

Innovations

The Impact of Perceived Transformational Leadership on Organizational Commitment and Employees' Work Role Performance: A Study on Selected Ethiopian Public Universities Found in Amhara Regional State

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Abstract

This research paper was aimed at examining the effect of transformational leadership style on the employees work role performance and organizational commitment. It also examines the mediating effect of organizational commitment in the relationships between transformational leadership style and employees' work role performance. A quantitative explanatory research approach was followed whereby 386 survey questions were distributed to a randomly selected academic staff members in seven selected Ethiopian public universities found in Amhara Regional State. The required data were collected by use of multi-factor leadership questionnaire (MLQ), organizational commitment questionnaire (OCQ) and work role performance questionnaire (WRPQ) which are standardized questionnaires adopted from respective literatures. Analysis was made by using partial least square structural modelling (PLS-SEM) with the help of SMARTPLS4. The results revealed that transformational leadership style has statistically significant positive impact on the academic staffs' work role performance in the selected public universities. Transformational leadership style was also found having statistically significant effect on the academic staffs' organizational commitment. Finally, the mediation analysis indicated that organizational commitment plays a partial mediation role in the relationships between transformational leadership style and academic staffs' work role performance.

Key Words: 1. Transformational leadership, 2. Organizational commitment, 3. Work role performance, 4. Public Universities.

Introduction

Literature on organizational behavior and performance indicated the importance of building employee commitment towards organization and its goals and purposes have significant impact on increasing productivity and performance of employees at individual, group and organizational level (Saleh et al., 2018). Organizational commitment was described as "the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization" (Mowday et al., 1979:226). Another prominent definition given by Meyer & Allen (1991: 67) is that "[commitment] is a psychological state that characterizes the employee's relationship with the organization, and has implications for the decision to continue or discontinue membership in the organization". Committed workforces are found willing to work hard to achieve organizational goals that increases its productivity & performance. Hence, organizations need leadership that induce commitment in its employees (Yeh & Hong, 2012). This implies, leadership plays a crucial role towards the effective and efficient use of this

vital resource. In today's complex and dynamic work environment a competent and dynamic leader is a base for success of any organization (Williams et al., 1998). Organizations must undertake continuous and systematic capability development of their leaders and assist them to instil the best suited leadership styles. Among the various leadership styles available, transformational leadership style is asserted to have meaningful impact on employees' performance and commitment (Bass & Avolio, 1997). Transformational leadership happens when the leader and the followers lift up one another to a higher level of morality and motivation. A transformational leader gives his followers intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration, help them to be more productive than expectations and challenge traditional ways of doing their day to day routines (Yeh & Hong, 2012). Empirical research done on the relationships between transformational leadership, organizational commitment and employee performance reported that there exist meaningful positive relationships between the variables (Bass, 1985; Dadi & Subbaraydu, 2015; Kesto & Aregawi, 2021; Lyndon & Rawat, 2015; Saleh et al., 2018; Tsigu & Rao, 2012).

This paper was done to examine the effects of transformational leadership style on employees work role performance and organizational commitment. Furthermore, the mediating role of organizational commitment in the relationship between transformational leadership and work role performance of employees at Ethiopian public universities found in Amhara regional state was examined.

Rational for Undertaking this Research

Case studies conducted at Madda Walabu and Ambo universities, Ethiopia revealed that there exist high employee turnover rate and turnover intention (Minda, 2016; Yimer et al., 2017). Among different antecedents assessed in these studies, leadership was found as the main contributor for the high rate of actual turnover and turnover intention. Even though these studies indicate management and leadership as one of the leading factors for employees' actual turnover and turnover intention, they did not indicate which leadership style/s are in use under each of the universities and their impact on performance.

According to MoE (2018) Ethiopian education development road map summary document, contrary to the achievements made on expansion and access to higher education in Ethiopia, quality of education is deteriorating for more than a decade. Even though, efforts such as harmonization of curriculum, continuous assessment and peer learning were made to enhance and assure quality of education, the problem of quality of education is still apparent across Ethiopian higher education institutions. There exists widespread cheating among students and lenient evaluations of students' performance among instructors resulting in inflated grades irrespective of students' true academic achievements. The Ethiopian education development road map summary document further revealed that the higher education leadership and management system is not well organized and the leaders of the educational institutions lack strategic outlook and overwhelmed by routine tasks. Leader recruitment and appointment is not also merit based and lacks transparency which erodes professionalism and democratization.

Generally, education quality in Ethiopian higher education institutions is deteriorating for different reasons; massification tension (Areaya, 2010), lack of proper leadership & staff professional ethics (MoE, 2018) and low organizational commitment (Minda, 2016; Yimer et al., 2017) are the main reasons among others. Due to the aforementioned reasons, the Ethiopian higher education institutions are producing incompetent graduates who lack the knowledge, skills & attitudes of their respective field of study (MoE, 2018). To reverse this challenge and improve educational efficiency and effectiveness, there must be continuous leadership and management training and development program.

According to Lok and Crawford (2004) leadership can better predict the success or failure of an organization because strong leadership can help an organization to visualize institutional goal, direct and coordinate efforts, motivate staffs and evaluate progress thereby improve performance at individual, group & organizational level. This implies that universities in order to achieve their mission, there need to be a change in their leadership approach because leaders can inspire, motivate and recognize their employees to get work done and to achieve expected results. However, which leadership styles best suit Ethiopian universities? Which of the leadership qualities are lacked by Ethiopian university leaders? What will be the effects of the proposed leadership style on employee commitment and work role performance? These are questions which need answer through scientific inquiry. Therefore, this paper was intended to examine the effect of transformational leadership style on employees' work role performance and organizational commitment. The mediated relationship between

transformational styles and employees' work role performance through organizational commitment was also examined. Consequently, the results of this scientific inquiry might be used to assist policy makers as well as university management to identify bottle necks in university leadership and organizational commitment thereby enable them designing proper training and policy packages as a solution.

The Research Conceptual frame work

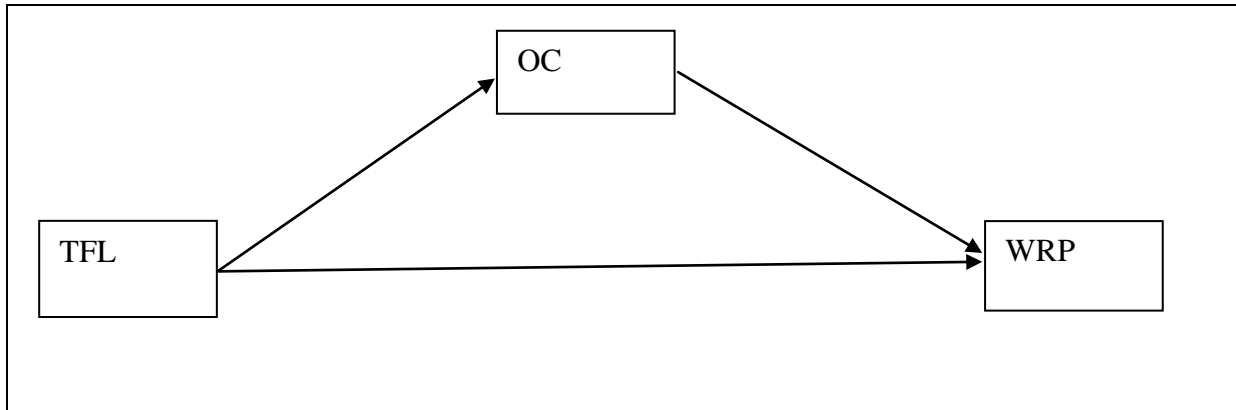


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the research

TFL (transformational Leadership), OC (organizational Commitment), WRP (work role performance)

Literature Review

Transformational leadership

According to McGregor Burns 1978 in (Bass & Ruth, 2008) a transformational leader is one who raise the followers level of awareness regarding the relevance and value of expected outcomes and ways of achieving them, convincing the followers to leave aside their own self-interest for the best interest of the team, organization or the larger population and boost followers need to higher level in Maslow's hierarchy of needs model specifically to achievement and self-actualization. A transformational leader addresses the needs and feelings of subordinates through which they let employees feel self-worthy for their organization (Bass & Avolio, 1997). Transformational leaders motivate their followers to do more than the originally intended and thought possible achievements by transforming their level of maturity, idea and concern for the benefit of group, organization and the society and installing sense of common purpose and family feeling (Bass & Ruth, 2008; Yeh & Hong, 2012). Transformational leaders advise, coach and direct individual subordinates to develop and reach their full potential thereby escalate the employee's self-confidence and self-worth to the organization and obtain the acceptance and support of followers (Bass & Avolio, 1997).

According to Bass & Avolio (1997) transformational leadership was conceptualized as a five-factor leader style: (1) Idealized influence attribute indicates whether the leader is perceived as powerful, confident, trustworthy, visionary, ethical, talented, risk taker and enthusiastic by his followers; (2) Idealized influence behavior refers to the consistent set of actions taken by a transformational leader targeted on achieving goals. These are the behaviors that the leader exhibit and made him a role model on the eyes of the followers (KAS et al., 2014); (3) Inspirational motivation indicates the leader's means of energizing followers by casting optimistic future, setting ambitious goals, designing appealing vision and convincing the followers that the vision is attainable (KAS et al., 2014); (4) Intellectual motivation implies the way the leader encourages employees to solve problems in ways other than the old methods and procedures and challenges their sense of logic, thinking and rethinking ability (Antonakis et al., 2003; Bass, 1985) and (5) Individualized consideration implies the leaders dedication on identifying the needs and potentials of followers, providing coaching, advice and feedback to promote personal development of subordinates, initiating followers to do more than their routine job requirements and encourage them to take extra responsibilities that are relevant for their personal development (KAS et al., 2014). Transformational leaders through these special qualities are able to build organizational commitment (Walumbwa & Lawler, 2003) and generate extra efforts from their follower which are necessary for achievement of organizational goals (Bass, 1985; KAS et al., 2014).

Employees' Work Role Performance

Organizational performance indicates how well an organization achieved its goals or progressing towards the attainment of those goals (Hamon, 2003 in Siyamak, 2022). Work proficiency was the traditional method of performance measurement in which an individual is evaluated in terms of how well the person completes the tasks specified in his or her job description (Murphy & Jackson, 1999). In this perspective, the person's job is well specified, standardized and consistent over time (Griffin et al., 2007) for which the person is required to comply. However, the changing nature of business and the general environment in which organizations operate desperately challenged the traditional performance evaluation view of "work proficiency" (Griffin et al., 2007; Murphy & Jackson, 1999). In response to this, the "Work Role Performance Model" developed by Griffin and his associates in 2007 is the most comprehensive of all other measurement constructs (Neal et al., 2012). Employees Work Role Performance refers to "the total set of performance responsibilities associated with one's employment" (Murphy and Jackson, 1999: 335) where the authors considered work roles as corner stones of social organization.

According to Griffin et al. (2007), employee work role performance is the function of uncertainty and interdependence of organizational and work contexts. Interdependence determines whether a task requires only an individual employee's effort or a team effort and collective efforts at organizational level. Griffin and his associates identified three valued levels of employee behaviors when contexts are highly interdependent: individual level, team level and organizational level behaviors. On the other hand, uncertainty implies lack of predictability of output, input and processes due to environmental volatility. In this respect, valued employee behaviors when there is high uncertainty context includes proficiency, adaptivity and proactivity (Neal et al., 2012). Task proficiency is the degree to which job requirements are satisfied as per the standard; adaptivity indicates the extent to which the employee is open and able to adapt changes and proactivity refers the extent that an employee takes initiative to introduce change. According to Griffin et al. (2007), the cross classification of these valued behaviors under uncertain and interdependent work contexts produces nine sub dimensions of work role performance labelled as (1) Individual task proficiency refers to employee's behaviors manifested to comply to formalized and known tasks that do not require group or collective efforts where an employee is expected to perform as per his or her job description (Pradhan & Jena, 2017), (2) Individual task adaptivity implies the level that an individual is able to adapt to changes, copes with changes or supports changes introduced by his or her organization or the general environment (Neal et al., 2012), (3) Individual task proactivity implies to the level to that a person engages in upcoming self-reliant behaviors to initiate changes and adjust the person's work situation, work role or the person him/her self (Griffin et al., 2007), (4) Team member proficiency describes employee behaviors required for work contexts that can be formalized and are highly interdependent and the person is evaluated based on how he meets his job requirements as a member of a team (Neal et al., 2012), (5) Team member adaptivity is an employee behavior required when work contexts are both uncertain and highly interdependent where the person is required to deals with, reacts to and backs changes that influence his/her roles on the job as part of a team, (6) Team member proactivity is a behavior required for work contexts that are both uncertain and highly interdependent in which a person is supposed to involves in self-directed & forthcoming behaviors to initiate changes and adjust a team's work system or way of operating as a member of a team (7) Organization member proficiency describes employee behaviors required for work contexts that can be formalized and are highly interdependent where the person is evaluated on the extent that he or she meets his or her job requirements as a member of the organization (Neal et al., 2012), (8) Organization member adaptivity this is an employee behavior required when work contexts are both uncertain and highly interdependent in which the person is supposed to deals with, reacts to and backs changes that influence his/her roles on the job as part of an organization and finally (9) Organization member proactivity behavior is required for work contexts that are both uncertain and highly interdependent in which a person is expected to take in self-reliant & upcoming behaviors to change the organization or the way the organization operates.

Previous research studies revealed strong and positive relationship between transformational leadership and employees' task performance (Bass, 1985; Saleh et al., 2018). Transformational leaders influence the adaptive and proactive behaviors of employees (Neal et al., 2012) to be productive and effective under dynamic and competitive environments (Bass et al., 2003). Similarly, studies done in Ethiopia asserted that transformational leadership style has significantly and positively correlated with employee performance (Kesto & Aregawi, 2021; Tsigu & Rao, 2012). Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed

H₁: Transformational leadership styles significantly and positively affect employees' work role performance.

Organizational Commitment

Organizational Commitment is defined as “the relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization” (Mowday et al. 1979: 226). According to Meyer & Allen (1991: 67) commitment is defined as “a psychological state that characterizes the employee’s relationship with the organization, and has implications for the decision to continue or discontinue membership in the organization”.

According to Meyer & Allen (1991) model, organizational commitment is described as composite of three emotional condition expressed as: desire (affective commitment), costs (continuance commitment) and obligation (normative commitment). Affectively committed employees are those with strong psychological attachment to, association with, and participation in an organization. Employees develop affective commitment through positive work experiences in that organization (Allen & Meyer, 1997). Continuance committed employees are those individuals who are aware of the losses that result from quitting to work for that organization whereas normative commitment is the feeling of obligation to once organization (Jaros, 2007; Meyer & Allen, 1991). Employees with affective and normative commitment prefers to remain loyal and exert extra efforts (Allen & Meyer, 1997) and mostly register high degree of performance, positive work attitudes, and a desire to stay (Starnes & Truhon, 2006).

According to Jackson et al. (2013), transformational leaders increase affective and normative commitment of employees by creating desired work environment and entertaining the various needs of employees. Lyndon & Rawat (2015) identified positive relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment. Researches undertaken in Ethiopia in different sectors reported positive and significant relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment (Dadi & Subbarayduu, 2015; Rao & Gorfie, 2017). Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed

H₂: Transformational leadership styles significantly and positively affect employees' organizational commitment.

Transformational leadership, commitment and work role performance

Transformational leadership behaviors such as personalized attention, intellectual stimulation, idealized influence and intellectual stimulation increased their employees’ commitment to organizations (Walumbwa & Lawler, 2003). According to Bass (1985:33) “total commitment to and belief in organization emerged as a consequence of belief in the leader and heightened self-confidence”. Transformational leaders can boost employees’ commitment by creating appealing work environment and aligning the various needs of the employees with the values and needs of the organization (Jackson et al., 2013) which in return yields improved performance. Employees with strong organizational commitment are opt to exert extra efforts towards organizational goals (Meyer & Allen, 1991). This clearly indicates transformational leaders can increase employees’ commitment to their organization which in return improve employees’ performance. Hussain and his associates (2019) study on Logistic Sector of Pakistan asserted that organizational commitment partially mediates the relationship between transformational leadership style and job performance. Similar research on Saudi Arabia female nurses by Almutairi (2016) indicated affective component of organizational commitment has a partial mediation effect in the relationships between transformational leadership and performance. Donkor et al. (2021)’s study on state owned enterprises in Ghana revealed that organizational commitment has significant mediating effect on the relationships between transformational styles and employees’ job performance. Hence, the proposed hypothesis is

H₃: Organizational commitment significantly mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and employees' work role performance.

Research Methods

This paper is an explanatory study designed to evaluate the effects of transformational leadership style on employees’ work role performance with a mediating effect of organizational commitment to describe the relationship between these variables at Ethiopian public universities found in Amhara Regional State.

Sampling and Data Collection Instruments

Stratified simple random sampling technique was used to obtain proportionate data from each of the seven public universities. The universities included in this research were Bahir Dar University, University of Gondar, Debre Markos University, Debre Birhan University, Debre Tabor University, Mekdela Amba University, and Injibara University. Self-administered questionnaires were distributed to 386 academic staffs and 318 valid responses were obtained which accounts about 82% response rate. Data collection instruments for transformational leadership, organizational commitment and work role performance were adopted from respective literatures. A 5-point Likert scales were used as 1=strongly-disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree and 5=strongly-agree. Transformational leadership style data were collected by using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-Form 5-x) developed by Bass and Avolio (1997). Out of the 36 items related with leadership 20 of the items related with transformational leadership style were adopted. Organizational commitment related data were collected using the self-scoring 18 item Organizational Commitment questionnaire (OCQ) developed by Meyer and Allen (1997). The employees' work role performance was measured using 27 self-scoring work role performance measurement questionnaires developed by Griffin et al. (2007).

Analysis Conclusions and Recommendations

Test of the hypotheses and proposed model were made based on partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS4 software. The analysis was carried out in two parts: the first part concentrates on measurement model assessment and the second part focuses on the structural model assessment or hypotheses testing determined at 95% confidence interval (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2002).

Measurement Model

Quality of the constructs in the study was assessed based on the evaluation of the measurement model. This research used a higher order (second order) PLS-SEM because the measurement involves two layers of latent constructs as the independent variable transformational leadership (TFL) has five dimensions and each were measured by four items. The dependent variable work role performance (WRP) involves nine constructs each were measured by three items. The mediating variable organizational commitment (OC) is measured by three dimensions where each were measured by six items. These two layers: from items to dimension and from dimensions to each respective variable forms a second order reflective-reflective measurement model (Hair et al., 2019). Hence, the measurement model assessment was done both at first and second order levels. For the sake of simplicity only the second order construct assessment results are presented.

Table 1: Factor loading, Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR) & AVE for TFL, OC & WRP

Constructs & their Dimensions	Reliability & Validity Measures			
	Loading	Alpha	CR	AVE
Transformational Leadership (TFL)		0.913	0.935	0.742
TFIC	0.831			
TFIIA	0.873			
TFIIB	0.824			
TFIM	0.892			
TFIS	0.884			
Organizational Commitment (OC)		0.705	0.835	0.628
AC	0.809			
CC	0.745			
NC	0.823			
Work Role Performance (WRP)		0.902	0.919	0.557
ITA	0.724			
ITE	0.737			
ITP	0.731			
OMA	0.779			

OMP	0.752
OMTE	0.758
TMA	0.757
TMP	0.750
TMTE	0.727

Note:TFIC (transformational individualized consideration), TFIIA (transformational idealized influence attribute), TFIIIB (transformational idealized influence behavior), TFIM (transformational inspirational motivation), TFIS (transformational intellectual stimulation), AC (affective commitment), CC (continuance commitment), NC (normative commitment), ITE (individual task efficiency), ITA (individual task adaptivity), ITP (individual task proactivity), TMTE (team member task efficiency), TMA (team member adaptivity), TMP (team member proactivity), OME (organization member efficiency), OMA (organization member adaptivity and OMP (organization member proactivity)

As indicated in table 1, the factor loadings of all the indicators of higher order constructs (TFL, OC and WRP) have factor loading values greater than the lower limit of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2019). Hence, indicators are proved that they load well on their constructs. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability measure wherein both results meet the minimum required value of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2017) hence, sufficient reliability fit was maintained. Convergent validity measure of average variance extracted (AVE) values for each variable are also found well above the minimum threshold value of 0.50. Hence, convergent validity is also maintained. Discriminant validity assessment was made based on Fornell and Larker criterion, HTMT and multicollinearity (VIF). Using the Fornell and Larker criterion the square root of AVE (diagonal highlighted values in table 2) for all constructs is higher than their correlation values with all other constructs showing no discriminant validity problem.

Table2: Discriminant Validity Measures for TRL, OC & WRP

	TFL	OC	WRP
Fornell-Larker Criteria			
TFL	0.861		
OC	0.518	0.793	
WRP	0.428	0.479	0.746
Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)			
TFL			
OC	0.64		
WRP	0.46	0.56	

In addition to the Fornell and Larker criterion, the HTMT values shown in Table 2 also indicates that HTMT values are less than the required threshold of 0.90 indicating no discriminant validity issue among the constructs.

Table3: Construct Multicollinearity (VIF) & Cross Loadings for TFL, OC & WRP

Constructs	VIF	Cross Loading		
		TFL	OC	WRP
TFIC	2.271	0.831	0.454	0.373
TFIIA	2.808	0.873	0.400	0.384
TFIIIB	2.302	0.824	0.395	0.361
TFIM	3.134	0.892	0.478	0.387
TFIS	3.033	0.884	0.497	0.338
AC	1.354	0.425	0.809	0.479
CC	1.337	0.447	0.745	0.288
NC	1.558	0.400	0.823	0.352

ITA	2.026	0.378	0.257	0.724
ITE	2.224	0.319	0.283	0.737
ITP	2.094	0.385	0.306	0.731
OMA	2.367	0.378	0.437	0.779
OMP	2.333	0.349	0.500	0.752
OMTE	2.036	0.424	0.511	0.758
TMA	2.145	0.324	0.222	0.757
TMP	1.900	0.429	0.332	0.750
TMTE	2.167	0.312	0.217	0.727

As can be observed in table 3 each construct loads high on its own parent construct than other constructs in the model. Similarly, VIF values are less than maximum threshold of 5, hence, no multicollinearity problems were manifested among the constructs.

Structural Model (Hypotheses Testing)

Once the measurement model was validated, the next task was testing the proposed hypotheses. The result of the path analysis showed that (table 4) transformational leadership significantly and positively affect employees' work role performance (B=0.129, t=2.036, P=0.042<0.05). Hence, H₁ was supported. Similarly, transformational leadership was found having significant positive impact on employees' organizational commitment (B=0.294, t=5.009, P <0.001). Hence, H₂ was supported.

Table 4: Test of Direct Relationships of the Variables

Hypotheses	Path	Beta-coefficient	STDV.	T-statistics	P-values	Outcome
H ₁	TFL->WRP	0.129	0.063	2.036	0.042*	Supported
H ₂	TFL->OC	0.294	0.059	5.009	0.000**	Supported

Note: **significant @P<0.01, *Significant @P<0.05 Two-tailed

In addition to the direct relationships, the mediating effect of organizational commitment in the relationships between transformational leadership and work role performance was examined.

Table 5: Mediated Relationships of the Variables (TFL->OC->WRP)

Hypothesis	Indirect-Effect			Direct-Effect			Total-Effect			Outcome
	Beta	T-value	P-values	Beta	T-value	P-values	Beta	T-value	P-values	Outcome
H ₃	0.077	3.235	0.001**	0.129	2.036	0.042*	0.206	3.334	0.001**	Supported

The results on Table 5 revealed that transformational leadership has significant positive indirect effect (β=0.077, t=3.235, p<.001), direct effect (β=0.129, t=2.036, p<.05) and total effect (β=0.206, t=3.334, p<.001) on work role performance that indicates commitment plays partial mediation role in the relationship between transformational leadership and work role performance. Hence, H₃ was supported.

Discussion

The result indicated that transformational leadership has statistically meaningful positive impact on selected universities' academic staff work role performance where a one-unit improvement on transformational leadership leads to a 0.129 unit of improvement on the employees' work role performance. The result is consistent with previous research results where transformational leaders are deemed to affect individual and

team performances by motivating and combining efforts around shared goals (Kahai et al., 2003), addressing the needs and feelings of subordinates, improving the feeling of self-worth for their organization and raising followers' level of awareness and expectation to a higher level of morality (Bass & Ruth, 2008; Yeh & Hong, 2012). Furthermore, empirical research done in Ethiopia, Pakistan, Malaysia and Taiwan revealed that transformational leadership has statistically significant impact on employees' performance (Tsigu and Rao, 2012; Choudhary et al., 2013; Dastane, 2020; Lai et al., 2020). Similarly, transformational leadership has significant impact on academic staffs' organizational commitment where a one-unit improvement on the transformational leadership brings a 0.294 unit of improvement on the academic staff overall organizational commitment. Transformational leadership behaviors such as presenting appealing vision, encouraging creative ways of doing things, personalized attention and development and attracting others to follow their footsteps of extraordinary achievements increases subordinates' commitment to their organization (Bass & Ruth, 2008; Walumbwa & Lawler, 2003) especially affective and normative commitments (Jackson et al., 2013). Transformational leaders are those leaders who serve as role models and earned their followers' admiration, interest to associate with them and extra efforts to show their worthiness which all improve organizational commitment. Empirical investigation in different sectors: banking (Dadi & Subbaraydu, 2015; Lyndon & Rawat, 2015), higher education (Rao & Gorfie, 2017), fire-fighting (Shine, 2013) asserted that transformational leadership has meaningful positive impact on employees' performance. Finally, the result revealed that transformational leadership has indirect impact on staffs' work role performance through the mediator organizational commitment where on each unit of improvement on organizational commitment, a 0.077 unit of indirect contribution can be made on staff's performance when a transformational leader works towards increasing staff's commitment. This result is consistent with the theoretical assumptions that transformational leadership positively affects employees' organizational commitment which in turn positively affects employees' performance (Jackson et al., 2013; Meyer & Allen, 1991). Empirical research results in different countries: Pakistan (Hussain et al., 2019), Saudi Arabia (Almutairi, 2016) and Ghana (Donkor et al., 2021) reported that organizational commitment has significant mediating effect on the relationships between transformational leadership and employees' performance. Based on these results it is mandatory for the universities to develop transformational leadership through continuous training and development which needs the combined effort of the Ministry of education, university board of directors and management. University leaders must also work on improving employees' organizational commitment to escalate extra efforts and performance.

Conclusion

Transformational leadership was found having meaningful positive effect on the selected universities' academic staff organizational commitment. The exceptional qualities of transformational leaders such as vivid vision, helping personality, success story and innovative orientations trigger staff desire for long-term membership and association with their leader and organization. Transformational leadership was found having statistically meaningful direct and indirect effect on staffs' work role performance. It was observed that academic staffs' performance can be further boosted if a transformational leader works on issues that improve the staffs' commitment such as issues that make them feel happy by their job and feel proud about their membership to their institution. The overall impact of university leaders' leadership on their followers' performance can be improved to higher level when the leaders try to address it indirectly by working on issues that affect their followers' organizational commitment than when they simply work to affect the performance of their followers.

Future Research Directions

Ethiopian public university leadership is not solely left to university leaders rather supervised by the ministry and board of directors. Hence, the impact of the ministry and board directions and their leadership can be studied along with the universities' internal leadership styles.

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