

Case study

The Influence of Intellectual Stimulation as an aspect of Transformational Leadership in Enhancing Employee's Performance towards Successful Management of Water Supply Services at Iringa Urban Water Supply and Sanitation Authority

ABSTRACT

This research aimed to examine the impact of transformational leadership on the successful management of water supply services at IRUWASA. The study applied the transformational leadership theory developed by Bass in 1985. The specific objective of the research was to assess how intellectual stimulation influence employee performance in enhancing the successful management of water supply services at IRUWASA. The study adopted a quantitative research approach where data were collected through structured questionnaires. The study involved 109 IRUWASA employees selected using a proportionate simple random sampling method. Multivariate Correlation analysis was employed to analyze the quantitative data. The research findings demonstrated that there were significant positive correlations between intellectual stimulation and employee performance in the context of successfully managing water supply services at IRUWASA. Furthermore, the study revealed a positive relationship between employee performance and the successful management of water supply services. Consequently, it can be concluded that fostering qualities of intellectual stimulation should be prioritized and actively encouraged. By doing so, employee performance can be enhanced, ultimately leading to the successful management of water supply services at IRUWASA. This underscores the importance of implementing transformational leadership practices to achieve desired outcomes of management of water supply services at IRUWASA.

Key Term: Transformational Leadership, Intellectual Stimulation, Employees' Performance

1. INTRODUCTION

The understanding and definition of leadership style differ from person to person. For instance, individuals engaged in various fields like politics, social work, academics, and business interpret the term in diverse ways, leading to distinct meanings and expectations based on the individual or situation (Yusuf *et al*, 2014). The expression of leadership qualities is influenced not only by personal attributes but also by the circumstances and environment in which individuals operate (Northouse, 2022). It has been established that the type of leadership style within an organization significantly impacts its success or failure. Organizations today recognize the crucial role of leadership style in achieving short- and long-term business objectives, as well as in optimizing employee performance and efficiency (Edoka, 2012). Various alternative approaches to conceptualizing and practicing leadership have profoundly influenced how managers and Chief Executive Officers operate organizations and subsequently impact performance outcomes. Consequently, leadership has been a subject of extensive scrutiny by scholars over time, aiming to identify and develop the most effective leadership types and styles for exemplary employee performance (Mutahari *et al*, 2015).

According to Yusuf *et al*. (2014), leadership style in an organization is a pivotal factor influencing employee engagement and commitment. Thus, the significance of leadership style cannot be overlooked in any establishment. In the period preceding the 1980s, the primary paradigms of leadership were the trait approach and contingency approaches. The trait approach focused on leaders' personal traits, positing that leaders possess inherent traits rather than acquiring them. People perceived leaders as having specific personality attributes, physical traits, and personal skills that differentiate them from non-leaders or ineffective leaders. However, research into this trait approach until around 1950 failed to establish a consistent set of leader traits, which hindered the development of this leadership perspective (Colbert *et al*, 2012).

A newer leadership approach, referred to as transformational leadership, gained substantial attention from the 1980s onward. Terms like transformational, charismatic, visionary, and

value-based are commonly used to describe this style. Transformational and charismatic are the prevalent terms (Ndisya, 2016). Theories associated with this style of leadership aim to elucidate how specific leaders attain high levels of admiration, loyalty, trust, dedication, motivation, and performance from their followers. They also explore how these leaders succeed in guiding their organizations or achieving exceptional performance. A comparison between House's path-goal theory and his 1976 charismatic theory reveals that the path-goal theory emphasizes how follower needs and circumstances shape leader behavior, whereas the charismatic theory focuses on how leaders effect changes in individuals rather than merely responding to them. Another distinction lies in the fact that while the path-goal theory emphasizes effective leadership by aligning with the environment, the new leadership approach centers on altering and creating the environment (Famakin and Abisuga, 2016).

Extensive global research has been carried out on the impact of transformational leadership on the performance of organizations. Ndisya (2016) conducted a study to evaluate how the transformational leadership style affects employee performance, using Safaricom Limited as a case study. The results showed that the application of transformational leadership had the most positive influence on performance. However, Muchran *et al*, (2017) studied the effects of transformational leadership on the performance of an Islamic Bank and found contradictory results, indicating no significant impact on performance. Similar studies were conducted in both Malaysia and Kenya, yielding consistent results. For example, Argia and Ismail (2013) explored the connection between transformational leadership and performance in Malaysian higher education institutions, discovering a significant positive effect. In contrast, Ngaithe (2015) focused on the impact of transformational leadership within state-owned enterprises in Kenya and found a negative influence on staff and organizational performance. Given these conflicting findings from empirical research, the challenge of generalizing conclusions on the influence of transformational leadership in enhancing performance emerged, thus emphasizing the need for further investigation. While existing studies shed light on the influence of transformational leadership on employee performance towards successful services provision, there remained a gap in understanding how specific components of transformational leadership, such as intellectual stimulation impact service provision through employee performance. This research has explored the effects of intellectual stimulation on employee's performance in enhancing the successful management of water supply services at IRUWASA.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretical Literature Review

This study is governed by the transformational leadership theory as developed by Bass in 1985. In discussions concerning the concept of transformational leadership, Bass (1985) presented a definition that revolves around how a leader influences their followers. These followers are intended to cultivate feelings of trust, admiration, and respect for the leader. Bass identified three distinct routes through which leaders bring about this transformation among their followers: raising awareness about the significance and value of tasks, redirecting focus towards team or organizational goals over personal interests, and triggering higher-order needs as a result there occur organizational performance. Bass's proposition acknowledges that charisma is an essential yet insufficient trait for a transformational leader. However, transformational leaders achieve two crucial charismatic outcomes: evoking strong emotions and instilling a sense of connection between followers and the leader. This can be accomplished through passionate appeals or indirect methods like coaching and mentoring (Anjali and Anand, 2015). In more recent times, Bass emphasized that authentic transformational leadership is grounded in moral foundations, encompassing four vital components: Idealized influence, Inspirational motivation, Intellectual stimulation, and Individualized consideration (Nawaz and Khan, 2016). Mutahar *et al*, (2015) regarded transformational leadership as a bridge connecting employees and leaders to enhance performance within the organization. Similarly, Datche (2015) provided evidence that transformational leadership proved notably more influential in shaping organizational performance compared to other leadership styles. This effectiveness stems from its potential in addressing issues relevant to improving both employee and organizational

performance. Conversely, Mpango (2012) proposed that transformational leaders must boldly tackle and conquer seemingly impossible challenges. This involves basing all endeavors on key performance indicators for each program and project to ensure desired outcomes. Additionally, leaders must uphold disciplined action, refraining from compromising on program implementation schedules. Within the realm of transformational leadership, leaders often need to provide clear directives, particularly during initial transition stages. Lastly, leaders must establish a winning coalition, highlighting the importance of collaborating with a successful team to enhance organizational performance. Despite the acknowledged importance of the transformational leadership theory in influencing employees towards organizational performance, there exists a lack of research specifically focused intellectual stimulation on the successful management of water supply services at IRUWASA. To address this research gap, this study examined the influence of transformational leadership's under intellectual stimulation on enhancing employee performance for the successful management of water supply services at IRUWASA. By scrutinizing these specific aspects of transformational leadership, the study has contributed to an understanding of their relevance in the context of management of water supply service at IRUWASA.

2.2. Empirical Literature Review: Influence of Intellectual Stimulation on Performance

Intellectual Stimulation involves engaging followers in devising novel and varied solutions to common challenges and approaching tasks in innovative manners. Leaders actively challenge established practices, confront antiquated assumptions, traditions, and processes, and encourage others to partake in discussions that stimulate fresh perspectives. As per Neupane (2015), this form of leadership spurs followers to exhibit creativity and innovation, urging them to question their own convictions and principles, as well as those held by the leader and the organization. Such leadership fosters a supportive environment for followers as they experiment with novel approaches and pioneer inventive strategies to tackle organizational issues. It encourages independent problem-solving and empowers followers to deliberate on their own. According to Udchachone and Zumitzavan (2014), intellectual stimulation involves prompting followers to challenge conventional problem-solving methods and encouraging them to enhance and refine these methods. Intellectual stimulation revolves around stimulating an individual's cognitive capacity, enabling them to engage in autonomous thinking while fulfilling their job responsibilities (Chebon *et al.*, 2019). Andrean and Petrik (2016) argue that this approach encourages followers to scrutinize leader decisions and group processes, thereby fostering innovative thinking. Anjali and Anand (2015) propose that by fostering intellectual stimuli, managers can ignite employees' inclination to experiment with fresh practices and generate impactful ideas. The intellectual stimulation component of transformational leadership plays a vital role in promoting organizational learning (Yasin *et al.*, 2014). It addresses followers' desires for growth and achievement in a manner that resonates with them. Elgelal and Noermijati (2014) suggest that leaders, especially transformational ones, wield considerable influence over the presence or absence of organizational innovativeness. Due to their orientation towards innovation, transformational leaders' ability to motivate and intellectually stimulate their followers nurtures a parallel innovative inclination in those followers (Mokhber *et al.*, 2015). The ultimate outcome is exceptional performance both for the employees and the organization as a whole. Mutahar *et al.* (2015) conducted a quantitative research study in Saudi Arabia to investigate the correlation between transformational leadership and performance. The survey involved participants from the Saudi Arabian context. The results revealed that intellectual stimulation had a positive impact on improving performance. This was achieved by leaders creating a supportive environment where employees felt comfortable, their ideas were recognized and acknowledged, and they received regular feedback, leading to the delivery of high-quality services. Similarly, Tahsildari *et al.*, (2015) examined the relationship between TL and organizational performance in Malaysia. Their findings supported the idea that intellectual stimulation, demonstrated through fostering innovation, encouraging knowledge sharing, and providing opportunities for staff professional development, contributed to improved employee performance. Moreover, Udchachone and Zumitzavan (2014) analyzed the connection between leadership style, mediated by innovation, and performance in the hospitality industry in Thailand. The study involved 419 managers, and regression analysis was used. The findings indicated a significant relationship between the variables. Despite the significant role of intellectual stimulation in enhancing performance,

there is limited research available specifically focusing on the context of successful management of water supply services at IRUWASA. Therefore, this study aims to assess the relationship between intellectual stimulation and the enhancement of successful management of water supply services.

3. Research Methodology

The study conducted at IRUWASA. The organization provides water supply and sanitation services to more than 202,490 people as according to 2022 census of Iringa Municipality, Kilolo Urban centers and Ilula Township through production, distribution and delivery of potable water including collection, treatment and disposal of the waste water emanating from the urban areas of the Iringa Municipality. According to EWURA, (2022) Three years Performance Report (2018/2019 to 2020/2021, the IRUWASA ranks one of the successful Water Supply and Sanitation Authority due to efficiency in water supply services provision and operation and maintenance of the infrastructures. The study involves getting insights from 152 employees of IRUWASA from different cadre who ensure provision of water supply services in respective areas of Iringa Municipality, Kilolo Urban centers and Ilula Township. From this population, the sample size was 109 employees. Deductive research approach was utilized. This approach involved applying the Transformational Leadership theory to investigate the causal relationships between variables. Both descriptive and explanatory research designs employed to fulfill its research objectives. Kothari and Garg (2014) emphasized that explanatory research designs are particularly useful for testing developed hypotheses. This study used two types of data which are primary data and secondary data. Primary data collected directly from respondents meanwhile secondary data collected from literature review such as research work from other professionals and report from relevance authorities such as the Ministry of Water, EWURA and IRUWASA. Data analysis in this study was conducted in three phases. The initial phase focused on testing the validity and reliability of the collected data. Yong and Pearce (2013), noted that factorial analysis serves as a valuable tool for testing the validity of the data gathered. To assess validity, factorial analysis was employed, while Cronbach's alpha (α) analysis was used to evaluate reliability. The second phase of data analysis involved descriptive statistical analysis. This phase aimed to profile the characteristics of the respondents by representing their frequencies and percentages. As suggested by Rowley (2014), the use of frequency and percentage is considered highly useful for profiling respondent characteristics. The final part of the data analysis encompassed multivariate correlation analysis. Yeater *et al.*, (2015) expressed multivariate correlation as the statistical analysis that extends the analysis to multiple variables simultaneously, allowing researchers to understand more complex patterns of relationships.

Ethical considerations in research refer to the principles and guidelines that ensure the well-being, rights, and dignity of research participants, as well as the integrity of the research process. Adhering to ethical standards is essential for maintaining the trustworthiness and credibility of research findings (Wiles *et al.*, 2012). In line with these ethical principles, the researcher adhered to research protocols by obtaining clearance permits from the University of Iringa (UoI), the Regional Administrative Secretary (RAS), and the Managing Director of IRUWASA to facilitate smooth data collection. Moreover, the researcher prioritized confidentiality throughout the entire research process and demonstrated respect for all the respondents' rights and privacy. These ethical considerations were carefully upheld to ensure the integrity and ethical conduct of the study.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Descriptive Statistical Analysis

In this section, the descriptive results of the independent, intermediate and dependent variables are presented. The study employed a structured questionnaire with closed ended questions with a total of 109 observations ($n = 109$), data were coded using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 23), the standard deviation, mean and medians for multiple variables were analyzed in SPSS using descriptive procedure. These mean scores for

each attribute indicate that higher means correspond to a greater influence on employees' performance, ultimately contributing to the successful management of water supply services at IRUWASA, as demonstrated in Table 1 below: -

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics Independent Variables

Items under Study	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Intellectual Stimulation					
Creativity (IS1)	109	1.00	5.00	3.3853	.82673
Knowledge sharing (IS2)	109	1.00	5.00	3.4862	.87786
Best practices: (IS3)	109	1.00	5.00	3.7890	.83968
Provision of resources (IS4)	109	1.00	5.00	3.8257	.85898
Professional development (IS5)	109	1.00	5.00	3.8991	.86007
Digital solutions (IS6)	109	1.00	5.00	3.5688	1.07468
Constructive critique (IS7)	109	1.00	5.00	3.8807	.77847

Source:Field data (2023).

Moreover, a descriptive analysis was performed on two variables: the intermediate variable, employees' performance, and the dependent variable, successful management of water supply services at IRUWASA. Examining the results reveals that the mean values of attributes related to employee performance and successful management of water supply services were above the scale's center point (3 = moderate), with a standard deviation below one, indicating a high level of agreement among the respondents. Regarding employee performance, the attribute with the highest mean value was "competence," scoring 3.8807, while the attribute with the lowest mean value was "performance evaluation," scoring 3.5321. Similarly, in terms of the attributes of successful management of water supply services, "compliance with water quality" obtained the highest mean score of 4.3303, while "environmental sustainability" scored the lowest with a mean value of 3.2294, as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Dependent Variable

Items under Study	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Employees Performance					
Performance evaluation (EP1)	109	1.00	5.00	3.5321	.84513
Problem-solving (EP2)	109	1.00	5.00	3.5780	.74899
Effective coordination (EP3)	109	1.00	5.00	3.7798	.91649
Accomplishing duties (EP4)	109	1.00	5.00	3.8073	.87641
Accountability (EP5)	109	1.00	5.00	3.7798	.80918
Technical competence (EP6)	109	1.00	5.00	3.8807	.81337
Resource utilization (EP7)	109	1.00	5.00	3.7982	.80254

Source: Researcher, (2023)

4.2 Relationship of Variable

A partial correlation was employed to analyze the connection between the independent variable. In order to derive conclusions, the study utilized seven measurement variables under the category of intellectual stimulation: creativity (IS1), knowledge sharing (IS2), best practices (IS3), provision of resources (IS4), professional development (IS5), digital solutions (IS6), and constructive critique (IS7). The aim was to analyze how each independent variable influence employee performance, contributing to the effective management of water supply services at IRUWASA. The findings indicated a strong association between all dimensions of intellectual stimulation and employee performance. Notably, the professional development the strongest correlation with employees' performance ($r = .731^{**}$, $p < 0.05$), while creativity and innovation exhibited the least association ($r = .408^{**}$, $p < 0.05$). These results suggest that providing necessary resources to employees positively influenced their efforts, while a need for improvement in fostering creativity and innovation was observed, as it impacted performance. Overall, all aspects of intellectual stimulation were positively associated with employee performance ($r = .801^{**}$, $p < 0.05$), as shown in Table 3. This signifies a significant and positive relationship, as highlighted in Table 3, between intellectual stimulation and employee performance, thereby contributing to the successful management of water supply services at IRUWASA. The implications of these findings suggest that the implementation of intellectual stimulation greatly influences employee performance at IRUWASA, consequently contributing to the successful management of water supply services. To foster such positive outcomes, leaders at IRUWASA should encourage creativity, knowledge sharing, adopting best practices from successful departments within or outside the organization, providing necessary resources, embracing digital solutions, and offering constructive critiques. By exhibiting intellectual stimulation leadership behavior, the organization can achieve reliable water supply, efficient operation, financial sustainability, staff training, and infrastructure expansion. Moreover, it ensures environmental sustainability and compliance with water quality standards.

Table 3: Influence Intellectual Stimulation on Employee's Performance

Var	IS1	IS2	IS3	IS4	IS5	IS6	IS7	IS	EP1	EP2	EP3	EP4	EP5	EP6	EP7	EP
IS1	1															
IS2	.645**	1														
IS3	.354**	.398**	1													
IS4	.299**	.316**	.701**	1												
IS5	.187	.304**	.629**	.590**	1											
IS6	.332**	.501**	.565**	.544**	.530**	1										
IS7	.302**	.273**	.669**	.618**	.606**	.536**	1									
IS	.600**	.665**	.828**	.783**	.740**	.794**	.764**	1								
EP1	.169	.150	.577**	.629**	.692**	.542**	.638**	.656**	1							
EP2	.243*	.218*	.649**	.600**	.681**	.520**	.617**	.680**	.684**	1						
EP3	.459**	.446**	.577**	.469**	.486**	.693**	.463**	.703**	.475**	.552**	1					
EP4	.341**	.399**	.464**	.380**	.513**	.417**	.299**	.545**	.362**	.448**	.403**	1				
EP5	.322**	.432**	.394**	.287**	.530**	.475**	.355**	.543**	.346**	.462**	.362**	.649**	1			

EP6	.371**	.474**	.402**	.336**	.331**	.428**	.246**	.503**	.214*	.326**	.343**	.661**	.594**	1		
EP7	.154	.160	.335**	.292**	.378**	.220*	.272**	.347**	.292**	.326**	.228*	.346**	.516**	.458**	1	
EP	.408**	.448**	.686**	.608**	.731**	.664**	.589**	.801**	.694**	.773**	.679**	.764**	.775**	.699**	.623**	1

Source: Field data (2023)

These findings align with Anjali and Anand's (2015) declaring that intellectual stimulation fosters employee commitment to the organization by enhancing the organization's ability to achieve its goals through the dedication and hard work of employees. As a result, the application of intellectual stimulation leadership prompts a change in the way problems are approached and solved. Moreover, these results are consistent with the study conducted by Yasin *et al.*, (2014) on the relationship between intellectual stimulation and SMEs (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) performance in Pakistan. Their research revealed that intellectual stimulation can serve as a catalyst for innovation and improved SMEs performance, showing a strong positive connection between innovations and SMEs performance. Similarly, Elgelal and Noermijati (2015) conducted a study focusing on the effect of direct transformational leadership on employee motivation, job satisfaction, and employee performance among all employees at FEB UMM. They found that Intellectual Stimulation played a key role in determining transformational leadership. Managers who encourage employees to carefully solve problems and foster creativity can positively influence employee behavior. Moreover, the results draw a parallel with Orabi's (2016) investigation into the influence of transformational leadership on organizational performance in Jordan. This research, focusing on the banking sector in Pakistan, highlights the substantial role of intellectual stimulation in shaping employees' performance and, consequently, its impact on the overall performance of the organization. Transformational leaders, by fostering intellectual stimulation, actively encourage creativity and innovation among employees, thereby empowering the organization to effectively adapt to external changes and gain a competitive advantage.

Conclusion: the high performance of employees at IRUWASA is achieved when leaders encourage and embrace attributes such as creativity, knowledge sharing, goal orientation, provision of resources, digital solutions, and constructive critiques, all of which fall under intellectual stimulation. This implies that when leaders at IRUWASA adopt an intellectual stimulation approach, employees respond with increased creativity and innovation, ultimately contributing to the successful management of water services at IRUWASA.

Based on the earlier discussion, it is evident that intellectual stimulation positively impacts employees' performance.

4.3 Recommendation

- i. The results of this investigation indicate that the application of intellectual stimulation has a positive effect on employees' performance, contributing to the successful administration of water supply services at IRUWASA. Consequently, it is advisable for the management to incorporate intellectual stimulation to enhance the overall success of sustainable water supply services at IRUWASA.
- ii. This research specifically delved into evaluating the impact of intellectual stimulation on employee performance in the proficient administration of water supply services in the Iringa region at IRUWASA. Nevertheless, prospective studies could broaden their focus by encompassing regions beyond Iringa.
- iii. Moreover, while this study primarily centred on the efficient administration of water supply services at IRUWASA, other researchers may investigate diverse services or projects within our communities that extend beyond water supply. This broader approach would augment the relevance and applicability of the findings related to transformational leadership theory.

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