

# Transformational Leadership Style and Employee Innovative Behaviour in Nigerian Banking Industry

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## Abstract

This research study investigates the employee innovative behaviour effects of transformational leadership and its dimensions (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration) in the Nigerian banking industry. Data were gathered from 350 full-time employees working in the banking industry in South-West region of Nigeria. Multiple regression analysis was utilized to examine the theoretical hypotheses. The empirical results showed that transformational leadership stimulates employee innovative behaviour. The findings further provide empirical support for the significant role of transformational leadership in improving employee innovative work behaviour. Furthermore, the direct effect of idealized influence and inspirational motivation on employee innovative behaviour is statistically significant at the conventional level whereas intellectual stimulation and individual consideration were found significant at 10% level. Thus, there is need for banking managers to ensure an environment that encourages the subordinates to enhance individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation practices. To identify the needs, desires and motives of employees, transformational managers need to assist subordinates to grow their skills and abilities towards the organizational demands, growth and sustainability.

**Keywords:** Transformational leaders, charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individual consideration, employee innovative behaviour.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Organizations have continually factor human performance along with social, economic and environmental issues into their habitual policy goals in order to ensure business growth and sustenance (Florea, Cheung, and Herndon, 2013; Di Fabio and Peiró, 2018). Meanwhile, the attention on human dimensions in the existing body of literature is sparse when compared to economic and environmental traits of organizational growth and sustainability (Florea, Cheung and Herndon, 2013; Spreitzer, Porath and Gibson, 2012). Although, studies on human dimensions of organizational sustainability have increased in the last decade (Li *et al.*, 2019), however, the growing empirical work on employee innovative work behaviour is key in human behaviour literature. Examining factors influencing employee innovative behaviour is imperative in order to showcase how organizations can achieve a competitive advantage and organizational growth and development. One of these key factors that influence innovative work behaviour is leadership dimensions. This is because as organizations rely on diverse factors to stimulate innovative work behaviour (Martins and Terblanche, 2003), the organizational leaders are the most well-known actors who can promote innovative work behaviour at the workplace which convey new changes to an indefinable situation (Janssen, 2000; Javed *et al.*, 2017; Nazir, Qun, Hui and Shafi, 2018; Nazir, Qun, Atif and Abdullah, 2018). Thus, recent studies have identified leadership among key factors influencing employee innovative behaviour (Young, 2012; Li *et al.*, 2019).

The recent business and economic environment of Nigeria most especially in the financial industry needs business leaders to employ the transformational leadership dimensions for encouraging employee innovative behaviour to ensure sustainable business growth and development. Previous studies have focused on areas relating to non-financial incentives (Abdulsalam, Faki, and Dardau, 2012; Elijah, Alimi and Alese, 2015; Abosede, Eze, and Sowunmi, 2018), strategic management tools (Alese and Alimi, 2014a; Abosede, Obasan and Alese, 2016), business growth dichotomy (Mambula, 2002; Alese and Alimi, 2014b; Eniola, 2014; Eniola and Ektebang, 2014). Transformational leadership has been on the forefront of scholars recently that have examined the factors of employee innovative behaviour in work behaviour literature (Jung, Chow and Wu, 2003; Gumusluoglu and Ilsev, 2009; Aryee, Walumbwa, Zhou and Hartnell, 2012; Choi, Kim, Ullah and Kang, 2016; Javed *et al.*, 2018). Transformation leaders are required to develop their subordinates' work potentials via idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration that can assist in developing employee innovative behavior (Bass and Avolio, 1994; Hartog, Muijen and Koopman, 1997; Bass, 1999). Following the aforementioned information, this study investigates the effects of transformational leadership on employee innovative behaviour in the Nigerian banking industry, South-West Zaria region in Nigeria. This research paper further examined how transformational leadership dimensions (via idealized

influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration) affect employee innovative behaviour.

Apart from the introductory part, the study is divided into four sections. Section two review relevant literatures briefly, while the third section presents the methodology. Section four provides data analysis and discussion whereas the last section presents conclusion and proffers policy recommendations.

## 2.0 BRIEF REVIEW OF LITERATURE

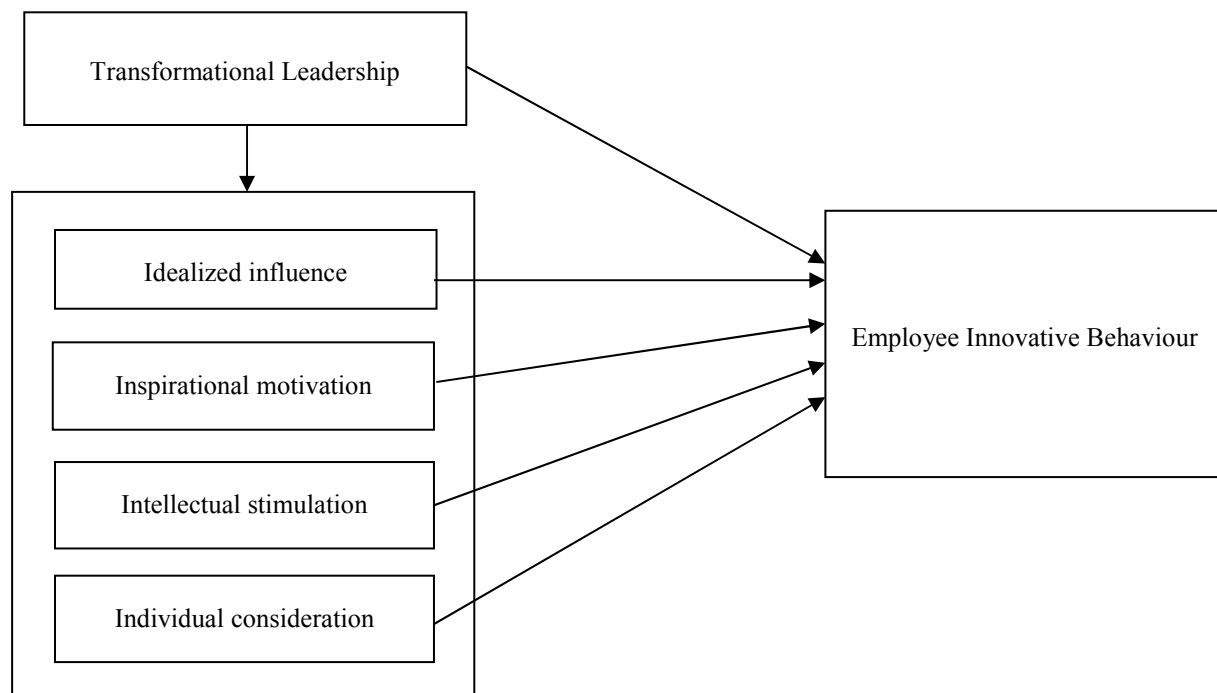
In the body of literature, lots have been extensively researched and written on the concept, style and theories of leadership as well as transformational leadership. According to Sale (1991), he argued that transformational leadership has a vision and mission intellect to inculcate self-importance, gain and respect and trust that enhance followers' spirits to perform better than expected. Northouse (2012) opined that transformational leadership is the intrinsic skill and ability to bring people to desire change, improvement and show leadership. Summarily, it involves assessment of associates' motives, needs satisfaction including their valuation (Musa *et al.*, 2018). In addition, transformational leadership is said to be a unique leadership style that is hypothesized to have the ability to persuade employees' moral values and ethics in a manner that they are inclined to perform better than anticipated (Bass, 1985; Yukl, 1999). In the words of Bass (1985) and Nemanich and Keller (2007), transformational leadership centers on the thought, intellectual inspiration, and inspiring motives of individuals. Besides, a transformational leader is believed to be more reliable, sensible, and practical, which assist to achieve his/her tasks as well as the prospect of stimulating ground-breaking work behavior (Bass, 1999; Bass, Avolio, Jung, and Berson, 2003).

The four factors to transformational leadership posited by Northouse (2012) are: (i) Idealized influence: it depicts managers that are exemplary role models for associates. This type of managers with idyllic influence can be believed and valued by associates to make good decisions for the organization. (ii) Inspirational motivation: This portrays managers who inspire associates to be committed to the vision and mission of the organization. These kind of managers with inspirational motivation hearten unity and harmony to arrive at goals of improved revenue and market growth for the organization. (iii) Intellectual stimulation: it explains managers who promote novelty, originality and creativity through confronting the usual beliefs or views of a group. Thus, managers with this trait encourage critical thinking and problem solving to make the organization better. (iv) Individual consideration: it describes managers who take steps as coaches and advisors to the associates. These managers support associates to achieve goals that assist the associates and the organization. Meanwhile, innovation is a multiple process which entails the ability of an individual to identify/recognize a problem, make novel ideas/decisions, as well as the ability to hold up and execute the ideas (Moss Kanter, 1988; Scott and Bruce, 1994). It is imperative to note that innovation is influenced by organizational factors including incentives, organizational supports, and individual's personality (Barron and Harrington, 1981). Thus, employee innovation behavior implies the process that make an individual to identify, develop and apply new ideas to carry out tasks better in their work place (Van de Ven, 1986; Grant, 2000; Li *et al.*, 2019).

Just like Li *et al.* (2019), this research study hinges its theoretical foundation on the social exchange theory. The theory hypothesized that transformational leadership influence employee engagement via social exchanges by creating a friendly and reliable environment (Blau, 1964) explicitly based on trust and an "open-ended stream of transactions" (Organ and Konovsky, 1989; 162). According to the social exchange theory, its basic principle is that the followers of a transformational leader will lend a supportive role to the leader by signifying positive behaviours and attitudes that add directly to their organization, such as commitment, satisfaction, citizenship behavior, performance, and innovative work behavior toward the organizational development (Choi, Kim, Ullah, and Kang, 2016: 52–54). Breevaart and Bakker (2018) noted that transformational leaders have the ability to kindle improvement in the levels of employees' engagement through the creation of amiable and dependable environment in the organization.

On the empirical literature front, related and relevant studies were reviewed in this section. Most of the existing studies focused on the employment performance effect of leadership style in developed and developing whereas few studies are available on the links between transformation leadership and employee innovative behaviour. Among the few studies, Li *et al.* (2019) investigate the influence of transformational leadership on innovative work behaviour of associates via leadership trust, empowerment and work engagement using a primary data set gathered from 281 multinational organization employees in China. Using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) macro process to test the serial mediation, the study found that transformational leadership and work engagement have significant and positive relationship with innovative work behavior. They further found a significant impact of transformational leadership on leadership trust, which subsequently impacted positively on the work engagement of the employees. While investigating the effect of three different styles of leadership (such as transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership style) on employees' innovative work of 461 sampled Al-Ahliyya Amman University employees in Jordan, Alheet *et al.* (2021) found a positive statistically significant impact of transformational leadership style on employees' innovative work

behaviour. However, a negative statistically significant impact of transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles was found on the employees' innovative work behaviour. Likewise, Pieterse, Van Knippenberg, Schippers, and Stam (2010), Afsar, Badir and Bin Saeed (2014), and Pradhan and Jena (2019) empirically found a direct relationship between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior.



**Figure 1:** Hypothesized framework

**Source:** Authors' conceptualization

According to Huang, Wu, Lu and Lin (2016), leadership has been identified among the key factors that promotes and triggers the generation of innovative work behavior of employees. Wu and Lin (2018) noted that leaders have the ability to create attitudes and conditions that can bring innovative work behavior of their associates and therefore arrive at desirable creative outcomes. Also, the influence of leadership on innovative work behavior of employees varies among the different of styles of leadership like transactional, laissez-faire and transformational leader (Oke, Munshi and Walumba, 2009). For this reason, leaders do their best to provide an environment that persuades the innovative work behavior of their subordinates (Sethibe and Steyn, 2016). Felfe and Goihl (2002) stressed that transformational leadership promote intellectual thoughts which make subordinates to think creatively, thereafter, employees become more dedicated to effective accomplishment of organizational vision. These managers further ensure that associates' working behaviour assist them to improve their skills and abilities to resolve work-based problem (Bass and Avolio, 1997; Geyery and Steyrer, 1998; Kark, Shamir and Chen, 2003). For example, these leaders help their subordinates to be creativity in personal decision making with lower reliance on others so as to enhance their intellectual capacity. An exceptional organizational culture is also developed by transformational leaders to ensure confidence in employees towards innovative work behaviour (DeGroot, Kiker, and Cross, 2000; Dorenbosch, Engen, and Verhagen, 2005; Aryee, Walumbwa, Zhou, and Hartnell, 2012). Thus, transformational leaders have distinctive characteristics (such as idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration) that are necessary for making and improving employees' innovative work behaviour. It is evidenced in the above reviewed studies that only few studies are available in developing countries like Nigeria. It is based on this information that this research study investigates the influence of transformational leadership dimensions (like idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration) on employees' innovative behaviour in the Nigerian banking industry. The research hypotheses proposed for this research study are depicted in Figure 1.

### 3.0 METHODOLOGY

The data and information were gathered from full-time employees working in the banking industry in different South-West region of Nigeria. The questionnaire contains questions on transformational leadership traits and factors (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration), demographics and employees innovative work behaviour. The respondents were given assurance that all their

views and perceptions would remain anonymous and only used in this research study. For this research paper, 350 questionnaires were distributed and 235 were returned, thereby making the response rate 67.14%. Summarily, about 64.3% were male, 58% were in the age bracket of 18–40 years, and about 37% were engaged in the industry between 1–5 years. A 5point likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always) was used to address questions on transformational leadership whereas employees innovative work behaviour was also on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Regarding the data description, the 12-items of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) developed by Bass, Avolio, Jung and Berson (2003) and Avolio and Bass (2004) was used to measure transformational leadership and this reflect the views and perceptions of employees about the behaviour of their superiors. The four dimensions of transformational leadership included are: charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Samples of questions included for the dimensions of transformational leadership are idealized influence i.e. “My supervisor talks about his/her most important values”; individualized consideration i.e. “My supervisor treats me as an individual rather than just as a member of a group”; intellectual stimulation i.e. “My supervisor suggests new ways of looking at how to complete an assignment”; and inspirational motivation i.e. “My supervisor talks enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished”. As for employees innovative work behaviour, a six-item developed by Scott and Bruce (1994) was used. Past studies that have used are Carmeli, Meitar and Weisberg (2006), Carmeli and Spreitzer (2009), Yuan and Woodman (2010), and Li *et al.* (2019). The question used to measure the variable is “This employee creates new ideas for difficult issues”. The average of transformational leadership is 3.53, whereas the mean of its dimensions are 3.76, 3.69, 3.24, and 3.41 for idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration respectively. The average of employee innovative work behaviour is 3.92.

Concerning the demographic factors used as controlling variables, the series included are sex, age group, tenure with the organization, and power distance. In terms of coding of gender, we ascribed 1 to male and 2 to female. For age distribution, 1 for 18–30 years, 2 for 31–40 years, 3 for 41–45 years, 4 for 46–55 years, and 5 for 56 years old and above. In the case of tenure 1 is ascribed to 1–5 years, 2 to 6–10 years, 3 to 11–15 years, 4 to 16–20 years, and 5 to 21 years and above. For reliability test, the Cronbach alpha test conducted for transformational leadership, employee innovative behaviour and control variables are 0.89, 0.82 and 0.87 respectively.

This study utilized the multiple regression estimator to estimate the parameters of the explanatory variables. Specifying a multiple linear regression model, the equation is written in a simple form as:

$$y_i = x_i\beta + \varepsilon_i \quad \text{where } i = 1, \dots, I \quad (1)$$

Where:  $y$  represents the outcome variable relating to  $1 \times M$  vector of regressor  $x_i$  that include the constant and stochastic term  $\varepsilon$ ; and  $\beta$  indicate  $M \times 1$  coefficient of variables of interest. Most importantly, the OLS estimator used in this study assumes that the regressors  $x_i$  are not correlated with the stochastic term  $\varepsilon$ ,  $E(x_i'\varepsilon_i) = 0$  since the standard errors of parameters are in a robust form.

#### 4.0 DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The empirical results of the employee innovative behaviour effects of transformational leadership using the multiple regression analysis are presented in Table 1. In the first columns, we presented the findings relating to the composite transformational leadership while the estimates of the dimensions of transformational leadership are presented in column 2. The parameter estimates of gender, age and tenure are equally reported in both columns. Furthermore, the result shows that the transformational leadership and other controlling variables explain a higher variation in employee innovative work behaviour. Going by the adjusted R square values, transformational leadership came out as strong variable for predicting employee innovative work behaviour of Nigerian banking industry in South-West region, Nigeria. Likewise, the F-statistics value shows the overall significance of the explanatory variables.

**Table 1:** Multiple linear c regression result of employee innovative work behaviour

Variables	Dependent Variables: Employees Innovative Behaviour	
	1	2
<b>Gender:</b> Male	-0.570***(0.203)	-0.881**(0.368)
<b>Age distribution:</b>		
31 – 40 years	-2.026***(0.696)	-1.597**(0.640)
41 – 50 years	-0.613(0.479)	-0.591(0.462)
51 – 55 years	-1.040**(0.405)	-1.054***(0.396)
56 years and above	-0.993**(0.458)	-0.884*(0.454)
<b>Tenure:</b>		
1 – 5 years	1.543*(0.793)	0.985(0.742)
6 – 10 years	0.803(0.761)	0.378(0.703)
11 – 15 years	0.697(0.700)	0.336(0.657)
16 – 20 years	1.560*(0.911)	1.623(1.044)
Transformational Leadership	0.698**(0.325)	
Idealized influence	-	0.844***(0.394)
Inspirational motivation	-	0.724***(0.204)
Intellectual stimulation	-	0.568*(0.319)
Individual consideration	-	0.424*(0.254)
Adjusted R-Square	0.560	0.682
F-statistics	15.948	25.030
Prob.	(0.000)	(0.000)

**Note:** Robust standard errors in parentheses; \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, and \* p<0.10. Variables benchmarked to avoid dummy trap are stated in parenthesis as follows: gender(female), age(1–5 years); and tenure(21 years & above).

From the empirical results of employee innovative work behaviour presented in Table 1, it is evident that transformational leadership is positively and significantly related with employee innovative work behaviour. It means that transformational leadership is among the factors that enhance employee innovative work behaviour. Further estimation on the dimensions of transformational leadership showed that idealized influence ( $\beta = 0.844$ ,  $p < 0.010$ ) is the most influential factor that determine employee innovative work behaviour, afterwards, inspirational motivation ( $\beta = 0.724$ ,  $p < 0.010$ ), intellectual stimulation ( $\beta = 0.5684$ ,  $p < 0.10$ ) and individual consideration ( $\beta = 0.424$ ,  $p < 0.10$ ) respectively. Consistently, the direct effect of idealized influence and inspirational motivation on employee innovative behaviour is statistically significant at the conventional level whereas intellectual stimulation and individual consideration were found significant at 10% level.

## 5.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDING AND CONCLUSION

This research paper investigates the influence of transformational leadership on employees' innovative work behaviour in Nigerian banking industry. Hinging on the social exchange theory, the empirical results showed that transformational leadership stimulates employee innovative behaviour. The findings of this research study provide empirical support for the significant role of transformational leadership in improving employee innovative work behaviour, which is consistent with the results of previous studies like Pieterse, Van Knippenberg, Schippers, and Stam (2010), Afsar, Badir and Bin Saeed (2014), Li *et al.* (2019), Pradhan and Jena (2019) and Alheet *et al.* (2021). Thus, transformational leadership has a huge impact on employee innovative work behaviour in the Nigerian banking industry. Particularly, leaders' ability to create attitudes and conditions may bring innovative work behavior of their associates and therefore arrive at desirable creative outcomes (Wu and Lin, 2018). Thus, transformational leadership promote intellectual thoughts which make subordinates to think creatively, thereafter, employees become more dedicated to effective accomplishment of organizational vision (Felfe and Goihl, 2002). Transformational managers ensure that associates' working behaviour assist them to improve their skills and abilities to resolve work-based problem (Bass and Avolio, 1997; Geyery and Steyrer, 1998; Kark, Shamir and Chen, 2003).

On the policy front, the decision makers in the banking industry need to ensure an environment that encourage the subordinates to enhance individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation practices. Also, there is need for managers to identify the needs, desires and motives of employees by assisting them to grow their skills and abilities towards their demands and the organizational goals. Employees' supports in respect of creativity and innovative minds needs to be ensure to support the vision and mission statements of the firms. Lastly, employees must be included in the decision making process as well as encouragement to challenge the status quo.

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