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9, Alli Gbadebo Street, Mokola Ibadan

GSM: 0803 3596 818

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IMPACT OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES ON TEACHERS' PERFORMANCE AND STUDENT ACADEMIC OUTCOMES IN NIGERIA SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Ifiora Nancy ifeyinwa

Nasarawa State University, Keffi

Email: Ifyifiora@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examined the impact of transformational leadership practices on teacher performance and student academic outcomes in Nigerian secondary schools. The research explored how school principals who embody transformational leadership principles influence school success. Drawing on transformational leadership theory, the study focuses on four core dimensions idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration and their relationship with teaching effectiveness and student achievement. The descriptive survey research design was adopted, involving a sample of 500 participants (200 teachers, 250 students, and 50 administrators) selected from public secondary schools across the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Data was collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using Pearson's correlation and multiple regression analysis. Findings revealed a strong positive correlation between transformational leadership practices and teacher performance ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.01$). Among the dimensions, inspirational motivation ($\beta = 0.34$, $p < 0.05$) and intellectual stimulation ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < 0.05$) significantly predicted teaching effectiveness, while individualized consideration showed a moderate effect ($\beta = 0.21$, $p < 0.05$). Furthermore, transformational leadership was found to significantly enhance student academic performance ($R^2 = 0.56$, $F(4, 495) = 42.78$, $p < 0.001$), demonstrating its role in creating a supportive and engaging learning environment. The study concluded that transformational leadership practices are crucial for improving both teacher performance and student achievement in Nigerian secondary schools.

Keywords: Transformational leadership, Teacher performance, Student academic outcomes, Secondary schools, Principals,

Inspirational motivation, Intellectual stimulation,
Educational leadership, Nigeria

Introduction

The educational landscape in Nigeria faces numerous challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, insufficient funding, and a lack of effective leadership. This leadership style emphasizes vision, innovation, and the development of followers' potential, which can lead to improved teacher performance and enhanced student outcomes.

The role of school leaders is pivotal in shaping the educational experience. Research indicates that principals who adopt transformational leadership practices positively influence teacher productivity. For instance, a study by Nnaji and Unamba (2024) found that transformational leadership practices, such as teacher mentoring, provision of ICT facilities, and involving teachers in decision-making, have a significant positive relationship with teachers' productivity in secondary schools in Calabar Education Zone, Cross River State. Similarly, in Anambra State, Okeke et al. (2024) observed that principals' transformational leadership styles significantly affect teachers' job performance. Their study highlighted that principals who exhibit high levels of transformational leadership positively influence teachers' performance in teaching and learning.

Furthermore, research by Adeke et al. (2024) in Benue State revealed that various leadership styles, including transformational leadership, have a high level of perceived influence on teachers' job performance. This underscores the importance of leadership in enhancing teacher effectiveness. The impact of transformational leadership extends beyond teacher performance to student outcomes. In Iwo Local Government, Osun State, Temisanren et al. (2024) found a significant relationship between teachers' leadership roles and students' academic performance. Their study suggested that when teachers adopt leadership roles characterized by counselling, motivation, and discipline, students' academic performance improves.

Statement of the Problem

The quality of secondary education in Nigeria faces challenges such as declining teacher performance, low student engagement, and

unsatisfactory academic outcomes. Traditional leadership approaches have often failed to address these issues effectively. Transformational leadership, which emphasizes vision, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, has been proposed as a potential solution. However, there is a lack of empirical evidence on how transformational leadership practices by school administrators influence teacher performance and student outcomes in Nigerian secondary schools. This study seeks to fill this gap by examining the impact of transformational leadership on these educational variables.

Objective of the Study

The primary objectives of this study are to

- i. Assess the extent to which transformational leadership practices by school administrators influence teacher performance in Nigerian secondary schools.
- ii. Evaluate the impact of transformational leadership on student academic outcomes in these schools.
- iii. Identify specific transformational leadership behaviors that contribute most significantly to improvements in teacher performance and student achievement.
- iv. Provide recommendations for educational policymakers and school administrators to enhance leadership practices that foster improved educational outcomes.

Research Questions

To guide this investigation, the following research questions are posed:

- i. What is the relationship between transformational leadership practices of school administrators and teacher performance in Nigerian secondary schools?
- ii. How do transformational leadership practices impact student academic outcomes in these schools?
- iii. Which specific transformational leadership behaviors are most effective in enhancing teacher performance and student achievement?
- iv. What are the perceptions of teachers and students regarding the influence of transformational leadership on their performance and academic success?

Review of Related Literature

In the context of Nigerian secondary schools, the role of principals as transformational leaders has garnered significant attention. Transformational leadership, characterized by inspiring and motivating teachers, fostering intellectual stimulation, and providing individualized consideration, has been linked to enhanced teacher performance and improved student outcomes.

The conceptual framework for this study is grounded in the Transformational Leadership Theory, which posits that leaders can inspire and motivate followers to achieve higher levels of performance by fostering an environment of trust, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. In the context of Nigerian secondary schools, this framework examines how principals' transformational leadership behaviors influence teacher performance and, subsequently, student outcomes.

Transformational leadership in Nigerian secondary schools is characterized by principals who inspire and motivate teachers through a compelling vision and shared goals. Encourage intellectual stimulation, promoting innovative teaching methods and continuous professional development. Provide individualized consideration, addressing the unique needs and challenges of teachers to enhance their effectiveness. A study by Nnaji and Unamba (2024) in Calabar Education Zone highlighted that principals' transformational leadership practices, such as mentoring and involving teachers in decision-making, significantly enhanced teachers' productivity. The study emphasized the importance of principals' support in fostering a conducive teaching environment.

Teacher performance refers to the effectiveness with which educators deliver instruction, manage classrooms, and contribute to the overall educational environment. It is influenced by various factors, including leadership support, professional development opportunities, and the resources available to teachers. Research by Asiegbo and Ikwu (2020) in Delta State found a high positive relationship between principals' transformational leadership behaviors such as intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration and teachers' job performance. The study recommended that principals design professional development programs tailored to teachers' individual needs to enhance their performance.

The studies highlight the positive impact of transformational leadership behaviors exhibited by school principals on various educational outcomes. Nnaji and Unamba (2024) revealed a significant positive relationship between transformational leadership practices such as teacher mentoring, provision of ICT facilities, and involvement of teachers in decision-making and teachers' productivity. The study recommended that government should organize and sponsor capacity-building programs for teachers, and school administrators should implement mentorship programs to enhance teacher performance

Research by Okeke et al. (2023) in Anambra State examined the influence of principals' leadership styles on teachers' job performance. The study found that principals exercised a high level of transformational leadership style, which positively affected teachers' performance in teaching and learning. The study recommended that the Ministry of Education should organize professional development on school leadership to help strengthen principals' leadership practices Ibe and Chukwu (2023) explored how transformational leadership influences principals' conflict management in secondary schools. The study found that transformational leadership positively affected conflict management, suggesting that such leadership styles contribute to a harmonious school environment. The study recommended organizing conferences and seminars on transformational leadership for principals. A study by Orunbon et al. (2023) indicated a strong positive relationship between principals' digital transformational leadership and teachers' organizational commitment and job satisfaction. The study emphasized the importance of principals' digital leadership behaviors in encouraging teachers to be creative, innovative, and committed to achieving organizational goals. Temisanren et al. (2024) investigated the relationship between teachers' leadership roles and students' academic performance. The findings showed a significant relationship between teachers' leadership roles and students' academic performance, suggesting that teachers' leadership behaviors contribute to enhanced student outcomes. The study recommended that teachers prioritize their leadership roles in counseling, motivation, and discipline to improve student performance. Okere et al. (2022) found that transformational leadership positively influenced the attainment of educational objectives, emphasizing the role of leadership in achieving educational goals. The study recommended that principals adopt

transformational leadership styles to effectively attain educational objectives

The theoretical framework of transformational leadership provides a robust foundation for understanding how leadership behaviors can influence teacher performance and student outcomes in Nigerian secondary schools. The empirical evidence underscores the importance of principals adopting transformational leadership practices to foster an environment conducive to improved educational outcomes.

This dimension refers to leaders serving as role models, demonstrating ethical behavior, and earning the trust and respect of their followers. In the context of Nigerian secondary schools, principals who exhibit idealized influence can instill a sense of pride and commitment among teachers. Leaders serve as role models, earning trust and respect. Dada (2022) emphasized the need for transformational leaders in Nigeria to engage stakeholders and embody ethical standards to enhance governance. He notes, "Transformational leaders who have strong belief that they cannot do it alone would engage stakeholders who align in thoughts and actions to manifest good governance" Ughulu (2024) highlights the importance of charismatic leadership in developing nations like Nigeria, stating, "This leadership paradigm transcends conventional models, emphasizing a visionary approach that fosters innovation and collective success"

Transformational leaders articulate a compelling vision and set high expectations, thereby motivating teachers and students to strive for excellence. Leaders articulate a compelling vision and inspire commitment Without a compelling vision, people may lack direction; without inspired commitment, even the best vision remains a dream. Igbomor (2022) found a strong positive correlation between transformational leadership and job satisfaction in Nigeria's hospitality sector, particularly through idealized influence and inspirational motivation. Edu (2024) discusses how transformational leadership fosters a shared vision in higher education, stating, "By fostering a shared vision, inspiring stakeholders, and cultivating an environment conducive to creativity and inclusivity, transformational leaders significantly enhance institutional performance and student outcomes" page, 22.

This involves encouraging creativity and problem-solving among followers. In Nigerian schools, principals who promote intellectual stimulation can foster an environment where teachers are motivated to develop their careers and students are encouraged to think critically. Leaders encourage creativity and innovation by Encouraging creativity and innovation directly supports your argument on leadership's role in fostering institutional trust, adaptability, and improved outcomes—whether in education, governance, or public service by moving away from rigid, nepotism-prone systems toward dynamic, merit-based practices. Dada (2022) noted that transformational leaders welcome intellectual and constructive criticisms to advance a given course of action, stating, "Intellectual stimulation emanates from leaders who welcome intellectual and constructive criticisms to advance a given course of action" page 45.

Methodology

This section outlines the procedures and methods employed to investigate how transformational leadership affects teacher performance and student outcomes in Nigerian secondary schools. This study adopts a cross-sectional descriptive survey research design. This design is appropriate because it enables the researcher to collect data from a large population at a single point in time and to describe existing conditions regarding leadership practices, teacher performance, and student outcomes without manipulating any variables. The approach is particularly suited for identifying patterns, relationships, and perceptions as they exist naturally, thereby providing an accurate snapshot of the current situation. The target population for this study comprises all public secondary school principals, teachers, and senior secondary school students in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nigeria. To obtain a representative sample, a multistage sampling technique is employed.

In the first stage, three area councils are randomly selected from the six area councils in the FCT. In the second stage, twenty public secondary schools are purposively chosen from the selected area councils, based on criteria such as school size and accessibility. Within each selected school, participants are drawn from three groups: the principal, a sample of teachers, and a sample of senior secondary school students. The teachers and students are selected using stratified

random sampling to ensure that various subject areas and grade levels are proportionately represented. This approach enhances the representativeness of the sample and ensures that the perspectives of all key stakeholders in the teaching–learning process are captured.

Three main structured questionnaires and a semi-structured interview guide were used for data collection. Principal Leadership Questionnaire (PLQ) is designed to assess the leadership practices of secondary school principals. It consists of four sections covering transformational leadership, instructional leadership, decision-making styles, and conflict management strategies. Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree (1)* to *Strongly Agree (5)*. Higher scores indicate a greater demonstration of effective leadership practices. Psychometric Properties PLQ was subjected to expert validation by three specialists in educational administration to ensure content relevance and clarity. A pilot test conducted in two public secondary schools outside the study area produced a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.81, indicating high internal consistency. Teacher Performance Evaluation Scale (TPES) measures teacher effectiveness across key domains such as lesson planning, instructional delivery, classroom management, and assessment practices. Items are structured on a 5-point Likert scale from *Poor (1)* to *Excellent (5)*, enabling quantitative assessment of teacher performance. Expert validation confirmed that the TPES adequately covers the essential dimensions of teacher performance. Pilot testing yielded a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.85, demonstrating excellent internal consistency.

Student Academic Engagement and Achievement Survey (SAEAS) evaluates students' level of engagement in learning activities and their perceived academic achievement. The instrument includes sections on class participation, study habits, motivation, and self-reported grades. Responses are captured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *Never (1)* to *Always (5)* for engagement items, and from *Very Low (1)* to *Very High (5)* for achievement items. Expert review confirmed the appropriateness of the items for assessing student engagement and achievement. The pilot test produced a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.79, which is considered acceptable for research purposes.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected principals and teachers to obtain in-depth qualitative insights into leadership practices, teacher performance, and student engagement. The guide consisted of open-ended questions aligned with the research objectives, allowing participants to elaborate on their experiences and perspectives. Although reliability coefficients are not typically computed for qualitative tools, the interview guide was reviewed by experts for face validity, ensuring that questions were clear, relevant, and capable of eliciting rich data.

Data analysis was conducted at both descriptive and inferential levels to address the research objectives. Quantitative data from the Principal Leadership Questionnaire (PLQ), Teacher Performance Evaluation Scale (TPES), and Student Academic Engagement and Achievement Survey (SAEAS) were first analysed using descriptive statistics. Measures such as frequencies, means, and standard deviations were computed to summarise respondents' demographic characteristics and to describe the central tendencies and variability of responses to each scale item.

To test the study's hypotheses and examine relationships among variables, the following inferential statistical techniques were employed Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) are Used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between transformational leadership practices and both teacher performance and student engagement/achievement.

Multiple Regression Analysis are Applied to assess the predictive power of leadership practices on teacher and student outcomes, while controlling for other variables. Conducted to identify significant differences in leadership effectiveness, teacher performance, and student engagement based on school type, location, or demographic categories. Responses from semi-structured interviews with principals and teachers were analyzed using thematic analysis. This involved transcribing the interviews verbatim, coding the data, identifying recurring themes, and interpreting the findings in relation to the study objectives. The qualitative analysis complemented the quantitative findings, providing deeper insights into leadership practices and their perceived effects on school outcomes. All statistical analyses for the quantitative data were performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27, while qualitative data

coding and thematic development were carried out manually to ensure close engagement with the data.

Results

Research Question 1 What is the relationship between transformational leadership practices of school administrators and teacher performance in Nigerian secondary schools?

Table 4.8: Correlation between Transformational Leadership Practices and Teacher Performance in Nigerian Secondary Schools

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	N	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value	Interpretation
Transformational Leadership	4.15	0.62	200	0.72	< 0.01	Strong positive correlation
Teacher Performance	4.03	0.57				

The Pearson correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant and strong positive relationship between transformational leadership practices and teacher performance, $r(198) = 0.72$, $p < 0.01$. This indicates that approximately 51.84% of the variance in teacher performance can be explained by principals' transformational leadership behaviors (since $r^2 = 0.5184$). In practical terms, as school principals increase their application of transformational behaviors such as inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation, teacher effectiveness, commitment, and motivation improve substantially.

Research Question 2 How do transformational leadership practices impact student academic outcomes in these schools?

Table 2: Correlation between Transformational Leadership Practices and Student Academic Outcomes in Nigerian Secondary Schools

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	N	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value	Interpretation
Transformational Leadership	4.22	0.59	300	0.68	< 0.01	Strong positive correlation
Student Academic Outcomes	3.97	0.64				

The results show a statistically significant and strong positive correlation between transformational leadership practices and student academic outcomes, $r(298) = 0.68$, $p < 0.01$. This means that 46.24% of the variance in student academic performance is attributable to principals' transformational leadership practices ($r^2 = 0.4624$). The findings suggest that principals who adopt motivating, supportive, and intellectually engaging strategies foster improved learning environments, which, in turn, lead to higher student achievement levels in Nigerian secondary schools.

Research Question 3 Which specific transformational leadership behaviors are most effective in enhancing teacher performance and student achievement?

Table 3: Regression Analysis of Transformational Leadership Behaviors on Teacher Performance and Student Achievement in Nigerian Secondary Schools

Leadership Behaviour	Beta (β)	Coefficient t-value	p-value	Significance Level
Idealized Influence	0.24	3.10	< 0.01	Significant
Inspirational Motivation	0.31	4.05	< 0.01	Most effective
Intellectual Stimulation	0.28	3.76	< 0.01	Significant
Individualized Consideration	0.19	2.60	< 0.05	Significant

The regression analysis indicates that Inspirational Motivation is the strongest predictor of both teacher performance and student achievement, with a beta coefficient of $\beta = 0.31$, $t(196) = 4.05$, $p < 0.01$. This suggests that principals who articulate a clear vision, inspire enthusiasm, and build a sense of purpose have the greatest positive impact on educational outcomes. Intellectual Stimulation follows closely ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.01$), showing that encouraging creativity and critical thinking also significantly boosts performance. Idealized Influence ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < 0.01$) and Individualized Consideration ($\beta = 0.19$, $p < 0.05$) are also important, indicating that role-modeling ethical behavior and attending to individual needs are valuable, though slightly less impactful, in the Nigerian secondary school context. The model's overall explanatory power was $R^2 = 0.54$, meaning that 54% of the variance in outcomes is explained by these four leadership dimensions.

Research Question 4 What are the perceptions of teachers and students regarding the influence of transformational leadership on their performance and academic success?

Table 4: Perceptions of Teachers and Students on the Influence of Transformational Leadership on Performance and Academic Success

Group	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	N
Teachers	82%	10%	8%	200
Students	75%	15%	10%	300

Perception analysis shows that a substantial majority of teachers (82%) and students (75%) agree that transformational leadership positively influences their professional performance and academic success. Only a small proportion expressed disagreement (8% of teachers, 10% of students), with the rest remaining neutral. This strong positive perception aligns with the statistical findings from Research Questions 1–3, reinforcing that principals' adoption of transformational leadership strategies fosters a motivating, inclusive, and performance-enhancing school environment in Nigerian secondary schools.

Discussion of Findings

Based on the perspectives of teachers, students, and school administrators, this study found that transformational leadership practices by principals have a notable positive impact on both teacher performance and student academic achievement in Nigerian secondary schools. The findings indicate that when principals adopt leadership behaviors such as mentoring, motivating staff, and involving teachers in decision-making, teachers tend to become more productive, committed, and satisfied with their roles. This is consistent with the view of Akinola and Okeke (2022), who observed that teacher motivation and commitment increase when school leaders adopt inclusive and supportive leadership styles.

The results also suggest that transformational leadership positively influences student academic outcomes. Schools led by principals who inspire, support, and intellectually engage both staff and learners tend to achieve better academic results. This aligns with the work of Musa and Ibrahim (2023), who found that leadership practices that foster a collaborative school climate indirectly improve student performance by strengthening teacher engagement, enhancing student–teacher relationships, and creating a supportive learning environment.

The study revealed that among the components of transformational leadership, inspirational motivation emerged as the most influential in improving school outcomes, followed closely by intellectual stimulation. Principals who articulate a clear and compelling vision, encourage innovative teaching methods, and recognize the unique contributions of teachers appear to drive the most substantial improvements in both staff and student performance. These findings corroborate the assertions of Eze and Chukwu (2024), who reported that clear goal-setting and cognitive engagement are essential elements for fostering excellence in education.

The perceptions of both teachers and students in this study further strengthen the empirical evidence. A large majority of respondents expressed that transformational leadership had a positive influence on their professional performance and academic success. Teachers reported feeling more empowered, supported, and valued in their work, while students described a more engaging, motivating, and stable learning environment. This supports the conclusion of Adewale

and Sunday (2021) that transformational leadership fosters not only professional growth among educators but also holistic development among learners.

The findings of this study align with a growing body of literature that emphasizes the role of transformational leadership in improving educational quality in Nigeria. By prioritizing vision-driven leadership, intellectual engagement, and individualized support, school administrators can create conditions that promote both teacher effectiveness and student academic success.

Conclusion

The study concluded that transformational leadership is a critical factor in enhancing the performance of teachers and improving student academic outcomes in secondary schools.

The data revealed that principals who practice transformational leadership characterized by idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration significantly improve teacher effectiveness, motivation, and job satisfaction. Students in schools led by transformational leaders demonstrated improved academic achievement due to enhanced teaching quality, a more supportive school environment, and better student-teacher relationships.

Among the components of transformational leadership, inspirational motivation (e.g., clear vision, encouragement) and intellectual stimulation (e.g., fostering creativity and innovation) had the most impact on both teacher performance and student outcomes. A large percentage of teachers and students acknowledged that transformational leadership contributed positively to their academic and professional success, indicating a strong approval and recognition of its effectiveness in the school environment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made for stakeholders in education:

1. Ministries of Education and Teacher Service Commissions should organize regular workshops, leadership training, and certification programs to develop transformational leadership competencies among school principals.

2. Educational policies should include leadership development as a central strategy for enhancing teacher performance and student achievement, making it a criterion for principal recruitment and promotion.
3. School heads should actively involve teachers in decision-making, recognize their contributions, and mentor junior staff to build professional confidence and competence.
4. Government and school boards should provide the necessary infrastructure, digital tools, and funding that enable transformational leadership practices such as innovation, staff development, and data-driven decision-making.

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