



Transformational Leadership Style and Organizational Performance of Five-Star Hotels in Kenya. A Case Study of Fairmont The Norfolk Hotel Nairobi

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ABSTRACT

The hospitality industry in Kenya is currently facing challenges in recovering to its earlier performance levels before the Covid-19 pandemic. Leadership is framed as one of the contributory factors to the effective utilization of organizational resources and capabilities valuable in navigating crisis periods and moving organizations toward fulfilling performance targets. This study aimed to explore transformational leadership style and organizational performance of Five Star Hotels in Kenya. A case of Fairmont The Norfolk Hotel Nairobi. The anchor theory for the study was the Path-Goal theory of effective leadership. The study adopted a Descriptive Research Design. The target population will comprise 177 staff of Fairmont The Norfolk Hotel Nairobi. The study applied the census sampling technique. Primary data was collected using Google Survey Forms. Validity and reliability tests were carried out to ensure that the questionnaire was reliable for data collection. The collected data was retrieved from Google Forms and transferred to Excel spreadsheets where it was cleaned, coded and transferred to version 28 of the Social Package for Social Sciences for analysis. The results were analysed using descriptive and inferential analysis. Multiple linear regression results revealed that transformational leadership style had a positive and significant effect on organizational performance. The study concluded transformational leadership had a positive and significant effect on organizational performance. The study recommended that leaders in five-star hotels adopt transformational leadership style to better manage complexities in the business environment and to make use of employee attributes and qualities more effectively.

Keywords: Transformational leadership, organizational performance, five-star hotels, Kenya

Introduction

The hospitality industry in Kenya is currently facing challenges in recovering to its earlier performance levels before the Covid-19 pandemic (Wachira & Kandie, 2021; Wanjiku & Kungu, 2022). Apart from the unpredictable and unstable operating environment, internal challenges caused by low staff retention rates, low employee motivation and inability to diversify have contributed to the closure of Kenyan hotels (Kahongeh, 2023). Transformational leadership style is framed as one of the contributory factors to the effective utilization of organizational resources and capabilities valuable in navigating crisis periods and moving organizations toward fulfilling performance targets (Elkhwesky, Salem, Ramkissoon & Castaneda-Garcia, 2022). Furthermore, theoretical and empirical studies have shown that transformational leadership leads to exploitation of new innovations and opportunities, optimisation of risks, and creation of a dynamic working environment to organise and motivate employees towards a common goal (Khawaja, Sarfraz, Rashid & Rashid, 2022). This style of leadership has been regarded as an effective development approach to attain higher organisational performance (Al-shami, Refeaa, Al-mamun & Sidek, 2022). Researchers and practitioners have found that transformational leadership has a positive and significant relationship with organizational performance (Escortell, Baquero & Delgado, 2020; El-Deen and Ali, 2021; Jackson, 2020; Vargas-Sevalle, Karami & Spector, 2020; Asbari, Santoso & Prasetya, 2019). Meanwhile, there are few empirical studies on the relationship between transformational leadership style and organisational performance in the hospitality sector in Kenya (Langat, Linge & Sikalich, 2019), and more particularly under post-pandemic circumstances (Wachira & Kandie, 2021; Wanjiku & Kungu, 2022). As a result, there are gaps that justify conducting further research. This study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of transformational leadership style so that managers can apply transformational leadership to improve organizational performance of five-star hotels in Kenya.

Theoretical Literature Review

Path Goal Theory of Leader Effectiveness

The Path-Goal theory was postulated by Robert House (1971). The theory outlines that individual leaders assess situational factors to determine which leadership style is suited to raising followers' motivation, satisfaction or performance levels. Leadership behaviours are linked to followers' satisfaction,

motivation and performance. The theory applies motivational and situational aspects in explaining the effect of leadership as it originated from the path-goal motivation theory and the expectancy model. House (1996) reformulated view argued that leadership behaviour influenced follower empowerment, overall satisfaction and effectiveness and overall performance of work teams.

Effectual leaders exhibit complementary behaviours to subordinate environments, competencies and abilities. Leaders switch their leadership styles to make amends for existing deficiencies so that followers could raise their performances leading to overall team performance (House, 1996). The leadership styles adopted could be directive such as that illustrated by autocratic leadership, participative as seen in democratic leadership, supportive which are applied by transformational leaders or achievement-oriented whereby transactional leaders drive follower effort through use of rewards or punishments. The situational factors commonly assessed by leaders when switching between leadership styles were related to their follower's and environment's attributes.

The path-goal theory assumes the styles used by leaders are chosen based on the environment tasks being done and follower characteristics. Leaders adopt a transactional style when subordinates face complex and uncertain tasks or working environments but have high expectations of their capabilities (Uslu, 2019). On the other hand, autocratic leadership is adopted when followers face uncertainty and complexity and have low competence levels and experience. Democratic leadership is utilized when followers expect to have autonomy in their roles and transformational leadership styles are adopted when followers carry out certain or structured tasks. Therefore, leaders have multiple leadership styles that can be applied when needed, consistent with the integrative leadership model (Appiah, 2020; Lawton-Misra & Pretorius, 2021). The theory assumes leaders are intentional and purpose-driven when switching between leadership styles (Luther, 2020).

The path-goal theory of leadership effectiveness purpose is to introduce and expound on the integrative concept of leadership. The framework views leadership styles as being substitutable. The likelihood of a leadership style's application increases when it is perceived as being influential on subordinates. This is done after leaders assess follower characteristics or the work contexts. Leaders exhibit behaviors that lend support to followers, allow increased participation, direct follower activities and inspire achievements. The study views the styles of leadership in the path-goal explanation namely, the directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-based styles, as relating to autocratic, transformational, democratic and transactional leadership styles respectively.

Transformational Leadership Style

Transformational leadership is the processes in which the leaders and the subjects help each other advance to a higher level of morale and motivation (Burns, 1978). According to Bass (1985), transformational leaders facilitate their follower's confidence that results to performance beyond expectations. Transformational leadership has four characteristics; idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Burns (1978) viewed idealized influence as a leader's ability to be charismatic which draws followers to the leader and they view the leader as a role model due to the leader's high moral and ethical standards. Bass (2008) extends this view and described idealized influence as a leader's ability to exude confidence and communicates the organizations values and mission to the followers. This characteristic also instils trust in the followers, because they are reassured that they are all working towards common values and ethics as well as the ability to overcome any obstacle (Widodo, Silitonga, & Ali, 2020). Idealized influence is a component of transformational leadership that is concerned about the leader being a strong role model for followers (Lai, Tang, Lu, Lee, & Lin, 2020). The followers admire their leader and have trust in his or her decision making and vision (Langat, Linge & Sikalieh, 2019). The leaders are respected, trusted, have ethical standards and they provide direction, vision and clearly articulate the mission of the organization (Northhouse, 2013).

According to Northhouse (2015) inspirational motivation is about raising the consciousness of the employees by motivating and inspiring them to demonstrate commitment to the vision and mission of the group in the organization. The inspirational motivational leaders engage in clearly communicating high expectations to followers and increase team spirit and enthusiasm (Nugroho, Asbari, Purwanto, Basuki, Sudiyono, & Fikri, 2020). Inspirational motivational leaders enhance subordinate task and job autonomy that results to high performance (Buil, Martinez & Matute, 2019). Furthermore, inspirational motivational leaders seek to learn more and encourage subordinates to continue learning and enhancing personal and career development (Smith, 2011).

Intellectual Stimulation entails the leader empowering the followers to critically view their operational processes in order to generate creativity in daily business operations that are more efficient and effective (Hashim, 2019). The leader allows the followers to solve problems on their own and thus develops job autonomy and commitment in the followers (Kirkbride, 2006). The leader supports the follower's ideas and innovations. The leader creates an atmosphere or space for the followers to try new ways of doing things; it enhances critical thinking and solving problems in different ways than they have been in the past. It enhances autonomy and the followers have a sense of job responsibility and their contribution is felt in the organization (Northhouse, 2013).

Individualized consideration is defined as the support, advice and concern that leaders have for their followers to enable them achieve their career and personal goals (Antonakis, Avolio and Sivasubramaniam, 2003). Individualized consideration is shown by the transformational leader by creating a supportive climate, listening to their employees, and acts as a coach and mentor which the leaders show consideration for their employees' needs (Lai, Tang, Lu, Lee and Lin, 2020). Leaders pay close attention to individual differences and treat their employees in the most caring way. Leaders also help

individuals to achieve goals and personal development. This type of leaders also uses delegation to get their employee to grow through personal challenges (Northouse, 2015).

Organizational Performance

Organizational performance has been approached from a variety of dimensions over the years. According to Zhang, Khan, Lee & Salik (2019), growing challenges in business environments have made organizations change the emphasis from quantitative-based growth, found by measuring financial indicators, to multidimensional growth, determined by using financial and non-financial indicators. As a multifaceted creation, the firm is viewed as being influential not only to the shareholders but also to stakeholders sharing contact through offerings or brand contact. Taouab and Issor (2019) assert that due to the multidimensional nature of organizational performance, firms experience difficulties regarding how to capture it effectively, giving rise to tools such as Balanced Score Card (BSC), performance prism and performance pyramid.

According to Abu-Mahfouz (2019), performance originates after evaluating an outcome against an input based upon a set of expectations. Effective measurement of an organization's outcomes ensures that a firm has reliable metrics to indicate whether a firm is positively progressing in meeting its broad stakeholder objectives. Manoharan and Singal (2019) noted that organizational performance in the hospitality sector was considered in terms of outcomes related to finance, guests, employees and society. Finance outcomes would for instance, be indicated by cost efficiency, budget performance, profitability and occupancy rate, while guest outcomes would be viewed from service feedback, service ratings, room ratings and guest satisfaction while employees would be viewed against measures such as employee engagement surveys, employee turnover, staff feedback, employee promotion and staff trainings.

Organizational performance in the hospitality industry is indicated as comprehensive when approached from the guest's perspective, internal to the business and the learning and growth outlook (Baroma, 2021). The guest's perspective ensures that offerings from the hospitality sector meet the guests need and demand and it could be captured through new customer acquisitions, guest retention rates and service quality ratings. Jugovic, Stavljjanin and Stankovic (2022) added factors such as net promoter score, guest lifetime value, and guest profits to show guests satisfaction. The internal business perspective utilized measures such as service error rates, complaints settlements and productivity rates with Jugovic, Stavljjanin and Stankovic (2022) suggesting service measures such as the economic value of service, advertising, public relations and sales promotions as other indicators that could be considered given that hospitality also included guest interaction effectiveness.

The learning and growth perspective ensured that a firm is also increasing in capability to compete in the long term. Baroma (2021) viewed this factor as being influenced by employee-related factors such as turnover rate, working hours and employee complaints resolution. Kaluthanthri and Osmadi (2020) added that this dimension could also be approached strategically by evaluating hotel flexibility, resource utilization and innovations. Flexibility could be measured in percentage responsiveness to guests changing needs and demands. Resource utilization could be in the degree of ICT applications, utilization of information from guest and employee surveys and equipment maintenance frequency. Innovations could be shown through the number of processes or services innovated upon (Kaluthanthri & Osmadi, 2020). The organizational performance dimensions used in this study were increase in revenue, increase in guest satisfaction, increase in attendance/booking and increased employee retention.

Transformational Leadership Style and Organizational Performance

Teoh, Wider, Saad, Sam, Vasuden and Lajuma (2022) examined the effects of transformational leadership dimensions on employee performance in the hospitality industry in Malaysia. Primary data was collected online from 400 employees working in the hospitality industry in Malaysia and analysed using partial least square structure equation modelling (PLS-SEM). The findings showed that only two dimensions of transformational leadership, namely idealised influence and inspirational motivation had a significant positive influence on employee performance.

Escortell, Baquero, Delgado and Wright (2020) investigated the impact of transformational on job satisfaction of internal employees and outsourced workers in the hotel industry. A novel method was adopted using fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA). A questionnaire-based survey was conducted to collect responses from 60 members of staff at four- and five-star hotels in Spain. Across the sample, a high level of leadership in three of the four dimensions of transformational leadership was observed to be sufficient to increase job satisfaction. The three optimal combinations of dimensions are: individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and idealized influence; individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence; and intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence. The findings suggest that there are differences between outsourced workers and internal employees. Outsourced workers need all four dimensions to achieve high job satisfaction, whereas internal employees can achieve high job satisfaction without individualized consideration.

Khan (2019) identified transformational leadership as a cross-cultural leadership style and aimed to determine how it contributed to organizational success in the France hospitality sector. The study also assessed transactional leadership's influence on organization's performances. The theoretical background applied for the study was that of Hofstede cultural dimension theory while a desktop design was applied to complement the qualitative methodology adopted by the research. The research analysed secondary data on leadership styles on the hospitality industry in France where content analysis was used to derive inference and meaning. It was determined that transformational and transactional leadership styles were influential on the hospitality sector in France as work efficiency, increased performance and efficacy from training and development. In concluding, the research asserted that transformational leadership was exceedingly suitable for leading in the French hospitality and tourism industry as it had beneficial influence on employees than seen in transactional leadership.

Milelu (2019) sought to ascertain the role of transformational leadership on organizational performance in an appraisal of Kenyatta University where both the explanatory and descriptive study designs were applied. The study's population was derived from employees in the academic and administration offices of the institution and a purposive sampling was done to determine the participants to be sampled. The study used the regression method to conduct analysis and the questionnaire method to collect information. The study's finding ascertained the influence of transformational leadership as being positive and significantly influential in exhorting organizational performance. It was further illustrated that components; personalised influence, inspired motivation, intellectual stimulation and personalised consideration were all significantly influential on organizational performance.

Langat, Linge and Sikalieh (2019) determined the influence of idealising influence on employee job performance. The study adopted the positivism research philosophy and correlation research design. The target population of the study was 676 lower-level managers from 52 insurance companies operating in Kenya as of 2017. A sample size of 245 was drawn using a stratified random sampling technique and systematic sampling. 245 questionnaires were distributed out of which 211 were completed and returned representing a response rate of 86% which was deemed as adequate for a correlation research design. The analysis of variance was used to test the hypothesis. The study concluded that idealized influence significantly predicted employee job performance.

Conceptual Framework

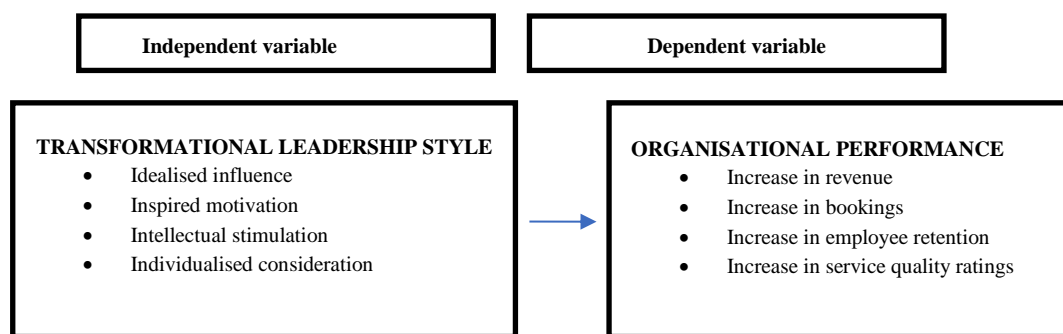


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

The study applied a descriptive research design. The target population comprised of 177 staff from Fairmont The Norfolk hotel, Nairobi. The study utilised a census sampling technique. The research collected primary data using Google Forms questionnaires. The study drew up a structured questionnaire that consists of close-ended statements. The close-ended statements followed a Likert scale. Each score indicated a respondent's level of agreement or disagreement. A rating of 1 will indicated strong disagreement, 2-disagreement, 3-neutral, 4-agreement and 5-strong agreement. The questionnaire consisted of three major sections: The first collected information on demographic data, the second sourced information on integrative leadership styles, and the third collected information on organizational performance. The study conducted a pilot survey as a preparation exercise for the main survey. The pilot study aided in ascertaining the research tool's reliability and validity. The study conducted a pilot survey as a preparation exercise for the main survey. The pilot study aided in ascertaining the research tool's reliability and validity.

Study Findings

Content validity was confirmed by enlisting research specialists, such as the research supervisor, assessed whether the research tool effectively measures its intended constructs. The study findings revealed that transformational leadership style had a Cronbach value of 0.935 while organizational performance had a value of 0.903 which were deemed as reliable which was above the alpha threshold of 0.7(Hitti & Khan, 2022). Convergent validity was tested through Pearson correlation analysis with items with correlation coefficient above 0.5 indicating strong evidence of convergent validity. The item correlations among similar variables were largely found to be above 0.5 confirming convergent validity in the research tool.

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The study found that there were slightly more female (50.8%) than male (49.2%). Majority of the respondent (39.4%) were above 32 years, while 30.2% were between 25 and 31 years old, and 15.2% were below 25 years old. The majority (49.2%) of the respondents had a diploma as the highest level of education, 23.5% of the respondents had a bachelor degree, 23.5% had a Master's degree and only 3.8% had secondary level of education. The study established that the majority of the respondents (63.7%) had worked for the institution for less than ten (10) years old while 27.3% had worked for the organization for more than 10 years.

Descriptive Findings of Transformational Leadership Style

The study sought to ascertain the extent to which transformational leadership style was applied at Fairmont The Norfolk Hotel. The studying findings are presented in Table 2 below. The findings revealed that leaders in the organization aligned their personal ideals with what they required from employees ($M=3.4470$, $SD=1.32685$). The study results also indicated that leaders in their organization motivated employees to provide their best by communicating clear and optimistic futures and visions ($M=4.1515$, $SD=1.12897$). Further, there was evidence that leaders sought to empower employees by encouraging them to be as creative and innovative as possible in finding solutions to problems ($M=4.1288$, $SD=1.13518$). The respondents also agreed that intellectual stimulation was promoted by leaders as they encouraged employees to apply critical thinking when solving arising issues ($M=4.0000$, $SD=1.11204$). It was determined that leaders were attentive to employee concerns about the challenges they faced that could impact their work contribution ($M=4.0000$, $SD=1.30764$). The respondents' overall rating of transformational leadership indicates that transformational leadership style was practiced to a large extent in the organization ($M=3.9455$, $SD=1.2021$).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Transformational Leadership Style

Statements on transformational leadership style	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (S.D)
Top management align their personal ideals with what they require from us employees.	3.4470	1.32685
Top management motivate employees to provide their best by communicating clear and optimistic futures and visions.	4.1515	1.12897
Top management empower employees by encouraging them to be creative and innovative as possible in finding solutions to problems.	4.1288	1.13518
Top management encourage employees to apply critical thinking when solving arising issues.	4.0000	1.11204
Top management are attentive to employees' concerns about the challenges they face that could impact their work contribution.	4.0000	1.30764
Overall Mean and Standard Deviation	3.9455	1.2021

Descriptive Findings of Organisational Performance

The study sought to ascertain the extent by which organizational performance had been influenced by transformational leadership style at the Fairmont The Norfolk Hotel through a series of statements in the last one year. The mean and standard deviation of the responses from the statements was derived and the results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Organizational Performance

Statements on organizational performance	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (S.D)
The hotel's revenues have gradually increased.	3.9394	1.10348
Our hotels guests have shown increased levels of satisfaction	4.1061	1.06476
There has been a notable increase in the number of bookings	3.9545	1.12476
The hotel's employee retention rates have been excellent due to the leadership styles exhibited by our leaders.	3.6970	1.31891
There has been an improvement in the hotel's service quality ratings	4.0303	1.06247
Overall Mean and standard deviation	3.9455	1.1249

Table 2 above revealed that respondents strongly agreed that the hotel revenue had been increasing as a result of the transformational leadership styles adopted by its leaders ($M=3.9394$, $SD=1.10348$). The respondents also strongly concurred that their hotel's guests had been showing increased satisfaction levels due to the application of leadership style ($M=4.1061$, $SD=1.06476$). There was strong agreement that there had been a notable increase in the number of bookings due to their leaders adopting a transformational leadership style ($M=3.9545$, $SD=1.12476$). There was moderate agreement among respondents that their employee retention rates had been excellent due to the leadership style exhibited by the leaders ($M=3.6970$, $SD=1.31891$). It was determined from the strong agreement that there was an improvement in hotel's service quality ratings as a result of the transformational leadership style adopted by the hotel's leaders ($M=4.0303$, $SD=1.06247$). The overall rating of organizational performance was relatively high, indicating that respondents considered the application of transformational leadership style as being influential on organizational performance ($M=3.9455$, $SD=1.1249$).

Transformational Leadership Style and Organizational Performance

The link between transformational leadership and organizational performance was determined using pearson correlation analysis. Using SPSS 24, the mean score for each independent variable was determined, and the Pearson's correlation was calculated. Correlations were performed at the 0.05

significance level with one asterisk (*) or the 0.01 significance level with two asterisks. An alpha of 0.05 means that the chance of assuming that a connection exists when there is none is 5%. The p-value indicates whether or not the correlation coefficient differs substantially from zero. The association is statistically significant when the p-value is less than or equal to 0.05. Correlation is not statistically significant if the p-value is bigger than 0.05 or the significant. The results of the correlation revealed that transformational leadership had a significant effect on organizational performance. The inferential analysis revealed that transformational leadership style predicted organizational performance ($\beta=0.200$, $t = 2.280$, $p < 0.024$).

Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations

The study concluded that transformational leadership had a positive and significant relationship with organisational performance of five-star hotels in Kenya. The study findings were consistent with the study by Khan (2019) which found that transformational leadership contributed to organizational success in the France hospitality sector. Based on the findings, the study recommends that managers of five-star hotels in Kenya should adopt transformational leadership style to better manage complexities in the business environment in post-pandemic circumstances, and to make use of employee attributes and qualities more effectively so as to enhance organizational performance. In addition, the study recommends that further studies should be conducted on the effect of transformational leadership on sustainable performance of five-star hotels in Kenya.

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