

# Transformational Leadership Influence on Employee Performance: A Proposed Study Among Palestinian Central Municipalities Employees

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**Abstract:** *This research investigates the impact of transformational leadership on employee performance within Palestinian municipalities. As a vital cog in the management wheel, transformational leaders inspire and motivate employees, encouraging innovation and promoting excellence. Using a quantitative research approach, this study collected data from administrative staff in ten central Palestinian municipalities, leveraging questionnaires and statistical analysis. Our findings reveal the significant positive impact of transformational leadership behaviours, including inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, idealized influence, and individual consideration, on employee performance. The research also underscores the role of goal setting, as emphasized by Fischer (2016), in driving individual commitment and motivation. Further, this study discusses how transformational leadership contributes to successful teamwork and fosters a culture of creativity and problem-solving. It presents a set of recommendations for implementing transformational leadership in Palestinian municipalities, including leadership training, employee empowerment, communication of a compelling vision, and fostering a culture of innovation, among others. By adhering to these strategies, Palestinian municipalities can enhance employee performance and improve public service provision.*

**Keywords:** Transformational Leadership, Employee Performance

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## 1. Introduction

Employee performance is crucial for organizations seeking a competitive edge in today's economy (Khan & Wisner, 2019). Investing in employees as valuable assets aids in achieving organizational objectives. Transformational leadership, an approach proven to enhance employee performance, involves inspiring employees, fostering creativity, and guiding them towards realizing the organizational vision (Ahmad & Cheng, 2018; Nguyen et al., 2019).

For the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), enhancing civil service capacities and effective restructuring is crucial (World Bank, 2015). Given its challenges as an emerging independent state, transformational leadership is key for improving employee performance in Palestinian organizations (Olof Palme International Center, 2019; World Bank, 2020).

Palestinian municipalities face unique constraints, such as limited resources and the performance of PNA institutions. This necessitates high employee performance for survival

(World Bank, 2020). Thus, this research spotlights the importance of transformational leadership in improving employee performance in Palestinian central municipalities (World Bank, 2015).

## 2. Problem Statement

The growth of Palestine's municipal sector, encompassing 144 municipalities, is noteworthy. However, both local and international reports highlight employee performance issues within the West Bank's central municipalities (UNISPAL, 2021; Al-Jabri, 2021; World Bank, 2015, 2018). There's an observed decline in public service quality due to these performance issues. Recognizing the importance of transformational leadership for organizational success, this study examines its application and impact within Palestinian municipalities, particularly concerning employee performance. The objective is to address performance issues, enhance public service quality, and thereby improve overall municipal operations. The research aims to answer the question: **What influence does transformational leadership exert on employee performance in Palestinian municipalities?**

## 3. Research Objectives and Proposed Conceptual Framework

The study was set to achieve the following objective: To determine the impact of transformational leadership on employee performance in Palestinian central municipalities.

### Transformational leadership

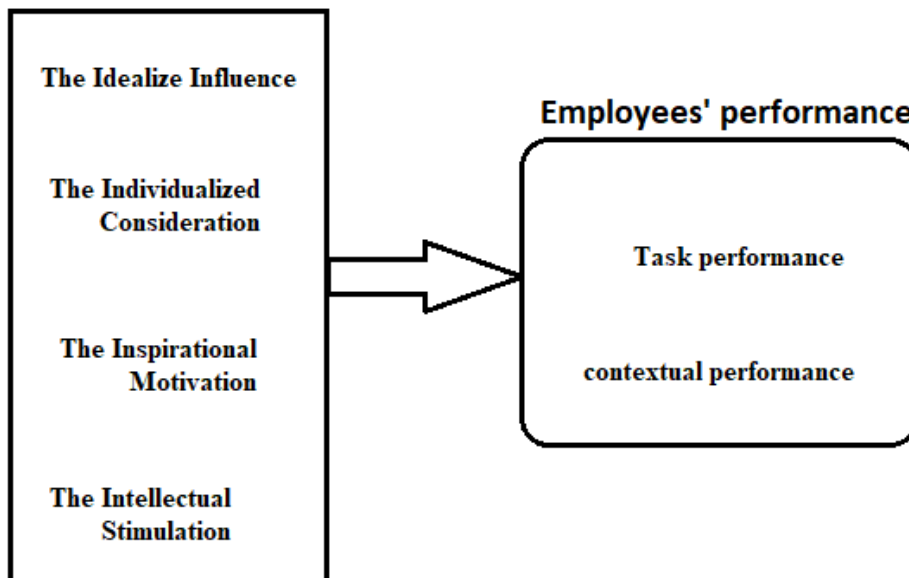


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

## 4. The Significance of the Study

This study aims to provide an understanding of how transformational leadership impacts employee performance, enabling organizations to devise strategies to enhance productivity. It seeks to expand stakeholders' understanding and explores transformational leadership styles in the context of Palestinian municipalities.

The findings can guide the Ministry of Local Government and other policymakers in designing policies promoting effective transformational leadership, leading to improved public service

provision. This aligns with the National Policy Agenda 2017-2022's 'citizen first' priority and provides municipalities with proactive strategies to boost employee performance.

This research contributes to the understanding of transformational leadership, elucidating its key elements impacting employee and organizational performance. It also lays the groundwork for further research in this field and contributes to the theoretical knowledge base of transformational leadership, paving the way for similar studies in developing countries.

## **5. Scope and Limitations of the Study**

This research aims to understand the impact of transformational leadership on employee performance within Palestinian municipalities, focusing on employees' perceptions of leadership effects and the challenge of improving their performance. The study will select participants based on their service degree (Director, Department Head, Division Head), primarily those with academic degrees and familiarity with leadership evaluation.

The research includes 10 major municipalities classified as municipality A in the West Bank, out of 16, which are central cities in the Palestinian governorates. The municipalities in Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip are excluded due to the prevailing political and security conditions and movement restrictions imposed by the Israeli occupation.

The scope of the study is limited to the role of transformational leadership on employee performance in Palestinian municipalities, which will make its results distinct from studies conducted in various Palestinian National Authority ministries. Given the municipalities were established before the Palestinian National Authority and have been subject to various regulations and laws from the Ottoman era, Britain, Jordan, and the Israeli occupation, the outcomes are expected to be unique. Therefore, the study's findings might significantly differ from previous studies in third-world countries due to the distinct circumstances under the occupation in Palestine.

## **6. Theoretical Frameworks**

### **6.1 Palestinian context**

The complex history of Palestinian municipalities under various administrative regimes has significantly shaped their structure and function. Established first in Jerusalem during the Ottoman era in 1863 and governed by the Administrative Divisions Law of 1877 (Jabali, 2009), the municipalities evolved through the British Mandate, Jordanian and Egyptian rule, and Israeli occupation. These periods brought different laws and restrictions, adding complexity to municipal governance (Shtayyeh & Habas, 2004). With the Palestinian National Authority's inception, the sector expanded to 144 municipalities, now categorized into four types based on size and function (MoLG, 2020), employing over 118,000 people (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Unique challenges arising from the ongoing Israeli occupation, administrative fragmentation, and low-quality educational outcomes (EU, 2017; Al-Sharabati, 2015) present a multifaceted context for studying the impact of transformational leadership on employee performance in Palestinian municipalities. This research will explore these complexities to understand how to enhance both employee performance and overall municipal operation in this challenging environment.

## **6.2 Employee Performance (EP)**

Employee performance, defined as "behavior that delivers results" (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020), is crucial to organizational success, as it forms the basis of significant management decisions. This accomplishment of tasks, evaluated by top management, requires meeting predefined standards while efficiently and effectively using resources in a dynamic environment (Ngwa et al., 2019). Performance encompasses both the actions people take at work and the results of those actions (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). Campbell and Wiernik (2015) suggest performance hinges on role knowledge, skills, and the choices regarding the effort's direction, intensity, and duration. Organizational progression is possible only with better employee performance, which can be enhanced by transformational leadership. Employee behaviours are cultivated through distinct yet interconnected HR practices, aimed at fostering competition and motivation, thereby improving performance (Kerdpitak & Jernsittiparsert, 2020). Further, training and development initiatives, both on-job and off-job, augment employees' skills in line with current knowledge (Gan & Yusof, 2019).

### **6.2.1 Employee Performance in the Palestine Context**

Despite the Palestinian Authority's efforts to enhance human resource management practices and staff performance through comprehensive human resource analysis and management reforms, improvements have not been as expected (MoLG, 2020). The World Bank reports that despite significant investments, staff performance within the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has not substantially improved (World Bank, 2020). Consequently, both internal and external evaluations continue to highlight poor staff performance in PNA institutions (PCDCR, 2019; UNISPAL, 2021). Generally, employees of the PNA institutions are not providing effective services due to subpar performance levels (PCDCR, 2019; UNISPAL, 2021).

### **6.2.2 Dimensions of Employee Performance**

Employee performance is defined by how effectively an employee accomplishes their job responsibilities within the set rules and expected behaviors of the organization. This encompasses their contribution to the organization's goals, the extent to which they meet job requirements under specific circumstances, and their displayed behaviors (Kaba et al., 2021). It is sometimes referred to as work performance or individual work performance. Job performance typically comprises two main facets: task performance or in-role performance, and contextual performance, also known as extra-role performance (Muhammad et al., 2017).

#### **6.2.2.1 Task performance**

Task performance or in-role performance involves effectively executing the duties and responsibilities outlined in one's job description (Faruk, 2016). This pertains to the essential activities needed for a particular job, contributing to achieving job-specific goals (Baksh Baloch et al., 2014; Tuna et al., 2018). Task performance affects productivity and quality, and it encompasses the volume and quality of work expected from employees (Jonsson et al., 2021). The primary work duties and related behaviours, overseen by managers, are central to task performance (Pattnaik & Sahoo, 2021). These behaviours aid in the execution of technical tasks in the production process and include planning, organizing, prioritizing tasks, taking responsibility, aiming for results, and working efficiently (Arwab et al., 2022). Consequently, task performance significantly influences individual and organizational outcomes (Jonsson et al., 2021).

#### **6.2.2.2 contextual performance**

Contextual or extra-role performance refers to the voluntary actions by employees that exceed their basic job requirements and aim to enhance interpersonal relationships within the

organization (Faruk, 2016). Such behaviour, also known as citizenship behaviour, motivates employees to improve efficiency beyond their core tasks (Baksh Baloch et al., 2014). Contextual performance is not explicitly included in job descriptions but is crucial for the organization's overall effectiveness (Twesme et al., 2021). These behaviours exceed formal job duties and include activities defined by employees to support essential tasks (Díaz-Vilela et al., 2015). While task performance is task-oriented and clearly defined, contextual performance involves actions that indirectly enhance task performance (Cleveland et al., 2019). It involves voluntary behaviours benefiting the organization, such as aiding others, cooperation, and adherence to rules (Jiang et al., 2022). The primary difference between task and contextual performance lies in their scope—task performance varies across different roles, while contextual performance is relevant across all roles.

### **6.3 Transformational Leadership**

Transformational leaders inspire employees towards organizational vision by emphasizing staff development, empowerment, innovation, and charisma (Alatawi, 2017). They not only fulfil the basic needs of their followers but also foster positive change in the organization (Nasser & Aini, 2016). This leadership style has been linked to employee satisfaction, productivity, and effective leadership (Holsinger & Carlton, 2018). It promotes positive behaviours, engages employees in extra roles and enhances job satisfaction by acting as mentors and supporters (Silva & Mendis, 2017).

Transformational leaders boost employees' readiness and performance by elucidating organizational goals and enhancing their motivation (Nguyen et al., 2019). They prioritize employees' interests and satisfy their emotional and intellectual needs (Alqatawenh, 2018), and ensure fair treatment (Tziner & Shkoler, 2018), thus fostering both task and contextual performance, leading to improved organizational success.

In Palestine, studies by Elmasry and Bakri (2019), and Awaja et al. (2018) show that transformational leadership positively influences good governance in the public sector and innovation in universities, underscoring its growing interest and significant impact within the region.

#### **6.3.1 Dimensions of Transformational Leadership**

Modern research on transformational leadership emphasizes its impact on both the emotional and rational aspects of followers' behaviour and motivation (Odumeru et al., 2013). Transformational leadership comprises four main elements: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration (Bass as cited in Kalsoom et al., 2018). Leaders with these attributes inspire confidence, stimulate creativity, and provide individualized mentorship, thereby transforming their followers' motivation and boosting performance (Fatma & Aini, 2015). By fostering a collegial approach and utilizing these leadership attributes, transformational leaders motivate their followers to exceed expectations and successfully achieve organizational goals (Sharma & Singh, 2017).

##### **6.3.1.1 The Idealized Influence**

Transformational leaders, employing idealized influence, guide with strength, dedication, and ethical behavior, thereby prioritizing collective needs over self-interest (Odumeru et al., 2013). This influence includes the silent cultivation of group values and goals. As highlighted by Saboe et al. (2015) and Bailey et al. (2017), these leaders build team cohesion and shared objectives through effective communication and group vision promotion.

Idealized behavioral influence refers to the leaders' visible actions that inspire confidence and trust in their followers (Nasser & Aini, 2016). These leaders, embodying purpose and values, serve as role models and inspire their followers with their vision, ethical decision-making, and confidence (Sharma & Singh, 2017). They foster employee pride and trust, and their influence results in enhanced performance by making work meaningful for employees.

Lastly, transformational leaders' success lies in their charismatic appeal, where they recognize and support individual employee needs, nurturing their growth through coaching and monitoring (Northouse, 2018).

### **6.3.1.2 The Individualized Consideration**

In transformational leadership, individualized consideration, where leaders act as coaches or mentors attending to each employee's unique needs, plays a crucial role (Boamah et al., 2018). As per Bass's theory, this involves fostering a respectful dyadic relationship between the leader and follower, emphasizing the individual's needs (Saboe et al., 2015). Leaders instill a vision with high standards, providing meaningful task insights and ensuring employees' fundamental needs are met for productivity enhancement (Sharma & Singh, 2017).

Demonstrating individualized consideration may include showing appreciation, equitable task distribution, career guidance, and tracking professional development (Fischer, 2016). By attending to followers' well-being and emotional, physical, and psychological needs, and offering benefits such as leave and promotional opportunities, leaders strengthen their relationships with employees.

In this regard, transformational leaders focus on fostering individual goal achievement and development, thereby building trust and enabling followers to tackle tasks and interpersonal stressors with social support (Long et al., 2014).

### **6.3.1.3 The Inspirational Motivation**

In transformational leadership, leaders motivate followers by presenting a compelling vision for the organization's future grounded in its values and ideals, a strategy known as inspirational motivation (Bono & Judge, 2004). Leaders elucidate an optimistic vision, driving followers towards excellence, sparking enthusiasm, and making complex ideas digestible (Barry & Girona, 2018). They aim to align followers' perceptions with the organizational vision, fostering commitment to this vision and setting ambitious expectations while considering followers' input and needs (Celik et al., 2016).

Unlike idealized influence, inspirational motivation employs emotional and non-intellectual facets to influence others (Fatma & Aini, 2015). Committed followers, inspired by their leader's confidence, strive to fulfill expectations, effectively using resources to actualize the leader's vision (Silva & Mendis, 2017).

Inspirational motivation under transformational leadership significantly enhances teamwork (Northouse, 2018). Leaders transcend transactional methods, inspiring employees to surpass expectations and foster innovation.

According to Fischer (2016), transformational leaders deeply impact their employees, stimulating them to maintain their commitment to individual-level inspirational goals. However, doubts regarding goal attainment can lead to feelings of depression and disengagement, potentially undermining their commitment to the desired outcomes.

#### **6.3.1.4 The Intellectual Stimulation**

Intellectual stimulation is a key trait of transformational leaders, who foster innovation, promote creative thinking, and appreciate diverse solutions among their followers (Utami, 2013). They empower their teams to approach traditional problems in fresh ways, encouraging intellectual problem-solving methods and critical analysis of established beliefs within the organization (Boamah et al., 2018).

Social support from leaders, in the form of intellectual stimulation, can predict dedication as it enables positive decision-making towards organizational goals (Fischer, 2016). This support, along with psychological well-being provided by leaders, aids the decision-making process and generates positive outcomes.

Transformational leaders inspire followers to think innovatively, reframing problems and suggesting potential solutions (Odumeru et al., 2013). They respect their followers' ideas, encouraging them to scrutinize their assumptions in problem-solving situations (Long et al., 2014). Such intellectual stimulation creates an environment that challenges and motivates followers, boosting their confidence in tackling tasks and problems (Silva & Mendis, 2017).

Transformational leadership dimensions are interconnected, all needed to enhance both followers' and leaders' expectations. Leaders must balance employee engagement and their managerial responsibilities. By demonstrating ideal influence, attending to individual needs, and acting as role models, leaders can instigate appreciative behavior among employees. Therefore, transformational leaders should engage employees, help them understand their group role and needs, improving both individual and overall organizational performance.

### **7. Methodology**

In this research, the methodology refers to a structured approach that assures the validity and reliability of findings, incorporating specific guidelines and resources (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). This descriptive study aims to address research questions through questionnaires and statistical analysis using the SPSS software. The objective aligns with Kumar's (2018) description of research as a systematic process of data gathering, assessment, and transformation into valuable insights. For effective quantitative data analysis, a deductive approach will be employed, assuming causal relationships among variables, supported by supplemental quantitative data. Deductive reasoning allows for statistical analysis of conclusions from observations and experiments, aiming to generalize findings from a sample to a larger population, consistent with the positivist model (Bryman, 2012). Thus, this study adopts a deductive reasoning approach.

#### **7.1 The Population of Study**

This study aims to analyze the influence of transformational leadership on employee performance within Palestinian municipalities. Fieldwork will be conducted in Palestine from January 2023 through March 2024.

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), the "population" refers to the entire group of individuals, groups, or entities that the researcher aims to study. The sampling frame is a comprehensive list of the population's members. In this study, respondents are selected from the administrative staff with supervisory roles in ten primary Palestinian municipalities (Nablus, Ramallah, Bethlehem, Hebron, Jenin, Tulkarim, Qalqilya, Salfit, Tubas, Jericho).

These individuals significantly contribute to shaping transformational leadership within their organizations and are well-versed in transformational leadership practices and employee performance. They play vital roles in enhancing employee performance. The selection of these municipalities aims to represent the entire population, offering a holistic view of transformational leadership within Palestinian organizations. Therefore, the study's population comprises 603 employees, as detailed in the following table.

**Table 1: Study community**

No.	Municipality	Managers	Head of Department	Division head	Total
1	Hebron	23	60	75	158
2	TulKarim	19	49	23	91
3	Ramallah	1	26	46	81
4	Jericho	16	21	37	74
5	Nablus	5	26	34	65
6	Qalqilya	7	16	13	36
7	Jenin	12	15	8	35
8	Bethlehem	9	18	3	30
9	Salfit	7	2	12	21
10	Tubas	3	7	2	12
Total	10	104	240	253	603

Source: General Administration of Formations, Palestinian Ministry of Local Government, 2022.

## 7.2 The sample size

This study employed a stratified sampling procedure, selecting a sample size of 240 from 10 central West Bank communities. The study utilized Yamane's formula for simple sample size calculation, considering the study's relatively small population requiring only a slight reduction (Yamane, 1967). Yamane's formula is as follows:

$$n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$$

In this equation, n represents the sample size, N denotes the total population size, and e (0.05 in this case) refers to the level of precision. Therefore, the sample size calculation is:

$$n = 603 / (1 + 603(0.05)^2) = 240$$

This calculated sample size pertains to medium-sized firms. The number of samples projected from each municipality is proportionate to the study's total sample size of 240, as illustrated in table 2. The study sample comprises administrative employees from category A Palestinian municipalities in the West Bank.

**Table 2: Distribution of the study sample to the Palestinian municipalities**

No.	Municipality	The number of administrative staff	Their ratio to the total number	Sample volume
1	Hebron	158	26.20%	63
2	Tul Karim	91	15.09%	36
3	Ramallah	81	13.43%	32
4	Jericho	74	12.27%	30
5	Nablus	65	10.77%	26
6	Qalqilya	36	5.97%	14
7	Jenin	35	5.80%	14
8	Bethlehem	30	4.97%	12
9	Salfit	21	3.48%	8
10	Tubas	12	1.99%	5
Total	10	603	100%	240

## 8. Conclusion and recommendation

To foster transformational leadership and boost performance in Palestinian municipalities, the following strategies are suggested:

- i. Leadership Training: Offer training to current and potential leaders to build transformational leadership skills, focusing on motivation, innovation, and communication (Bass, 1985).
- ii. Employee Empowerment: Grant employees decision-making authority to encourage initiative and meaningful contributions.
- iii. Clear Vision: Develop and communicate a compelling vision for the future of the municipality.
- iv. Lead by Example: Set high standards and demonstrate the behaviours you expect from your team.
- v. Innovation Culture: Promote a culture of innovation and continuous improvement.
- vi. Reward Performance: Recognize and reward exceptional performance and achievement of organizational goals.
- vii. Employee Development: Invest in your employees by providing training, mentoring, and growth opportunities.
- viii. Performance Feedback: Implement a regular feedback system to provide constructive criticism and recognize progress.
- ix. Team Collaboration: Foster a collaborative environment to effectively address complex challenges.
- x. Adaptability: Demonstrate resilience and adaptability in navigating uncertainties and challenges.
- xi. Strengthen Partnerships: Collaborate with external organizations like the World Bank, the European Union, and UNRWA to access additional resources and expertise.
- xii. Continuous Improvement: Regularly assess and adjust strategies based on their impact on employee performance and municipal outcomes.

By adopting these strategies, Palestinian municipalities can cultivate transformational leadership, improve employee performance, and enhance public service quality in the region.

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