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Transformational leadership and employee performance in Wakiso District Local Government, Uganda. A cross-sectional study.

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Abstract

Background:
Transformational leadership is consistently linked to better employee and organizational performance. This study examines the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance in Wakiso DLG, Uganda.

Methods:
A correlational design with a mixed-methods approach and concurrent triangulation was used. A questionnaire was administered to 142 staff selected by stratified random sampling from a population of 240 headquarters staff (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970); 140 returned usable questionnaires (98.6%). Ten key informants were purposively selected and interviewed, and published reports for 2022/23 to 2024/25 were reviewed. Data were analysed in SPSS using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and simple linear regression; qualitative data were analyzed thematically.

Results:
Transformational leadership (M = 3.10, SD = 0.80) and employee performance (M = 3.40, SD = 0.56) were both moderate. Transformational leadership had a moderate, positive, and significant relationship with overall employee performance ($r = .501$, $p < .001$) and explained 25.1% of its variation ($R^2 = .251$, $F(1, 138) = 46.13$, $p < .001$). The relationship was significant for task performance ($r = .475$), contextual performance ($r = .489$), and reverse-scored counterproductive work behaviour ($r = .385$), and for all four components of transformational leadership, with inspirational motivation the strongest ($r = .497$). Coaching (M = 2.73) and seeking staff ideas (M = 2.81) were the lowest-rated behaviours.

Conclusion:
Transformational leadership is positively associated with employee performance in Wakiso DLG, but its developmental and participative components are weakly practiced. Strengthening supervisors' skills in coaching, feedback, target-setting, and communicating a clear vision is likely to be where the gains lie.

Recommendation:
Wakiso DLG management, through the CAO's office and the DHRO, should train supervisors in coaching, appraisal, and giving timely feedback.

***Keywords**: Transformational Leadership, Employee Performance, Local Government, Wakiso District.*
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Background
Transformational leadership is widely associated with better performance in public organisations. Moynihan et al. (2012) showed that transformational leaders in American local governments promote performance by clarifying goals and creating a developmental culture in which performance information is used.

Evidence from local governments in developing countries is consistent. Vuong et al. (2023) surveyed 605 civil servants in Vietnamese local governments and found that transformational leadership was positively associated with job performance and job satisfaction, partly because it raised employees' public service motivation. However, employees who accepted large power differences between superiors and subordinates responded less to transformational leadership, a finding relevant to Uganda, where local government hierarchies are strong. In neighbouring Tanzania, Majaliwa and Kessy (2018) studied job satisfaction, not performance, among employees of private companies in Dar es Salaam, and found that idealised influence and intellectual stimulation were the transformational behaviours most strongly related to it; their evidence is therefore indirect support for this study.

In Uganda, Okidi et al. (2024) studied 124 employees of Apac Hospital and found that transformational leadership had a positive and significant effect on employee

performance (β = 0.391, p = .001), explaining 12.7% of the variation in performance. In Mbale Local Government, Nakhayenze (2026) found that leadership styles together explained a large share of the variation in employee performance (R^2 = .754), with transformational leadership the strongest predictor (β = 0.438); employees under transformational supervisors were reported to have achieved 72% of their performance targets, compared with 43% under autocratic supervisors. A qualitative study of Namisindwa District Local Government also concluded that transformational leadership builds creativity and motivation among staff, leading to better service delivery (Irene et al., 2024).

Although these studies consistently report positive associations, most examined transformational leadership alone or alongside styles outside the Full Range model, and several relied on qualitative or descriptive analysis. None was conducted in Wakiso District Local Government (DLG). Wakiso DLG surrounds Kampala Capital City and is the most populous district in Uganda (UBOS, 2024). Its large urban population, strong formal human resource systems, and recent staffing disruptions ("Full Plate for Wakiso Leaders," 2026; OAG, 2024b; OPM, 2024b) differ from the settings studied. The Auditor General has also reported a rise in documentation and reporting errors in the district (OAG, 2025), and the reports reviewed for this study point to absenteeism and delays in reporting. This study therefore examined the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance in Wakiso DLG.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a correlational research design with a mixed-methods approach. A correlational design is appropriate where the purpose is to establish the direction, strength, and statistical significance of the relationship between variables as they occur naturally, without manipulating them (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). It also allowed data to be collected from a relatively large number of respondents within a limited time and at a reasonable cost. Quantitative data were used to determine the direction, strength, and significance of the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance. Qualitative data from key informant interviews and documents were used to explain the observed relationship and to capture the constraints under which supervisors operate. A concurrent triangulation strategy was used, in which both types of data were collected during the same period and merged at the interpretation stage (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The design cannot establish the direction of influence between leadership and performance, so the objective and research question were stated as a relationship, and the findings are reported as associations.

Study Area

The study was conducted at the headquarters of Wakiso DLG in Wakiso Town, Central Uganda. The headquarters hosts the office of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and the departments and units responsible for planning, financing, implementing, and monitoring district services. The area was selected because of the documented performance gaps in the district and because the researcher could access it.

Study Population, Sample Size and Sampling

The study population consisted of technical and administrative staff based at district headquarters and on the approved staff establishment, whether permanent or on contract. Staff numbers were taken from the official Wakiso DLG staff list obtained from the District Human Resource Officer (DHRO) after clearance from the CAO. The population was 250, comprising 10 key informants and 240 other staff. Key informants were interviewed and were not part of the 240 staff from whom the questionnaire sample was drawn, so they did not rate supervisors.

The sample size of 152 was determined from the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table. After including all 10 key informants, 142 staff were selected for the questionnaire survey and allocated to departments in proportion to size using $n_h = (N_h / N) \times n$, rounded to whole numbers with a minimum of two respondents per department. P

Purposive sampling was used to select the key informants because of their strategic leadership positions and detailed knowledge of supervisory practice and staff performance: the CAO, the Deputy CAO, the DHRO and seven heads of department and units (finance, planning, health, education, production, works and internal audit). Heads of department were interviewed rather than given the questionnaire, because the questionnaire asked staff to rate their immediate supervisors. Other staff were selected by stratified random sampling, with each department forming a stratum and respondents chosen by simple random sampling using computer-generated random numbers applied to the departmental staff list (Sekaran & Bougie, 2020).

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Table 1: Study population, sample size and sampling techniques

Category/department	N	n	Sampling technique
Key informants (CAO, Deputy CAO, DHRO and seven heads of department and units)	10	10	Purposive
Administration	40	24	Stratified and simple random
Finance	14	8	Stratified and simple random
Statutory bodies	35	21	Stratified and simple random
Planning unit	20	12	Stratified and simple random
Production and marketing	45	27	Stratified and simple random
Health (district health office)	16	9	Stratified and simple random
Education and sports	12	7	Stratified and simple random
Works and technical services	16	9	Stratified and simple random
Natural resources	10	6	Stratified and simple random
Community-based services	8	5	Stratified and simple random
Trade, industry and local economic development	20	12	Stratified and simple random
Internal audit	4	2	Stratified and simple random
Total	250	152	

Source: Wakiso DLG staff list (2026)

Data Collection Methods and Instruments

Questionnaire survey. The questionnaire was the main source of quantitative data. It allowed standardised data to be collected from 142 sampled staff in a short time and allowed anonymous responses on the sensitive subject of supervisors' conduct. The relevant sections covered respondents' background characteristics, the transformational leadership behaviour of the respondent's immediate supervisor, and employee performance (task performance, contextual performance and counterproductive work behaviour). Items were developed by the researcher, informed by the MLQ-5X (Avolio & Bass, 2004) and the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ; Koopmans et al., 2014), and worded to fit local government practice in Uganda. A five-point Likert agreement scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used, with counterproductive behaviour items reverse-scored. An agreement scale was used instead of the 0 to 4 frequency scale of the MLQ-5X because the items are statements about specific behaviours, a single response format reduced respondent burden, and respondents gave an overall judgement of typical conduct rather than a count of occurrences. The scores are therefore not comparable with MLQ-5X norms.

Key informant interviews. Face-to-face interviews using a semi-structured guide covered leadership practice, reward, correction and constraints, performance and suggestions for improvement.

Documentary review. Secondary data on employee and departmental performance for 2022/23 to 2024/25 were extracted using a checklist from published reports: the LGMSD national synthesis reports and OPM assessment reports on Wakiso DLG for 2023, 2024 and 2025; Auditor General reports; performance reports of Wakiso DLG and its Human Resource Office; and national and news reports on local government performance. Individual attendance registers and appraisal records were not reviewed.

Measurement of Variables

Transformational leadership (independent variable) was measured by ten items (B1–B10) covering idealised influence (B1, B8), inspirational motivation (B2, B3, B9), intellectual stimulation (B4, B5) and individualised consideration (B6, B7, B10). Employee performance (dependent variable) was measured by 14 items: task

performance (C1–C5), contextual performance (C6–C10) and counterproductive work behaviour (C11–C14, reverse-scored). Composite scores were the mean of their items, and the overall performance index was the mean of the 14 items after reverse-scoring. Scores were treated as interval data, which is standard practice for multi-item composites. Mean scores were interpreted as 4.21–5.00 very high, 3.41–4.20 high, 2.61–3.40 moderate, 1.81–2.60 low, and 1.00–1.80 very low (equal class intervals of 0.80).

Validity and Reliability

Content validity was established by giving the draft instruments to the university supervisor and two experts in public administration and human resource management, who rated each item as relevant or not relevant. With three experts, an item was retained when all three rated it relevant (I-CVI = 1.00; Polit & Beck, 2006). The scale-level index was S-CVI/Ave = 0.85, above the 0.70 minimum recommended by Amin (2005). A pilot test with 15 staff from a neighbouring district local government not in the study led to minor changes in wording. Construct validity was supported by basing items on the Full Range Leadership Model and the IWPQ and was examined on the main study data using the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test. Cronbach's alpha was computed separately for each scale, with 0.70 or more regarded as reliable (Amin, 2005; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). For qualitative data, trustworthiness was ensured by triangulating interview and documentary evidence, taking detailed notes, recording interviews with permission, and confirming key points with informants at the end of each interview.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher obtained an introductory letter from the School of Graduate Studies and Research, Team University, and used it to seek permission from the CAO of Wakiso DLG. After clearance, the staff list was obtained from the DHRO, the sample was finalised, and the random sample was drawn. Questionnaires were delivered by the researcher and two trained research assistants, and respondents were given up to one week to complete them. To protect anonymity, completed questionnaires were returned in sealed envelopes to a collection box rather than to supervisors. Interviews were held at agreed times and lasted about 45 minutes each.

Data Analysis

Questionnaire data were coded and analysed in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations described respondents, the practice of transformational leadership and the level of employee performance. Pearson's product-moment correlation (r) established the direction, strength and significance of the relationship at the .05 level, interpreted as 0.00–0.19 very weak, 0.20–0.39 weak, 0.40–0.59 moderate, 0.60–0.79 strong and 0.80–1.00 very strong (Evans, 1996). Simple linear regression established how much of the variation in employee performance transformational leadership explains. Assumptions of normality, linearity, independence of errors, and homoscedasticity were checked (Field, 2018; Hair et al., 2019). Because the data are cross-sectional, coefficients are interpreted as associations, not causal effects. Interview and documentary data were analysed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Interview notes and recordings were transcribed, read repeatedly, coded, and grouped into themes. Key informants are identified by codes (KI-01 to KI-10).

Ethical Considerations

Written permission was obtained from the School of Graduate Studies and Research and from the CAO of Wakiso DLG. All respondents received a written explanation of the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation and their right to withdraw without consequence, and gave consent before participating. Questionnaires carried no names, results are reported only in aggregate, and care was taken that no response could be linked to a named supervisor. Completed instruments and recordings were stored securely. All sources are acknowledged in APA (7th edition) format.

Results

Response Rate

Of the 142 staff sampled, 140 returned usable questionnaires, a response rate of 98.6%, and all 10 key informants were interviewed (100%). The two missing questionnaires were one each from Administration (23 of 24; 95.8%) and Production and Marketing (26 of 27; 96.3%); all other departments responded fully. These rates are well above the 70% that Amin (2005) and Sekaran and Bougie (2020) consider adequate, and every department was represented in proportion to its size. The high response rate is attributed to personal delivery and collection, the sealed-envelope return procedure, and the support of the CAO's office.

Background Characteristics of Respondents

Table 2: Background Characteristics of Respondents (n = 140)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	64	45.7
	Female	76	54.3
	Total	140	100.0
Age	Below 25 years	5	3.6
	25–34 years	37	26.4
	35–44 years	52	37.1
	45–54 years	34	24.3
	55 years and above	12	8.6
	Total	140	100.0
Highest level of education	Certificate	9	6.4
	Diploma	34	24.3
	Bachelor's degree	74	52.9
	Postgraduate diploma	15	10.7
	Master's degree or above	8	5.7
	Total	140	100.0
Position	Senior/principal officer	23	16.4
	Officer	66	47.1
	Assistant officer	35	25.0
	Support staff	16	11.4
	Total	140	100.0
Length of service in Wakiso DLG	Less than 1 year	10	7.1
	1–5 years	35	25.0
	6–10 years	47	33.6
	11–15 years	32	22.9
	More than 15 years	16	11.4
	Total	140	100.0
Employment status	Permanent	110	78.6
	Contract	30	21.4
	Total	140	100.0
Years under current supervisor	Less than 1 year	41	29.3
	1–3 years	58	41.4
	More than 3 years	41	29.3
	Total	140	100.0

Female respondents (54.3%) slightly outnumbered male respondents (45.7%). Most were aged 35–44 years (37.1%), followed by 25–34 years (26.4%), 45–54 years (24.3%), 55 years and above (8.6%), and below 25 years (3.6%). More than half held a bachelor's degree (52.9%), 24.3% a diploma, 10.7% a postgraduate diploma, 5.7% a master's degree or above, and 6.4% a certificate. By position, 47.1% were officers, 25.0% assistant officers, 16.4% senior or principal officers, and 11.4% support staff. One third (33.6%) had served Wakiso DLG for 6–10 years, 34.3% for more than 10 years, 25.0% for 1–5 years, and 7.1% for less than a year. Most were permanent (78.6%), and 21.4% were on contract. Most (70.7%) had worked under their current supervisor for at least one year, so their ratings were based on sustained experience rather than first impressions.

Reliability and Construct Validity in the Main Study

Cronbach's alpha was .931 for transformational leadership (10 items), .795 for task performance, .743 for contextual performance, and .895 for the overall performance index (14 items). The four-item counterproductive work behaviour scale (reverse-scored) had an alpha of .680, slightly below 0.70 but within the 0.60–0.70 range regarded as acceptable for short scales and exploratory research (Hair et al., 2019). The KMO measure for the 38 items of the full questionnaire scales was .891, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2(703) = 3071.77$, $p < .001$), indicating that the data were suitable for factor analysis (Field, 2018). Harman's single-factor test showed that the first unrotated factor accounted for 30.3% of the variance, well below 50%, so common method bias was not a serious threat (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

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Level of Employee Performance

Table 3: Descriptive statistics on employee performance (n = 140)

Statement	% D	% NS	% A	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Task performance						
I complete the duties assigned to me within the set timeframes.	7.1	36.4	56.4	3.64	0.82	High
The quality of my work meets the standards expected of my position.	15.0	38.6	46.4	3.32	0.89	Moderate
I submit required reports by the stipulated deadlines.	6.4	37.1	56.4	3.65	0.84	High
I achieve the targets set in my annual performance plan.	6.4	37.9	55.7	3.69	0.86	High
My work rarely has to be redone because of errors.	17.1	46.4	36.4	3.24	0.89	Moderate
Task performance (composite)				3.51	0.64	High
Contextual performance						
I take on additional responsibilities when the department requires it.	7.1	35.0	57.9	3.66	0.83	High
I suggest improvements to the way work is done in my department.	12.1	45.0	42.9	3.36	0.82	Moderate
I assist colleagues who are struggling with their workload.	6.4	32.1	61.4	3.71	0.82	High
I attend promptly to citizens and clients who seek services from my office.	12.9	39.3	47.9	3.42	0.83	High
I keep my professional knowledge and skills up to date.	9.3	37.1	53.6	3.56	0.82	High
Contextual performance (composite)				3.54	0.58	High
Counterproductive work behaviour (raw scores; higher = more of the behaviour)						
I am absent from duty without authorisation.	37.1	36.4	26.4	2.86	0.99	Moderate
I report for duty later than the official starting time.	18.6	42.1	39.3	3.26	0.87	Moderate
I leave work before the official closing time without authorisation.	52.1	35.7	12.1	2.48	0.89	Low
I postpone tasks that I find difficult or unpleasant.	25.0	43.6	31.4	3.10	0.89	Moderate
Counterproductive behaviour, reverse-scored (composite)				3.08	0.65	Moderate
Overall employee performance index				3.40	0.56	Moderate

Source: Primary data (2026). % D = strongly disagree and disagree; % NS = not sure; % A = agree and strongly agree.

Task performance was high (M = 3.51, SD = 0.64). Most respondents agreed that they achieve their annual performance plan targets (55.7%), submit reports on time (56.4%), and complete duties within set timeframes (56.4%). Ratings were only moderate for quality of work (M = 3.32) and for work rarely having to be redone (M = 3.24; only 36.4% agreed and 46.4% were not sure), which is consistent with the reported rise in documentation and reporting errors (OAG, 2025). Contextual performance was also high (M = 3.54, SD = 0.58), with staff most likely to assist struggling colleagues (61.4%) and take on additional responsibilities (57.9%), and less likely to suggest improvements (M = 3.36) or attend promptly to citizens (M = 3.42).

Counterproductive work behaviour was the weakest dimension (reverse-scored M = 3.08, SD = 0.65). Notably, 39.3% admitted reporting for duty late, 31.4% postponing difficult tasks, and 26.4% being absent without authorisation; 12.1% admitted leaving early. Because these are self-reports, true levels may be higher. Overall, employee performance was moderate (M = 3.40, SD = 0.56), just below the threshold for "high": employees perform core duties reasonably well and cooperate with colleagues, but late reporting, absence, procrastination, and errors remain significant problems.

Transformational Leadership.
Descriptive Findings

Table 4: Descriptive statistics on transformational leadership (n = 140)

Statement	% D	% NS	% A	Mean	SD	Interpretation
My supervisor acts in ways that earn my respect and trust.	22.9	31.4	45.7	3.38	1.02	Moderate
My supervisor talks enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished in this department.	20.7	39.3	40.0	3.24	0.98	Moderate
My supervisor articulates a clear vision of what the department should achieve.	35.0	31.4	33.6	2.96	1.02	Moderate
My supervisor encourages me to look at problems from new angles.	26.4	37.9	35.7	3.09	0.98	Moderate
My supervisor seeks my ideas before taking decisions that affect my work.	40.0	32.9	27.1	2.81	1.06	Moderate
My supervisor spends time coaching and developing me.	40.7	36.4	22.9	2.73	1.07	Moderate
My supervisor treats me as an individual rather than merely as a member of staff.	28.6	36.4	35.0	3.09	1.02	Moderate
My supervisor sets a personal example of the standards expected of staff.	18.6	35.7	45.7	3.36	1.01	Moderate
My supervisor expresses confidence that departmental targets will be achieved.	17.1	32.9	50.0	3.46	1.02	High
My supervisor helps me to develop my professional strengths.	35.0	32.1	32.9	2.91	1.04	Moderate
Overall transformational leadership				3.10	0.80	Moderate

Source: Primary data (2026).

Transformational leadership was practised to a moderate extent (M = 3.10, SD = 0.80). The highest-rated behaviour was expressing confidence that targets will be achieved (M = 3.46; 50.0% agreed), followed by earning respect and trust (M = 3.38) and setting a personal example (M = 3.36). The lowest-rated behaviours concerned the development and involvement of staff: only 22.9% agreed that their supervisor spends time coaching and developing them (M = 2.73; 40.7% disagreed) and only 27.1% that their supervisor seeks their ideas before decisions (M = 2.81; 40.0% disagreed). Ratings were also low for helping staff develop their strengths (M = 2.91) and for articulating a clear vision (M = 2.96), where more respondents disagreed (35.0%) than agreed (33.6%).

By component, idealised influence was strongest (M = 3.37), followed by inspirational motivation (M = 3.22), intellectual stimulation (M = 2.95) and individualised consideration (M = 2.91). Supervisors are therefore generally respected and express confidence in targets, but rarely coach individual staff, involve them in decisions, or communicate a clear vision. Standard deviations of about 1.0 show that experiences differ considerably depending on the supervisor.

Correlation between Transformational Leadership and Employee Performance

Table 5: Correlation between transformational leadership and employee performance (n = 140)

Leadership variable	Task performance	Contextual performance	CWB (reverse-scored)	Overall employee performance
Transformational leadership (overall)	.475**	.489**	.385**	.501**
Idealised influence	.412**	.469**	.368**	.462**
Inspirational motivation	.482**	.459**	.400**	.497**
Intellectual stimulation	.397**	.404**	.293**	.407**
Individualised consideration	.420**	.442**	.327**	.442**

*Source: Primary data (2026). ** p < .001 (two-tailed) for all coefficients. CWB = counterproductive work behaviour.*

Transformational leadership had a moderate, positive, and statistically significant relationship with overall employee performance (r = .501, p < .001): employees whose supervisors display more transformational behaviour tend to report higher performance. The relationship was moderate for contextual performance (r = .489) and task performance (r = .475), and weak but significant for reverse-scored counterproductive work behaviour (r = .385), meaning that more transformational supervision is associated with less late reporting, absence, and procrastination. All four

components were positively and significantly related to overall performance: inspirational motivation (r = .497), idealised influence (r = .462), individualised consideration (r = .442) and intellectual stimulation (r = .407).

Regression of Employee Performance on Transformational Leadership

Table 6: Simple regression of employee performance on transformational leadership

Model summary	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	SE of estimate	F(1, 138)	p
Employee performance on transformational leadership	.501	.251	.245	.487	46.13	< .001

Coefficients	B	SE	β	T	p
(Constant)	2.312	.165	—	14.02	< .001
Transformational leadership	.350	.051	.501	6.79	< .001

Source: Primary data (2026). Dependent variable: employee performance index.

Transformational leadership explained 25.1% of the variation in employee performance (R^2 = .251, adjusted R^2 = .245), and the model was significant (F(1, 138) = 46.13, p < .001). A one-unit increase in transformational leadership on the five-point scale is associated with a 0.35-unit increase in employee performance (B = .350, p < .001). The remaining 74.9% of the variation is associated with other factors.

Qualitative Findings

Key informant interviews helped to explain the moderate level of transformational leadership. Most senior managers described supervision that relies on meetings and written reports rather than close personal engagement. The CAO explained: "I delegate to heads of department and hold monthly management meetings; I follow up mainly on reports." (KI-01). Others said: "I work through weekly briefings and ask for written updates" (KI-02) and "Large team, spread across sub-counties; I meet them monthly" (KI-08). Large spans of control, dispersed field staff and limited transport were repeatedly cited as reasons for limited coaching and individual contact (for example, "I advise departments but cannot supervise their staff daily," KI-03; "I rely on the few inspectors to visit schools and report back," KI-07).

A few informants described more engaged practice, such as setting targets with the team and reviewing progress quarterly (KI-05) and directing and reviewing every report in a small unit (KI-10), which is consistent with the wide standard deviations in staff ratings. Informants' suggestions also pointed to transformational behaviours: "training supervisors in appraisal and giving timely feedback" (KI-02), "clearer targets" (KI-05) and "regular performance reviews" (KI-06). These correspond to the inspirational motivation and individualised consideration components that staff rated lowest.

Integration. Staff rated coaching (M = 2.73) and being consulted (M = 2.81) lowest, and informants described supervision through meetings and reports, constrained by span of control and transport. This is consistent with individualised consideration (M = 2.91) and intellectual stimulation (M = 2.95) being the weakest components. Informants' proposals for clearer targets, feedback, and regular reviews match the strong association of inspirational motivation with performance (r = .497).

Answer to the Research Question

Transformational leadership has a moderate, positive and significant relationship with employee performance in Wakiso DLG (r = .501, p < .001) and explains 25.1% of its variation. The relationship holds for all three dimensions of performance and for all four components of transformational leadership.

Discussion

Transformational leadership was practised to a moderate extent in Wakiso DLG (M = 3.10) and had a moderate, positive and significant relationship with employee performance (r = .501, p < .001), explaining 25.1% of its variation.

This is consistent with the meta-analytic evidence of Judge and Piccolo (2004) and Backhaus and Vogel (2022) that transformational leadership is positively related to performance in general and public-sector settings. The correlation (r = .50) is close to the corrected validity of .44 reported by Judge and Piccolo (2004). It also agrees with Ugandan evidence: Okidi et al. (2024) found a positive and significant effect at Apac Hospital (β = 0.391), and Nakhayenze (2026) found transformational leadership the strongest predictor of performance in Mbale Local Government (β = 0.438). The standardised coefficient here (β = .501, which equals r in a simple regression) is higher than these, although the models are not strictly comparable. The finding also supports Vuong et al. (2023), who found that transformational leadership improved the performance of local government civil servants in Vietnam, and Irene et al. (2024), who concluded that it builds motivation and

creativity in Namisindwa District. This study did not measure power distance, so it cannot say whether the hierarchy effect reported by Vuong et al. (2023) applies in Wakiso DLG.

The study adds three points to this literature. First, transformational leadership was related to all three dimensions of performance, including counterproductive behaviour, which shows that inspiring and developing staff is associated not only with better work but also with less late reporting and absence. This is consistent with the argument of Wang et al. (2011) that transformational leadership affects both task and contextual performance. Second, the correlation was slightly stronger for contextual (r = .489) than for task performance (r = .475), in the direction suggested by Wang et al. (2011) and Motowidlo and Van Scotter (1994), although the difference is small. Third, the components that staff rated lowest, individualised consideration (M = 2.91) and intellectual stimulation (M = 2.95), are those that require close personal engagement. Key informants explained that supervision relies on monthly meetings and written reports, and that large spans of control, dispersed field staff, and limited transport restrict coaching. In terms of Expectancy Theory (Vroom, 1964), supervisors in Wakiso DLG are doing relatively well on raising valence through confidence and example, but less well on raising expectancy through coaching and skill development. Inspirational motivation had the strongest correlation with performance (r = .497), which supports the view of Jensen et al. (2019) and Moynihan et al. (2012) that a clear, shared sense of purpose is the core of effective transformational leadership in public organisations. The low rating on articulating a clear vision (M = 2.96) is therefore an important missed opportunity.

Conclusion

Transformational leadership is positively and significantly associated with employee performance in Wakiso DLG. Supervisors who earn respect, set an example, communicate a clear purpose, involve staff in decisions, and coach them individually are associated with staff who complete their duties more reliably, contribute beyond their formal roles, and engage less in late reporting and absence. However, transformational leadership is practised only to a moderate extent, and its developmental and participative components, namely coaching, seeking staff ideas and helping staff develop their strengths, are the weakest.

Limitations

Direction of the relationship. The correlational design shows that transformational leadership and performance are associated, not which influences which.

Common method bias. Leadership and performance were reported by the same respondent; this was reduced by separating item sets, assuring anonymity, triangulating with interviews and documents, and applying Harman's single-factor test (30.3%).

Social desirability and fear of reprisal. Respondents may have rated supervisors favourably, or their own performance generously; anonymity procedures and sealed-envelope returns were designed to reduce this.

Reliance on published records. The documentary review used published assessment and audit reports rather than individual attendance and appraisal records, which limited verification of self-reported performance.

Generalisability. Findings apply to Wakiso DLG headquarters staff and districts of similar size and structure, and should not be generalised to all Ugandan local governments, municipalities, teachers or health facility staff without further study.

Recommendations

Wakiso DLG management, through the CAO's office and the DHRO, should train supervisors in coaching, appraisal and giving timely feedback, the behaviours staff rated lowest (KI-02).

Supervisors should set clearer departmental targets, communicate a clear vision and hold regular performance reviews (KI-05; KI-06), building on inspirational motivation, which had the strongest association with performance.

Supervisors should consult staff before decisions that affect their work.

Management should address the span-of-control and transport constraints that limit individual supervision of dispersed staff.

Future research should use longitudinal or multi-source designs, including attendance and appraisal records, and extend the study to other Ugandan local governments.

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List of abbreviations.

APA – American Psychological Association
CAO – Chief Administrative Officer
CVI – Content Validity Index
CWB – Counterproductive Work Behaviour
DHRO – District Human Resource Officer
DLG – District Local Government
I-CVI – Item-level Content Validity Index
IWPQ – Individual Work Performance Questionnaire
KI – Key Informant (KI-01 to KI-10)
KMO – Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin
LGMSD – Local Government Management of Service Delivery
MLQ-5X – Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, Form 5X
OAG – Office of the Auditor General
OPM – Office of the Prime Minister
S-CVI/Ave – Scale-level Content Validity Index (average)
SPSS – Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UBOS – Uganda Bureau of Statistics
Table and statistical abbreviations
% A – Agree and strongly agree
% D – Strongly disagree and disagree
% NS – Not sure
B – Unstandardised regression coefficient
β – Standardised regression coefficient
F – F-statistic (ratio of explained to unexplained variance)
M – Mean
N – Population size
n – Sample size
p – Probability value (significance level)
r – Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient
R^2 – Coefficient of determination
SD – Standard deviation
SE – Standard error
t – t-statistic
χ^2 – Chi-square
B1–B10 – Questionnaire items on transformational leadership
C1–C14 – Questionnaire items on employee performance

Informed Consent.

Written informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their inclusion in the study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, procedures involved, potential risks and benefits, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

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Conflict of interest.

There is no conflict of interest.

Availability of data.

Data used in this study are available upon request from the corresponding author.

Authors contribution.

JA conceptualized the study, developed the methodology, carried out the investigation, and wrote the original draft.
DA supervised, validation, writing, review, and editing
All authors approved the final version of the manuscript and agreed to be accountable for the work.

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