



Transformational Leadership for Enhancing Academic Staff Productivity: A Comparative Study of Public and Private Universities in Enugu State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study determined how transformational leadership enhances academic staff productivity: a comparative study of public and private universities in Enugu State, Nigeria. The study was guided by two research questions, and two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. A descriptive survey research design was employed for this study. The population of the study was 2,943 academic staff members, consisting 1,966 males and 977 females, drawn from both public and private universities in Enugu State. The sample size was 294 drawn using purposive random sampling technique. Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire titled “Transformational Leadership for Enhancing Academic Staff Productivity Questionnaire (TLEASPQ)” which contained 15 items based on the two research questions. The instrument was validated by three experts from the Faculty of Education, Enugu State University of Science and Technology. Its reliability was tested using the Cronbach Alpha method, which produced coefficients of 0.79 for Cluster 1 and 0.81 for Cluster 2. The overall reliability index of 0.80 confirmed that the instrument was dependable for the study. Mean scores and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while t-test statistic was used to test the hypotheses. The study revealed that idealized influence and inspirational motivation are key dimensions of transformational leadership styles that significantly enhance the productivity of academic staff in both public and private universities in Enugu State. In line with the findings of the study, it was recommended that University administrators should strengthen transformational leadership practices by emphasizing idealized influence and inspirational motivation in their daily management.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a process of learning and acquisition of knowledge, skills and values for societal development. The Federal Republic of Nigeria in her national Policy (2013) sees education as a tool for development, helping to reduce poverty, ignorance, and crime, which is why both individuals and nations prioritize acquiring functional education. Nations invest in education because its quality directly affects how well citizens can contribute to national growth and development (Chidobi & Okenwa, 2015). By equipping individuals with the necessary skills, knowledge, and competencies, education ensures personal and societal security while fostering meaningful contributions to society. Osegbue, Ohamobi and Manafa (2018), emphasized that education acts as a significant driver of economic progress by enhancing human capital and fostering innovation. It also preserves knowledge for future generations and addresses the complex challenges of the 21st century. Education provides individuals with knowledge, skills, and competencies that form the foundation for advanced learning and specialized training, ultimately culminating in university education. University education is a type of education obtained in the university.

A university is a higher education institution that provides teaching, conducts research, and awards academic degrees, serving as a hub for scholars, students, and professionals dedicated to learning and societal development (Ofoegbu & Hezekiah, 2017). A university can either be public or private. Public universities are universities owned, funded and managed by the government to make higher education accessible to citizens, offering teaching, research, and community services under government supervision, though they often face challenges related to funding and maintaining quality. In contrast, private universities are established and managed by individuals, religious organizations, or corporate entities, providing specialized or flexible programs while operating under regulatory oversight from bodies like the National Universities Commission (Ofoegbu & Hezekiah, 2017). Together, both public and private universities are essential for producing skilled professionals, fostering innovation, and driving national development through effective governance and application of transformational leadership skills.

Leadership is the process of guiding, influencing, and directing people to achieve shared goals, aligning them with a vision, inspiring and motivating them, and communicating effectively (Plecas, Squires & Garis, 2018). A leadership style refers to the characteristic approach and behavior a leader uses to manage and motivate their team. It is defined as the set of traits and methods leaders employ to influence subordinates and ensure the achievement of organizational objectives (Rivai, 2017). For Abidakun and Ganiyu (2020), leadership style refers to patterns of behavior and practices used by a leader to coordinate the activities of

the work place. Gina, Maria and Henry (2018) then stated that there are various styles of leadership based on diverse viewpoints. They however stated that leadership style is contingent on a combination of influences and circumstances which inspire the adoption of some styles than others. According to Abidakun and Ganiyu (2020), the three dominant styles of leadership are: transformational, transactional and laissez –faire leadership styles. Meanwhile, transformational leadership style refers to a leadership approach in which the leader works with followers to identify needed change, creates a compelling vision to guide that change, and executes the change in cooperation with committed team members (Mittal & Dhar, 2015; Choi, Goh, Adam & Tan 2016). This style inspires followers to exceed ordinary expectations by elevating their awareness of the importance of tasks, shifting their self-interest toward the collective good, and developing their full potential (Mittal & Dhar, 2015).

Transformational leaders focus on motivating and empowering their followers through idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration (Choi et al., 2016). Their role is to effect deep organizational change and foster follower growth while aligning individual and organizational goals for sustainable performance. Emiru (2018) observed that transformational leaders motivate others to go beyond their assigned duties, set higher goals, and attain superior performance levels. According to Uzoehina and Oguegbu (2015), transformational leadership enables principals to achieve school objectives by efficiently organizing, directing, and integrating essential school resources, including teacher needs, in ways that are both productive and motivating. Koomson, Adjei and Owusu (2019), observed that transformational leaders who set clear visions, foster optimism, and encourage collaborative goal-setting significantly enhance employee motivation and performance in public-sector organizations in Ghana. Similarly, Musa and Bello (2018) found that leaders who set challenging goals, communicate clear directions, and provide motivating feedback boost staff productivity and commitment in Nigerian organizations. Key components of transformational leadership include idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and fostering team spirit (Ahmad, Noor, Yazan & Khalaf, 2019). Okoli, Nnabuike, Adani & Ugbo (2019), also observed that transformational leaders who model high ethical standards and serve as role models promote more effective institutional outcomes in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Similarly, Barinua and Ogbulu (2019) found that behaviours associated with idealized influence, such as trust-building, role-modelling, and ethical leadership, positively impact employee commitment, indicating that staff are more engaged and productive when leaders exhibit these qualities. This study focused on idealized influence and inspirational motivation.

Idealized influence, a core component of transformational leadership, refers to leaders serving as role models who earn respect and admiration through their actions, values, and high ethical standards, fostering trust and a shared mission among followers (Bass & Avolio, 2014; Okorji & Unamma, 2015). In educational leadership, this involves principals demonstrating commitment, integrity, and a clear vision that motivates both staff and students (Hughes, 2014). Leaders exhibiting idealized influence inspire followers to overcome challenges, emulate their behavior, and find purpose in their work (Lim & Ployhart, 2014). Inspirational motivation, another key aspect of transformational leadership, involves articulating a compelling vision and encouraging enthusiasm and commitment toward achieving it (Jason, Jeffery & Michael, 2015). Leaders using inspirational motivation set high expectations, communicate the shared vision effectively, and foster a sense of purpose among team members (Northouse, 2018; Yukl, 2015). Together, idealized influence and inspirational motivation enable transformational leaders to guide, inspire, and elevate the performance and engagement of their followers. If transformational leadership is effectively practiced through idealized influence and inspirational motivation, it could create an enabling environment that maximally enhances academic staff productivity in universities.

Academic staff productivity refers to the efficiency and effectiveness with which lecturers and researchers fulfill their teaching, research, and institutional service responsibilities (Kanyemba, Iwu, and Allenlle 2015). It encompasses the conversion of educational inputs such as time, expertise, and resources into meaningful outputs like student learning outcomes, research publications, and community service (Togunloju, 2016). High productivity among academic staff indicates both quantity (e.g., number of lectures given, papers published) and quality (e.g., relevance of research, impact of teaching) of outputs. Enhancing academic staff productivity is essential for institutional excellence and national educational development (Chika, Nnaji & Nwafor, 2016). The effectiveness of leadership styles in enhancing academic staff productivity can vary based on differences in communication, motivation, and work engagement, which are often influenced by gender.

Gender refers to the social, cultural, and psychological characteristics, roles, and expectations associated with being male or female, rather than merely biological differences. It shapes how individuals think, behave, and interact, influencing the way they are perceived and treated within society. Gender also affects access to opportunities, allocation of responsibilities, and adherence to social norms, thereby impacting personal, professional, and educational experiences (World Health Organization, 2016).

The researcher is concerned that many universities in Enugu State may be experiencing low academic staff productivity due to inconsistent or weak leadership practices. In some institutions, leaders do not

consistently demonstrate idealized influence or provide adequate inspirational motivation, which can lead to low morale, disengagement, and reduced teaching and research output. This problem appears to be more pronounced when comparing public and private universities, where differences in management style, resource availability, and institutional culture affect leadership effectiveness. Without effective transformational leadership, universities risk high staff turnover, poor academic performance, and a declining institutional reputation. Therefore, it is crucial to examine how idealized influence and inspirational motivation can enhance academic staff productivity in these universities.

Statement of the Problem

In an ideal university environment, academic staff are expected to demonstrate high levels of productivity, commitment, and innovation, driven by strong leadership that motivates, inspires, and guides them toward achieving institutional goals. Transformational leadership, particularly through idealized influence and inspirational motivation, is critical in fostering such an environment by promoting ethical standards, dedication, trust, and a shared vision among staff. When leaders model exemplary behaviour and provide motivating visions, academic staff are likely to perform optimally, contribute to research output, and enhance the overall reputation of the university. Such an environment not only supports the personal and professional growth of lecturers but also improves student learning outcomes and institutional competitiveness. Ideally, both public and private universities in Enugu State should benefit from transformational leadership practices that ensure the maximum utilization of human resources. Effective leadership should, therefore, serve as a catalyst for sustained academic excellence and staff satisfaction.

However, evidence suggests that many universities in Enugu State face challenges related to inconsistent or weak leadership practices, which may undermine the productivity of academic staff. In some institutions, leaders may fail to exhibit idealized influence or provide sufficient inspirational motivation, leading to disengagement, low morale, and reduced research and teaching output. This situation is particularly pronounced in comparing public and private universities, where differences in management practices, resource availability, and institutional culture may affect leadership effectiveness. The lack of effective transformational leadership can result in high staff turnover, poor academic performance, and diminished institutional reputation. If these challenges are not addressed, universities risk stagnation, reduced competitiveness, and a decline in quality education. Therefore, understanding how idealized influence and inspirational motivation enhance academic staff productivity is essential for developing strategies that improve leadership effectiveness and overall institutional performance.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to examine how transformational leadership enhances academic staff productivity: a comparative study of public and private universities in Enugu State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. determine the extent to which idealized influence as a dimension of transformational leadership enhances academic staff productivity in public and private universities in Enugu State;
2. ascertain the extent to which inspirational motivation as a dimension of transformational leadership contributes to academic staff productivity in public and private universities in Enugu State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does idealized influence as a dimension of transformational leadership enhance academic staff productivity in public and private universities in Enugu State?
2. To what extent does inspirational motivation as a dimension of transformational leadership contribute to academic staff productivity in public and private universities in Enugu State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance

1. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female academic staff on how idealized influence as a dimension of transformational leadership enhances academic staff productivity in public and private universities in Enugu State.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female academic staff on how inspirational motivation as a dimension of transformational leadership contributes to academic staff productivity in public and private universities in Enugu State.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study employed a descriptive survey research design. According to Nworgu (2015), a descriptive survey research design involves studying a group of people or items by collecting and analyzing data from a

selected sample that is considered representative of the entire population. This design enables researchers to gather factual information, describe existing conditions, and draw conclusions that reflect the characteristics of the larger group. The population consisted of 2,943 academic staff members, including 1,966 males and 977 females, drawn from both public and private universities in Enugu State. The sample size was 294 drawn using purposive random sampling technique. Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire titled "Transformational Leadership for Enhancing Academic Staff Productivity Questionnaire (TLEASPQ)" which contained 15 items based on the two research questions. The instrument was validated by three experts, two of which were from the Department of Educational Management while one of the experts was from the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science Education all from the Faculty of Education, Enugu State University of Science and Technology. Its reliability was tested using the Cronbach Alpha method, which produced coefficients of 0.79 for Cluster 1 and 0.81 for Cluster 2. The overall reliability index of 0.80 was obtained which confirmed that the instrument was dependable for the study.

Mean scores with standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while t-test statistic was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. However, out of the 294 copies of questionnaire administered, the researcher and her research assistants retrieved 281 copies (192 from male 89 from female lecturers) which gave 95.58% retrieval rate. Mean scores and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions, while the t-test statistic was employed to test the hypotheses. Each response option was assigned a numerical value based on the real limits of numbers as follows: Very Great Extent (VGE) = 3.50–4.00, Great Extent (GE) = 2.50–3.49, Low Extent (LE) = 1.50–2.49, and Very Low Extent (VLE) = 0.00–1.49. The interpretation of the hypotheses was guided by the significance (sig.) values obtained from the SPSS output. The null hypothesis was rejected when the p-value was less than or equal to the chosen level of significance ($\alpha = 0.05$), indicating sufficient evidence to support the alternative hypothesis. Conversely, the null hypothesis was not rejected when the p-value was greater than 0.05, suggesting that there was not enough evidence to accept the alternative hypothesis.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: To what extent does idealized influence as a dimension of transformational leadership enhance academic staff productivity in public and private universities in Enugu State?

Table 1: Mean ratings of male and female lecturers on the extent to which idealized influence as a dimension of transformational leadership enhance academic staff productivity in public and private universities in Enugu State

ITEMS		Male Lecturers 192			Female Lecturers 89		
S/N		\bar{x}	SD	Dec.	\bar{x}	SD	Dec.
	Idealized influence enhances academic staff productivity in public and private universities by:						
1	Demonstrating high ethical standards that inspire staff to follow	2.70	0.90	GE	2.72	0.89	GE
2	Serving as a role model by showing dedication	2.65	0.92	GE	2.68	0.91	GE
3	Building trust among staff through consistent actions	2.67	0.88	GE	2.69	0.90	GE
4	Encouraging staff to uphold university values	2.64	0.93	GE	2.70	0.89	GE
5	Demonstrating fairness in decision-making	2.69	0.91	GE	2.71	0.90	GE
6	Inspiring staff to achieve goals beyond personal interests	2.66	0.90	GE	2.72	0.91	GE
7	Promoting a culture of integrity among staff	2.68	0.89	GE	2.69	0.88	GE
8	Motivating staff through vision to excellence	2.69	0.92	GE	2.70	0.90	GE
	Cluster Mean/SD	2.68	0.91	GE	2.70	0.90	GE

Note: GE=Very Great Extent, GE= Great Extent, LE= Low Extent, VLE=Very Low Extent

Table 1 shows the mean ratings of male and female lecturers on the extent to which idealized influence, a dimension of transformational leadership, enhances academic staff productivity in public and private universities in Enugu State. Male lecturers' ratings ranged from 2.64 to 2.70 with standard deviations between 0.88 and 0.93, while female lecturers' ratings ranged from 2.68 to 2.72 with standard deviations between 0.88 and 0.91, all indicating a great extent. Specific areas rated highly included demonstrating high ethical standards, serving as a role model, building trust, promoting fairness, and inspiring staff to achieve beyond

personal goals. The cluster mean for male lecturers was 2.68 (SD = 0.91) and for female lecturers 2.70 (SD = 0.90), showing consistent agreement across genders. Over all, both male and female lecturers perceived that idealized influence significantly enhances academic staff productivity in universities.

Research Question 2: To what extent does inspirational motivation as a dimension of transformational leadership contribute to academic staff productivity in public and private universities in Enugu State?

Table 2: Mean ratings of male and female lecturers on the extent to which inspirational motivation as a dimension of transformational leadership enhance academic staff productivity in public and private universities in Enugu State

ITEMS		Male Lecturers 192			Female Lecturers 89		
S/N		X	SD	Dec.	X	SD	Dec.
	Inspirational motivation enhances academic staff productivity in public and private universities by:						
9	Encouraging staff to set challenging goals	2.62	0.93	GE	2.63	0.94	GE
10	Communicating a clear vision that inspires staff	2.61	0.95	GE	2.62	0.96	GE
11	Providing motivating feedback to enhance staff performance	2.59	0.94	GE	2.60	0.95	GE
12	Inspiring staff to take initiative in their work	2.61	0.95	GE	2.61	0.97	GE
13	Fostering optimism in challenging situations	2.59	0.92	GE	2.60	0.93	GE
14	Recognizing staff contributions to university goals	2.61	0.94	GE	2.61	0.94	GE
15	Encouraging collaboration among academic staff	2.61	0.95	GE	2.62	0.96	GE
	Cluster Mean/SD	2.60	0.91	GE	2.61	0.95	GE

Note: GE=Very Great Extent, GE= Great Extent, LE= Low Extent, VLE=Very Low Extent

Table 2 presents the ratings of male and female lecturers on how inspirational motivation, as a dimension of transformational leadership, contributes to academic staff productivity in public and private universities in Enugu State. Male lecturers' ratings ranged from 2.59 to 2.62 with standard deviations between 0.92 and 0.95, while female lecturers' ratings ranged from 2.60 to 2.63 with standard deviations between 0.93 and 0.97, all indicating a great extent. Key areas rated highly included encouraging staff to set challenging goals, communicating a clear vision, providing motivating feedback, fostering optimism, and promoting collaboration among staff. The cluster mean for male lecturers was 2.60 (SD = 0.91) and for female lecturers

2.61 (SD = 0.95), showing strong agreement across genders. Overall, both male and female lecturers perceived that inspirational motivation significantly enhances academic staff productivity in universities.

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female academic staff on how idealized influence as a dimension of transformational leadership enhances academic staff productivity in public and private universities in Enugu State.

Table 3: t-test on the mean ratings of male and female academic staff on how idealized influence as a dimension of transformational leadership enhances academic staff productivity in public and private universities in Enugu State

Group	n	\bar{x}	SD	df	p-value	Decision
Male Lecturers	192	2.68	0.91	279	0.864	H0 ₁ not rejected
Female Lecturers	89	2.70	0.90			

The table compares the mean ratings of male and female lecturers on the extent to which idealized influence enhances academic staff productivity. Male lecturers had a mean of 2.68 (SD = 0.91) and female lecturers a mean of 2.70 (SD = 0.90), with 279 degrees of freedom. The calculated p-value is 0.864, which is greater than the 0.05 significance level, indicating no significant difference between male and female lecturers' ratings. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected, showing 3.

that both groups similarly perceive the impact of idealized influence on academic staff productivity.

2. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female academic staff on how inspirational motivation as a dimension of transformational leadership contributes to academic staff productivity in public and private universities in Enugu State.

Table 4: t-test on the mean ratings of male and female academic staff on how inspirational motivation as a dimension of transformational leadership enhances academic staff productivity in public and private universities in Enugu State

Group	n	\bar{x}	SD	df	p-value	Decision
Male Lecturers	192	2.60	0.91	279	0.933	H0 ₂ not rejected
Female Lecturers	89	2.61	0.95			

The table compares the mean ratings of male and female lecturers on the extent to which inspirational motivation enhances academic staff productivity. Male lecturers had a mean of 2.60 (SD = 0.91) and female lecturers a mean of 2.61 (SD = 0.95), with 279 degrees of freedom. The calculated p-value is 0.933, which is greater than the 0.05 significance level, indicating no significant difference between male and female lecturers' ratings. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected, showing

that both groups similarly perceive the impact of inspirational motivation on academic staff productivity.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study revealed that idealized influence significantly enhances the productivity of academic staff in both public and private universities in Enugu State. Male and female

lecturers consistently rated behaviours such as demonstrating high ethical standards, serving as role models, building trust, promoting fairness, and inspiring staff to achieve beyond personal goals as having a great impact on productivity. The finding that idealized influence significantly enhances the productivity of academic staff in both public and private universities in Enugu State is supported by Okoli, Nnabuike, Adani & Ugbo (2019), who observed that transformational leaders who model high ethical standards and serve as role models promote more effective institutional outcomes in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Similarly, Barinua and Ogbulu (2019) found that behaviours associated with idealized influence, such as trust-building, role-modelling, and ethical leadership, positively impact employee commitment, indicating that staff are more engaged and productive when leaders exhibit these qualities. Both studies align with the present finding, emphasizing that leadership grounded in ethical conduct and inspirational modeling drives higher productivity among academic staff.

The study also found that inspirational motivation significantly contributes to academic staff productivity. Lecturers reported that encouraging challenging goals, communicating a clear vision, providing motivating feedback, fostering optimism, and promoting collaboration among staff positively influence their performance. The finding that inspirational motivation significantly contributes to academic staff productivity is supported by Koomson, Adjei and Owusu (2019), who observed that transformational leaders who set clear visions, foster optimism, and encourage collaborative goal-setting significantly enhance employee motivation and performance in public-sector organizations in Ghana. Similarly, Musa and Bello (2018) found that leaders who set challenging goals, communicate clear directions, and provide motivating feedback boost staff productivity and commitment in Nigerian organizations. Both studies align with the present finding, showing that inspirational leadership behaviours positively influence staff engagement and performance.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that idealized influence and inspirational motivation, as core dimensions of transformational leadership, play a vital role in enhancing the productivity of academic staff in both public and private universities in Enugu State. Academic staff who perceive their leaders as role models and vision-driven tend to demonstrate higher commitment and performance. The findings further indicated that transformational leaders inspire and motivate staff to achieve institutional goals beyond personal interests. This leadership approach fosters a positive work environment that encourages innovation, collaboration, and professional growth.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the researcher recommended that:

1. University administrators should strengthen transformational leadership practices by emphasizing idealized influence and inspirational motivation in their daily management. This will help create a supportive and inspiring work environment that boosts academic staff commitment and productivity.
2. Regular leadership training and development programmes should be organized for university leaders to enhance their ability to motivate, guide, and positively influence academic staff toward achieving institutional goals.
3. Both public and private universities should establish mentorship and recognition systems that encourage exemplary leadership behaviour and reward outstanding academic performance. This will promote a culture of excellence and continuous improvement among staff.

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