

# **The Process of Transformational Leadership in Achieving High Performance Workforce that Exceeds Organisational Expectations: A Phenomenological Case Study**

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## **Abstract**

Transformational leadership theory has acquired the interest of many researchers in the discipline of organisational leadership since the last three decades. The main foundation of the transformational leadership theory is the leader's aptitude to stimulate the follower to accomplish more than what the follower planned to accomplish. This study will focus on the main components of transformational leadership namely, idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration. However, for this study, Islamic perspective was added to this research. This addition is mainly because in light of new literature on leadership in Islam, it was found that most of the teachings of Islam embodies many of the concepts of modern leadership theories which are transformational in nature. A number of studies have investigated the effect of transformational leadership on the performance of organisation. However, there is an extensive gap in the research literature regarding the processes through which a transformational leader applies this impact to change his followers to be the best performer that are extremely dedicated to the organisation hence this study will be based on the issue stated above. The qualitative phenomenological case study methodology was chosen based on the objective of conducting this particular research study. The purpose of this study was to explore the process actualised by transformational leaders which will eventually lead to the effectiveness of transformational leadership in accomplishing to support a high-performance workforce that will exceeds the organisational expectations. The

data collection was obtained from ENI Gas Company in Libya. The target audience for this study was nine (9) respondents. The findings showed different practices of transformational leadership by the leader of ENI Gas Company in the usage of the four I's and Islamic perspective. In this regard, from the respondents feedback, it was discovered that the leader practiced the characteristics and behaviour, moral standard and leadership style in idealised influence; demonstrating commitment, future envisioning and risk management for inspirational motivation; innovative and creative and motivation for intellectual stimulation; coach and mentor and communication for individualised consideration; good example of Muslim leader, Islamic tools and ethics life principles for the Islamic perspectives.

**Key Words:** Transformational Leadership, The Process Of Transformational Leadership, Organisational Performance, Performance Beyond Expectations, Libya.

## 1.0 Introduction

Business leaders need to stay consistent and be responsible in motivating their subordinates' and need one of a kind style of ingenuity that takes care of all these needs (Raja, 2012). Organisations must be propelled by leaders that have the aptitude to rouse and transform the workforce to perform beyond organisational goals, and at the same time gratify their commitments by accomplishing their task (Okoro, 2012). Transformational leaders are more committed in achieving the goals of the work team which is under their responsibility instead of their own needs and interests. There is definite verification that transformational leaders seem to give a result that benefits organisation's proficiency and the results are financially associated (Neuhauser, 2007).

Fitzgerald and Schutte (2009), indicate that transformational leadership is a motivational leadership approach whereby the leader afforded the followers a clear picture of the organisational vision to induce the followers which will stimulate and inspire them. This endeavour by the leader could be accomplished by generating a closer relationship with the followers, thoughtful to their desires, and supporting them to attain their capacity, provides to good outcomes for the organisation. Hence, transformational leadership is sustaining identified goals, values and beliefs which may assist followers to envisage what they do as of great value organisation. Bass and Riggio (2006) similarly advocated that transformational leaders motivate and inspire followers to achieve astonishing achievements and help them to become leaders.

## 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Avolio et al., (2009) and Walter and Bruch, (2009) expressed that numerous researchers kept appealing for further study of appropriate background of the transformational leadership approaches. A detail knowledge on the subject is critical since performances and attributes of leaders are crucial.

The proper characteristics of the leader as a role model are important in order for transformational leaders to achieve their full potential as leaders. Consequently, obtaining the information and data about what makes a person a transformational leader is not sufficient.

Emery and Barker (2007) stated that even though there is a positive relationship; no study has given clear relationship between the transformational leader and organisational commitment. Yukl (1999) had claimed that the theories are not able to justify the interrelating variables concerning transformational leadership and clear work outcomes. The theory would however be convincing if the crucial influence processes were acknowledged more clearly and applied to detail out how the various behaviour influence each type of mediating variable and the initial outcome.

Many researchers in reviewing transformational leadership styles have focused on characteristics of the leader, such as leaders' personality by Judge and Bono, (2000), a study on emotions/emotional intelligence by Rubin et al., (2005). However, having a complete understanding of the processes through which the transformational leader applies this impact is still limited and uncertain even though some previous study had specified positive indication that leaders who are transformational in nature, practices a significant effect on employees' performance.

Therefore, there is a gap in the research literature regarding the processes through which a transformational leader applies this impact to change her/his followers to be the best performer that are extremely dedicated to the organisation

## **1.2 Literature Review**

### **1.2.1 Transformational Leadership**

Transformational leadership has been defined as leader's behaviour that transform and inspire followers to perform beyond expectations while transcending self-interest for the good of the establishment that they are being employed (Avolio et al., 2009). Transformational leadership is a leadership approach which focuses on helping the followers to advance and fulfil their needs. Consequently, administrators who practice transformational initiative and put great emphasis on the improvement of the followers' development and also their quality framework will stimulate their inspirational level and moralities based on their own capabilities (Ismail, et al., 2009)

According to Bass (1985), followers are motivated to perform more than what is expected, give more importance and value of the tasks, and are stimulated perform surpassing their own interests and focus their commitment to the interests of the work team and the organisation. The world at large, raise the level of change when they are under the charge of a transformational leader who are able to motivate them (Bass, 1985). Similarly, Burns (1978) said that transformation will occur when the leaders and followers are connected with each other and they are able to raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality.

Followers of transformational leaders are able to establish themselves within a common goal, because transformational leaders will ensure the followers will be transformed, given the relevant motivation, and their behaviours and ethical ambitions will be enhanced. Simola et al. (2012) therefore said that transformational leadership is an approach practiced by leaders who wishes to pursue constructive transformations of their followers which gained the anticipated transformation through the organisation's strategy and structure (Peter & James, 2013).

### **1.2.2 Elements of Transformational Leadership**

There are five elements which commonly present in the transformational leaders behaviours: -

**Idealised Influence:** - Transformational leaders extends idealised influence in order to motivate the followers to work beyond their self-interest in order to articulate a shared vision and challenging goals (Dionne et.al, 2004). The followers of these leaders look upon them as role models whom they admire, respect and trusted (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

**Inspirational Motivation:** - Leaders with inspirational motivation will ignite strong team spirit in leading team members to achieve their desired goals (Hargreaves & Harris, 2011; Bass & Riggio, 2006). According to Den Hartog et. al., (1997), a leader can inspire his followers by being the example which followers are excited to emulate. Additionally, Bass and Riggio (2010) further clarified that this element requires an amazing capability to connect, because the leader need to deliver his messages with precision and a feeling of power. The leader must incorporate his sustained energy, thirst and capacity to identify the positive aspect of organisational visions and objectives.

**Intellectual Stimulation:** - Transformational leaders plays an important role in stimulating followers to be innovative and creative by questioning assumptions and approaching past problems by using modern methodology (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Nicholason, 2007). In communicating the element of intellectual stimulation, these leaders encourage their followers to be creative in handling situational problems and also to use the latest methodology to solve the old problems. Dionne et al. (2004) expressed that this element alludes to the exertion of advancing insights, empowering judiciousness and critical thinking by the followers, testing them to think inventively and to discover answers for complicated issues.

**Individualised Consideration:** - Transformational leader practices the element of individualized consideration and acts as a mentor to followers and giving them special attention to the individual follower's need for achievement and growth (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Nicholason, 2007). Avolio and Bass (1995) indicated that a leader is more inclined to show more individualized thought by giving general backing to the endeavours of his followers.

### **1.2.3 Transformational Leadership and Organisational Performance**

Transformational leaders will stimulate followers and direct those to achieve group performance so that followers will become competent to execute task assigned to them. Morrow (1983) propositioned that transformational leader will help to boost employees' work abilities, involvement in organisational activities, be self-determine, learn to delegate, and aspire for self-achievement. If leaders and followers are able to reciprocate, it will foster a higher recognition to the organisational targets and objectives. The followers will interject their best efforts to the organisation and aspire to keep a good relationship with group members. Hence, job satisfaction can be promoted by transformational leadership while followers will perform better than expected and the degree of satisfaction increases. This is supported by Lee (1996). He found that transformational leadership in the government agencies is positively related to the followers' job satisfaction. So, performance and job satisfaction of followers in the work place will be elevated.

Hu (2001) found that organisational culture and types of leadership will influence job satisfaction of employees, and job satisfaction acts as a mediator of leadership and organisational culture to influence organisational performance.

### **1.2.4 Leadership from Islamic Perspective**

From an Islamic perspective, leadership is deemed a responsibility and trust, and cannot be gotten, advocates of this viewpoints are often referred to the Al Hadith cited in Sahih Muslim (Vol.3 No 1013 Islam does not sanction to any Muslim living without a leader in any situation. The primary duties of a leader are to steer the people in offering prayers, to look after their interests with justice and run their activities in a disciplined and systematic way according to the shari'a (Ahmad, 2006). However, an Islamic organisational leader will assist his faction or subordinates under some distinctive principles.

The principles of leadership in Islam are garnered from the Quran the words of the Mighty Wise, the habit and sayings of Prophet Muhammad, the personality and conducts of the Caliphs and other great Muslim leaders who with paltry means and massive obstacles are able to stretched the pinnacle of distinction. The principles and application of such principles are equally useful for every leader be they Muslim or non-Muslim as they surpass racial, religious, and other time based limitations. By understanding, attaining, and the usage of these enormous principles can open up the doors to success and progress in every human effort in a similar way the Prophet Muhammad and the four Caliph namely Abu Bakar, Umar, Othman, and Ali and their successors practiced their leadership style and achieved highest places in the chronicles of human history.

### **1.3 Research Methodology**

The researcher had chosen to use a qualitative method with a phenomenological case study research design to deal with these research questions. Qualitative research strives to understand the social world from the participants' perspectives and the detailed descriptions of their experiences. This methodology justify for a more practical research that will focus on detailing the process and explorative understanding from an actual leader in action. The depth and richness of descriptions and explorations represent one of the strengths of the qualitative research approach (Myers, 2000). In theory, it would justify if the crucial processes were identified more clearly and applied to detail out how the various behaviour of leadership influence each type of mediating variables and outcomes. Creswell and Maietta (2002) had described a qualitative research methodology as a procedure that will investigate, analyses, and interpret a society that shares similar culture imparting a shared behavior pattern, conduct, convictions, and dialect that are fostered during a certain time frame.

Furthermore, from the contextual justification, prior studies failed to take into account the current political climate in Libya which may have different phenomenal impact and uncertainties although previous study had specified positive indication and significant effect on employees' performance. According to Creswell (2013), phenomenology is the best method when trying to understand several individuals' common experiences. The aims of phenomenological research are is to illuminate the essence of the individuals' lived experience

of the phenomenon while defining and ascertaining the phenomenon (Cilesiz, 2011). In the human sphere, the phenomenological research seeks to answer research questions in a descriptive way through observation or interviews of those closest to the phenomenon (Davison, 2014). Shepherd and Sutcliffe (2011) notes that a theorist must start close to the phenomenon to determine the appropriate construct.

### **1.3.1 Sample**

The participants of this study were 9. The target audience was Chief Executive Officer and eight (8) respondents from ENI Gas Company, with different work experience, and backgrounds were interviewed. This ensures maximum variations, where all the essential common patterns were identified (Creswell, 2007). The researcher had chosen this company because it is one of the top ranking oil and Gas Company in Tripoli, Libya. It is the most appropriate for the study since had succeeded to continue to keep on existing notwithstanding amid the political turmoil in Libya and was able to sustain its competitive advantage all throughout the hard time during the Libyan revolution.

### **1.3.2 Data Collection and Analysis**

This section supports the approach of the study in which the data analysis is the process of making sense out of the raw data collected (Merriam, 2009). It requires the researcher to transcribe data recorded in words, categories, phrases, and meaningful patterns. An inductive analysis is the process of analysing a qualitative inquiry where Rubin and Rubin, (2005) showed that from the interview transcriptions, a researcher would recognize essential ideas, identifies themes and concepts to determine and examine main themes. Creswell's (2009) six steps data analysis were used where data from interviews were analysed to get a holistic view of the depth and width of raw data at an aggregate and individual level. For the transcript of each interview, the same procedure was completed.

Step one: Data organisation and preparation for analysis. Step two: Reading the data to gain a general sense of the information and the overall meaning. Step Three: Begin detail analysis with coding process. Step Four: Using coding process to generate descriptive settings and categories of themes. Step Five: Advancing description and themes in qualitative narrative. Step six: Interpretation or meaning of the data, Creswell's (2009).

The respondents of ENI Gas Company have been given abbreviated codes as Res1, Res2, Res3, Res4, Res5, Res6, Res7, Res8, And Chief Executive Officer has also been given a code as E1.



## **1.4 Findings**

The findings obtained from ENI Gas Company (EGC) Libya are presented describing the meaning and themes discovered in the phenomenological case study examination. Respondents' interview data and their experiences serve as significant findings to transformational leadership practices.

### **1.4.1 Respondent's idealized influence practices**

The process of idealized influence by transformational leader is the results of followers' acceptance of a leader displaying attributes and behavior which can be regarded as overcoming obstacles and emphasizes the importance of having a collective sense of mission. According to many of the ENI staffs, the attributes exercised by their leader had inspired and motivate them to achieve high performance. Respondents remarks point to how their leader demonstrate idealized influence behaviors highly by being considerate to deal with their followers and their professional needs. They said that he displays charismatic personality and that others wish to become like him. They also mentioned of his sincerity, unpretentious nature and how they are proud to have a leader like him as a role model. It can therefore be understood that the workers in ENI trust their leader and they have belief in his strong leadership skill, energetic personality and supervision to move the company forward.

### **1.4.2 Respondent's Inspirational Motivation practices**

A leader practices in exercising inspirational motivation to his followers can be defined as to how the leader demonstrates his commitments, future envisioning and unifying people and management that appeals and inspires his followers. This statement is supported by respondent who mentioned that ENI leadership behavior is directed towards the team in unifying the interest of the employees without prejudice to the interest of the organisation. As such he was able to achieve so much by his honesty in words and action. Further remarks mentioned of his supportive attitude for teamwork and working under high risk even when he is usually busy but always spent time attending with the staff's problems.

### **1.4.3 Respondent's Intellectual Stimulation practices**

Intellectual inspiration can be defined how leaders challenge old ways and assumptions to accomplished task by viewing at problems from many different angles and which the leader encourages creativity in the followers. Respondents mentioned of encouragement on creative thinking and challenges concerning task in the company. The leader of ENI motivates the staffs to become more involved in their tasks which results in an increase in the degree of satisfaction with their work and commitment to the organisation. They praised him for his contribution to creativity and reward them when they performed beyond expectation. They will receive a thank you message and publish the person's name on the screen.

#### **1.4.4 Respondent's Individualised Consideration practices**

The positive link of the sub-themes, coach and mentor and communication can be expected from a leader practicing individualized consideration, since both represent active and constructive forms of practices in leadership by paying attention to followers' need to develop. Respondent's perceptions on ENI leadership behaviors were evaluated and presented in this study suggest that he provides training and guidance for each employee, and appoint supervisor to find out what type of training suitable to their work. Respondents also mentioned about E1 support in new approaches in developing innovative ways of dealing with organisational issues. They also remarked about E1 being very close contact, thus he recognise the nature and intentions of the staff. He communicates on a daily basis with all the departments to ensure their needs are fulfilled. Because of this, he gives them the autonomy in decision making and problem solving thus promotes responsibility.

#### **1.4.5 Respondent's Islamic Perspectives practices**

Transformational leadership from Islamic perspective is rooted on moral values and ethical values related to the practices and characteristics of Prophet Muhammad. Findings revealed that all respondents agree that Prophet Muhammad is a role model leader with values of high moral and ethical character that attracts followers irrespective if they are Muslim or not. Others claimed he is a great leader in administration dealing with people and army and also the best example of honesty, dedication to work and Justice. On this note, respondent mentioned about E1 who is not a Muslim but portrays most of the characteristics of an Islamic leader. They spoke of his sincerity in his promise, and apply the principle of Shura and allow them the freedom to talk and think.

### **1.5 Discussions**

Respondents' perception has provided valuable insight into leaders' practices and results were obtained. Transformational leadership is a leadership style that has significant effect which explains the four elements namely idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration and Islamic perspectives. Respondents' perceptions of their leaders' practices are discussed as follows.

The process of instilling idealized influence indicates that E1 was a good role model as measured from his behavior under the three sub-themes namely characteristics and behavior, moral standards and leadership style. He is a leader that his followers admired, respected and trusted. This suggests that E1 attributes were significantly favorable with Bass & Riggio (2006) who said that idealized influence encompasses the conduct of the leader that serves as a role model that the followers admire, respect and trust. The process of instilling the process of inspirational motivation will appeal to the emotion of followers to create awareness resulting in organisational performance beyond expectation. It can be understood from Peter Senge (1990) that inspiration is the premise of motivation. As such, E1 unselfish support and commitments were inspirational to his followers and an indication that E1 is effective in inspiring and demonstrating an effective style of leadership.



The process of intellectual inspiration pointed to two important sub-themes, namely innovative and creative and motivation because the relationship is reasonably stable in connection to problem solving, patent rights, moral stimulus and rewards. E1 practices stresses incentives for what one can expect to receive when performance goals are achieved while patent rights was given to the rightful person.

The discussion about individualised consideration of the sub-themes, coach and mentor and communication represent active and constructive forms of practices in paying attention to followers' need to develop. The findings in this study supported E1 method who afford his followers opportunities to act and become part of the solution as a coach and mentor. The study had also shown that the practice of individualized consideration in all probability, form the foundation for leadership measurement and together with its sub-themes, it can be used to determine the possible effect of leadership on followers performance.

Transformational leadership from Islamic perspective can be discussed in as the result of a leader practicing similar character and behavior of justice and Shura, sincere, freedom of thought and defending rights. Many was found to be centered more on leader moral and ethical values which are very much related to the practices of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). These suggest that a leader with values of high moral and ethical attracts followers and create undivided loyalty to perform beyond expectation. This study conclude that E1 is a leader who have shown the practices and the process of the four I's and Islamic perspective to achieve performance beyond expectation.

## **1.6 Conclusion**

Transformational leadership is an ongoing topic of discussion but it is very much an important subject for researchers to explicitly discover for Organisation to move forward. In conclusion, the study conclude that true transformational leader like E1 have shown the practices and the process of the four I's and Islamic perspective to achieve performance beyond expectation in EGC. We therefore can imply that transformational leadership behaviors are positively related to greater follower acceptance, better work performance, and increased trust within Organisation's employee and the leader. It can be concluded from this study that respondents' testimony concerning their leaders' transformational leadership behaviors are accepted as having positive values in general while transformational leadership from Islamic perspective was found to be centred more on leader moral and ethical values which are very much related to the practices of Prophet Muhammad. Whether a leader demonstrates the characteristics properly, the main concern of this study has presented the effect it has on followers and organisational performance and also its implication.

The implications reached through the results obtained in this study will contribute to the new knowledge in the field of human resource development, giving opportunity for management to decide on how best to formulate human resource policies to train transformational leaders. Similarly from the policy implications, the findings of this study could provide insight into leadership behaviour and help policy makers to make research-based decisions on how to incorporate the right and necessary process in training future leaders for their organisation's succession plan. Importantly, this study will contribute to the improvement of practices in

which the findings could be used as future guidelines to enhance the characteristics of future leaders. This would serve as motivation for employees who wish to scale greater heights in leadership and follow the necessary guides to improve themselves.

### **1.7 Implications or Research**

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