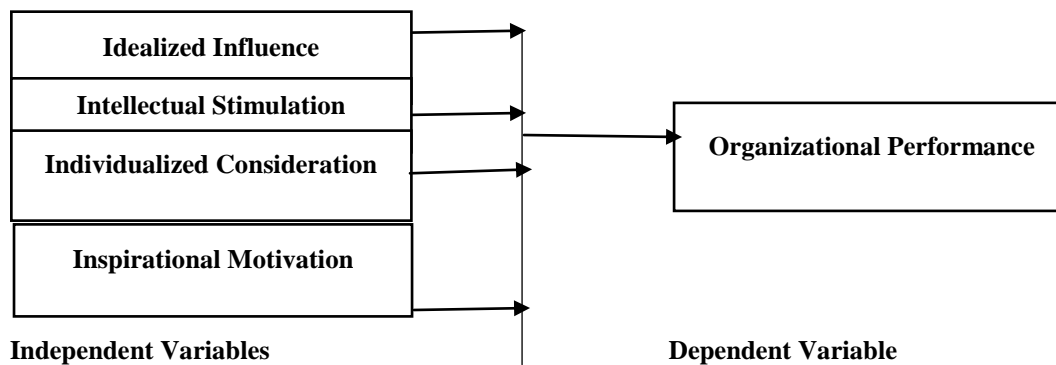


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

VII. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

7.1 Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative research design. According to Creswell (2020) designs are categorized as experimental or non – experimental designs such as surveys. Survey research designs provide a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population. The overall objective of a descriptive design is to discover new meaning by describing what exists and determine the frequency with which something occurs (Bryman & Bell, 2020).

In this study the leader characteristics, employee engagement and organizational performance were not only described but also measured to ascertain the relationships and establish the causal effects between study variables. The design was also cross – sectional (involving one time interaction with groups of people) in nature. Cross- sectional surveys are studies that yield data that can be modeled by regression analysis (Creswell, 2020) and findings based on sample generalized to a population.

7.2 Target Population

The study targeted 30 public universities in Kenya. The study will target university council members, university vice chancellors and heads of departments. The study targeted the Human Resource departments of which a top manager, middle level manager and or non-managerial employee who had been in their organization for three or more years was to give information needed for the study. The three respondents (unit of observation) were used to reduce biasness and also to report on the next level of leadership. Therefore, the target population was 90.

7.3 Sample Size

The total sample size for this study was obtained using the formulae developed by Saunder *et al.*, (2020) together with Miller and Brewer (2021) and the adjusted sample size was 74 as per workings below. With a study population of 320 being council members, vice chancellors and heads of departments in public universities in Kenya. With a confidence interval of 95 percent, the sample size will also be determined using the formula given by Miller and Brewer (2021) as shown.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(\alpha)^2}$$

Where: n= the sample size,

N= the sample frame (population)

The sample size was 74.

7.4 Data Analysis and Presentation

Qualitative as well as quantitative methods of data analysis was used to analyze the research variables. A Likert scale was adopted to provide a measure for qualitative data. The scale helped to minimize the subjectivity and make it possible to use quantitative analysis. The numbers in the scale were ordered such that they indicated the presence or absence of the characteristic to be measured (Kothari & Garg, 2020). This mix of tools is necessary because whereas some aspects of the study where qualitative others was of quantitative nature.

VIII. RESULTS

8.1 Descriptive Statistics

The section presents the descriptive statistics on idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration and inspirational motivation.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Idealized Influence	4.07	1.168
Intellectual Stimulation	4.31	0.588
Individualized Consideration	4.54	0.525
Inspirational Motivation	4.16	0.887
Performance	4.52	0.781

The results in Table 1 indicated that the respondents agreed that transformational leadership influences the performance of public universities in Kenya as indicated by aggregate mean score of 4.32 with a standard deviation of 0.789. These findings concurred with Gaiti and Kiiru (2021) study that identified a significant association between transformational leadership style and performance of commercial banks and the study concluded that for improved organizational performance, emphasize on transformational leadership styles which seeks to involves workers in key decisions is key.

8.2 Inferential Analysis

8.2.1 Correlation Analysis

Pearson Bivariate correlation coefficient was used to compute the correlation between the dependent variable (performance) and the independent variables (idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration and inspirational motivation). According to Sekaran, (2015), this relationship is assumed to be linear and the correlation coefficient ranges from -1.0 (perfect negative correlation) to +1.0 (perfect positive relationship). The correlation coefficient was calculated to determine the strength of the relationship between dependent and independent variables (Creswell, 2020).

In trying to show the relationship between the study variables and their findings, the study used the Karl Pearson's coefficient of correlation. This is as shown in Table 2 below. According to the findings, it was clear that there was a positive correlation between the independent variables idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration and inspirational motivation, and the dependent variable performance. The analysis indicates the coefficient of correlation, r equal to 0.186, 0.398, 0.373 and 0.430 for idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration and inspirational motivation, respectively. This indicates positive relationship between the independent variable namely idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration and inspirational motivation and the dependent variable performance with human resources inspirational motivation having the highest contribution.

Table 2 Pearson Correlation

	Correlations				
	Performance	Idealized Influence	Intellectual Stimulation	Individualized Consideration	Inspirational Motivation
Performance	1				
Idealized Influence	.186**	1			
Intellectual Stimulation	.003		1		
Individualized Consideration	.65		.65	1	
Inspirational Motivation	.65		.65	.65	1

Intellectual Stimulation	.398*	.533*	1		
Individualized Consideration	.373**	.118**	.101**	1	
Inspirational Motivation	.430**	.631**	.019**	.231**	1
	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	65	65	65	65	65

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

In this study, the least value for the Pearsons’ correlation belonged to the idealized influence. Showing that despite the idealized influence of supervisor in the state corporations being positively related and significant for organizational performance, the Pearsons’ r value of .186, p = .003 depicts a minimal display of this behavior by supervisors. The relationship is however significant p = 0.003. These findings suggest that an increase in idealized influence of supervisor, will lead to an increase in organizational performance in public universities in Kenya.

8.3 Coefficient of Determination (R²)

To assess the research model, a confirmatory factors analysis was conducted. The four factors were then subjected to linear regression analysis in order to measure the success of the model and predict causal relationship between independent variables (idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration and inspirational motivation) and the dependent variable (Performance).

Table 3 Coefficient of Determination (R²)

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.720 ^a	.519	.485	2.01634

a. Predictors: (Constant), idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration and inspirational motivation

The model explains 63.3% of the variance (R Square = 0.619) on employee productivity. Clearly, there are factors other than the four proposed in this model which can be used to predict financial sustainability. However, this is still a good model as Bryman and Bell, (2018) pointed out that as much as lower value R square 0.10-0.20 is acceptable in social science research. This means that 51.9% of the relationship is explained by the identified four factors namely idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration and inspirational motivation. The rest 48.1% is explained by other influence of transformational leadership on performance of public universities in Kenya not studied in this research. In summary the four variables include idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration and inspirational motivation or determines 51.9% of the relationship while the rest 48.1% is explained or determined by other factors.

8.4 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

The study used ANOVA to establish the significance of the regression model. In testing the significance level, the statistical significance was considered significant if the p-value was less or equal to 0.05. The significance of the regression model was as per Table 4 below with P-value of 0.00 which is less than 0.05. This indicates that the regression model is statistically significant in predicting influence of performance. Basing the confidence level at 95% the analysis indicates high reliability of the results obtained. The overall ANOVA results indicate that the model was significant at F = 16.179, p = 0.000.

Table 4 ANOVA

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	249.936	4	62.484	16.179	.000 ^b
	Residual	231.742	60	3.862		
	Total	481.677	64			

a. Dependent Variable: Implementation

b. Predictors: (Constant), idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration and inspirational motivation

8.5 Coefficients

The researcher conducted a multiple regression analysis as shown in Table 5 to determine the relationship between transformational leadership and performance in public universities in Kenya and the four variables investigated in this study.

Table 5 Coefficients

Model		Coefficients ^a				Sig.
		Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients	t	
1	(Constant)	21.267	3.133		6.789	.000
	Idealized Influence	.121	.094	.166	1.283	.205
	Intellectual Stimulation	-.563	.090	-.688	-6.263	.000
	Individualized Consideration	.349	.076	.701	4.602	.000
	Inspirational Motivation	.570	.116	.617	4.920	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Implementation

The regression equation was:

$$Y = 21.267 + 0.121 X_1 + -0.563 X_2 + 0.349X_3 + 0.570X_4$$

Where.

Y = the dependent variable (Performance)

X₁ = Idealized Influence

X₂ = Intellectual Stimulation

X₃ = Individualized Consideration

X₄ = Inspirational Motivation

The regression equation above established that taking all succession factors into account (Performance in public universities) constant at zero performance in public universities in Kenya will be 21.267. The findings presented also showed that taking all other independent variables at zero, a unit increase in idealized influence would lead to a 0.121 increase in the scores of performance of public universities in Kenya; a unit increase in intellectual stimulation would lead to a -0.563 increase in the performance of public universities in Kenya; a unit increase in individualized consideration would lead to a 0.349 increase the scores of performance of public universities in Kenya and a unit increase in inspirational motivation would lead to 0.570 increase the scores of performance of public universities in Kenya.

Table 6 Test of Hypothesis

Hypothesis Statement	Regression Results	Decision
H₀₁ : Idealized influence has no significant effect on performance of the national assembly of Kenya.	t = 1.283 P = 0.205	Accept H ₀₁ null hypothesis idealized influence has a significant influence on performance in public universities in Kenya.
H₀₂ : Intellectual stimulation has no significant effect on performance of the national assembly of Kenya.	t = -6.263 P = 0.001	Accept H ₀₂ null hypothesis intellectual stimulation has a significant influence on intellectual stimulation in public universities in Kenya.
H₀₃ : Individualized consideration has no significant effect on performance of the national assembly of Kenya.	t = 4.602 P = 0.000	Reject H ₀₃ the null hypothesis organizational culture man has no significant influence on individualized consideration in public universities in Kenya.
H₀₄ : Inspirational motivation has no significant effect on performance of the national assembly of Kenya.	t = 4.920 P = 0.000	Reject H ₀₄ null hypothesis inspirational motivation has no significant influence on performance of public universities in Kenya.

IX. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

9.1 Conclusion

Idealized Influence

Since there was a strong positive correlation between the independent variable idealized influence and the dependent variable performance of public universities in Kenya. From the study findings on coefficients, t-values of 1.283 and p-values of 0.205, this result accepted the null hypothesis that idealized influence has no significant effect on performance of public universities in Kenya. Therefore, the study concludes that idealized influence has no significant influence on performance of public universities in Kenya.

Intellectual Stimulation

Since there was a strong positive correlation between the independent variable intellectual and the dependent variable performance of public universities in Kenya. From the study findings on coefficients, t-values of -6.263 and p-values of 0.001, this result accepted the null hypothesis that intellectual stimulation has no significant effect on performance of public universities in Kenya. Therefore, the study concludes that intellectual stimulation has no significant influence on performance of public universities in Kenya.

Individualized Consideration

Since there was a strong positive correlation between the independent variable individualized consideration and the dependent variable performance of public universities in Kenya. From the study findings on coefficients, t-values of 4.602 and p-values of 0.000, this result rejects the null hypothesis that individualized consideration has no significant effect on performance of public universities in Kenya. Therefore, the study concludes that individualized consideration has a significant influence on performance of public universities in Kenya.

Inspirational Motivation

Since there was a strong positive correlation between the independent variable inspirational motivation and the dependent variable performance of public universities in Kenya. From the study findings on coefficients, t-values of 4.920 and p-values of 0.000, this result rejects the null hypothesis that inspirational motivation has a significant effect on performance of public universities in Kenya. Therefore, the study concludes that inspirational motivation has a significant influence on performance of public universities in Kenya.

9.2 Recommendation

The mission of HR should be to create an environment that encourages engagement as well as attract potential employees to organizations and to improve organizational performance by developing challenging and attractive vision together with employees.

Human Resources should develop policies and practices relating to transformational leadership and performance. This can be done by developing training and development programs for leaders or managers in public universities that allow for teamwork and knowledge sharing with subordinates to increase employee engagement to their organizations.

Organization leaders should arouse their employees' curiosity about work and enhance their performance through intellectual stimulation. The following specific recommendations are made in line with the findings of the study; Managers in public universities intending to boost their organizations performance through transformational leadership should focus on the three transformational leadership behaviors of inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration which were found to be significant for organizational performance.

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