

Transformational Leadership and Local Government Performance in Kanungu district, Uganda: A Mixed-Methods Investigation

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Abstract: The research sought to determine the impact of transformational leadership style on local government performance in Kanungu District, Uganda. Even though the significance of leadership in governing is acknowledged, there had been insufficient empirical studies carried out regarding how transformational leadership affected local government performance in rural Ugandan districts. In adopting a convergent parallel mixed-method design, the study sought to explore the impact of transformational leadership on local government effectiveness. The study population was made up of 258 respondents in Kanungu District Local Government. Through the use of Slovin's formula, a sample size of 157 was identified, out of which 135 respondents responded (response rate of 86.0%). The data was collected through a structured questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide involving 5 key informants. For the quantitative data analysis, SPSS version 22 was used to conduct descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis, while the qualitative data was subjected to thematic analysis. From the findings, it was observed that transformational leadership exhibited a very strong positive correlation with the performance of local government ($r = 0.658$), accounting for about 43.3% of the total variance ($R^2 = 0.433$). The regression analysis was significant ($F = 101.44$, $p < 0.001$) with the unstandardized coefficient of $B = 0.349$. The study established that transformational leadership was important for enhancing the performance of local governments in terms of service delivery and satisfaction. It was therefore suggested that local government leaders undergo training on transformational leadership practices, mentorship programs be initiated, and performance evaluations should consider leaders' ability to inspire and motivate their teams.

Keywords: Transformational leadership, local government performance, service delivery, Kanungu District, Uganda, mixed-methods

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

The performance of local government is key in influencing the lives of its people especially in developing nations such as Uganda (Bardach & Patashnik, 2016). Good leadership is one of the many factors which contribute to the success of local governments in meeting the demands of their communities. Research indicates that good leadership contributes to the success of local government performance by enhancing accountability, service delivery, and participation (Kauzya, 2017). There are several obstacles that local governments in Uganda are likely to encounter, such as lack of resources, lack of proper infrastructure, and socio-economic inequalities that may pose great problems in providing services to people (Green, 2015). In Uganda, leadership is one of the important elements of the performance of the local government since the district administration is supposed to implement the national policies into the programs and services that would meet local needs. Decentralization has been introduced by means of the Local Government Act of 1997 and involves many obligations of the local governments.

The District of Kanungu is situated in the sub-region of Kigezi within Western Uganda. Kanungu District was created in 2001 when it was separated from Rukungiri District (Kanungu District Local Government, 2025). As per the 2024 National Population and Housing Census of Uganda, the population of the Kanungu District stood at 439,175 individuals in 104,678 households (UBOS, 2024). In terms of economy, the District of Kanungu still retains an agricultural bias, with agriculture contributing significantly to economic development.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The role played by effective leadership in determining how well local governments perform is known and acknowledged since it is an important determinant of the quality-of-service delivery, governance, organizational commitment, and development of communities. Transformational leadership focuses on motivation, innovation, and vision of organizations, and therefore it plays a significant role in improving the performance of organizations (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Empirical evidence shows that transformational leadership improves employee engagement and quality of services delivered by local governments (Smith & Jones, 2023).

Despite the significance of the role played by leadership in public administration, issues with local government performance continue to emerge in the district of Kanungu. Issues with service delivery, accountability, corruption, and participation of citizens in the operations of local governments continue to come up, creating questions regarding the efficacy of leadership practices in the area (Uganda Local Government Association, 2022). In cases where leaders make decisions unilaterally, there are very few chances for the input of employees in institutions.

The continued existence of such problems associated with leadership may have an impact on the effectiveness of response of Kanungu District Local Government towards its people. It is thus critical to understand the role played by transformational leadership style in order to appreciate good leadership practices for effective governance.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The objective of this study was to determine the impact of leadership styles on the performance of local government in Kanungu District in Uganda. The specific objective of this research was to determine the impact of transformational leadership style on various dimensions of the performance of local government including service delivery and effective governance.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The specific objective of this study was:

- (i) To examine the effects of transformational leadership style on local government performance in Kanungu District, Uganda.

1.5 Hypothesis

H0_i: Transformational leadership style has no significant effect on local government performance in Kanungu District, Uganda.

2. Literature Review

This chapter provides an overview of the literature that is relevant to the research study. This will start with an examination of the theoretical framework of the study which comprises Transformational Leadership Theory and Public Choice Theory followed by alternative leadership theories and a rationale for choosing transformational leadership as the focus of the study.

2.2 Theoretical Review

2.2.1 Transformational Leadership Theory

The Transformational Leadership Theory can be attributed to James MacGregor Burns' groundbreaking study, "Leadership" (1978). Transformational Leadership Theory was distinguished from transactional leadership on the grounds that whereas the latter theory is rooted in exchanges of rewards and punishment, the former elevates the leader as well as the follower to high levels of motivation and morality. James MacGregor Burns defined transformational leadership as a process where "leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation" (Burns, 1978, p. 20).

Bernard M. Bass (1985) further developed this theory by breaking down transformational leadership into four distinct dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass & Avolio, 1994). These four dimensions have proved valid in different cultural and organizational settings and even in the public sector of developing countries (Ghasabeh et al., 2015; Northouse, 2018).

Idealized Influence is associated with leaders who act as credible role models and inspire followers by virtue of their exemplary behaviors and sacrifices. In terms of inspirational motivation, leaders define an inspiring vision and share high expectations, which motivates followers to move beyond self-interest. Leaders engaged in intellectual stimulation challenge assumptions, foster creative thinking, and solve problems (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Finally, individualized consideration implies that leaders take into account individual follower needs, provide coaching and mentoring (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

The criticism is directed at the theory because it may be prone to exaggeration of the importance of individual leaders (the "great man" theory), Western-centric understanding of leadership, and ignorance of context-specific variables such as resource scarcity and institutional capacity (Yukl, 2013). However, it is still one of the most researched leadership theories in public administration (Andrews & Boyne, 2010; Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2013).

2.2.2 Public Choice Theory

Public Choice Theory, introduced by Buchanan & Tullock (1962), involves the application of economic premises to political behavior. This theory assumes that political actors, such as bureaucrats, politicians and other public sector employees are rational and self-interested individuals who aim at maximizing their own utility via either budget maximizing, promotion and/or rent seeking (Niskanen, 1971). Within the context of local government, Public Choice Theory is important for understanding the rationale behind the success of leadership styles which harmonize individual incentives with those of organizations.

This theory has been criticized due to the negative nature of its assumptions regarding human behavior, lack of focus on intrinsic motivation and public servants' attitude and limited explanatory power in collectivist cultures (Dunleavy, 1991). Nonetheless, Public Choice Theory is helpful as an additional perspective on the ways in which transformational leadership may help align self-interested behavior towards collective results through intrinsic motivation and meaningful recognition.

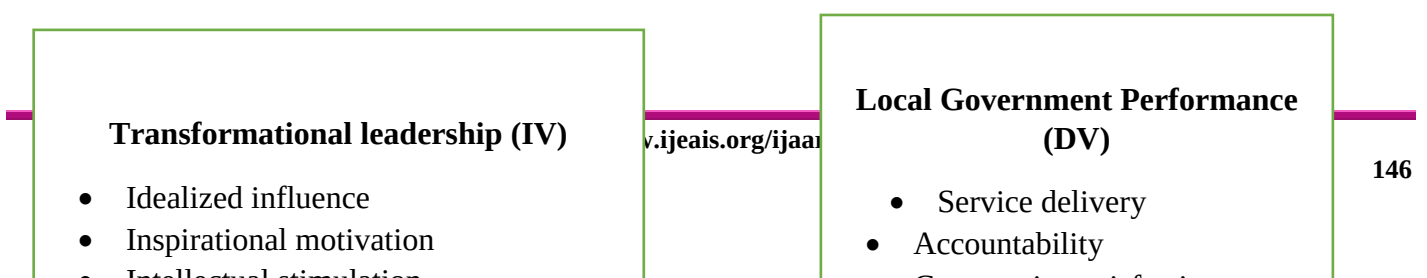
Combining Transformational Leadership Theory with Public Choice Theory provides a better grasp of leadership principles in public sector contexts. Although Transformational Leadership Theory gives an account of leadership motivation, Public Choice Theory helps in explaining why the followers would be motivated by such leadership as their self-interest coincides with the group interests.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is based on Transformational Leadership Theory and Public Choice Theory. It shows how the independent variable, transformational leadership, influences the dependent variable, local government performance.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



H0₁



Source: Author's conceptualization (2025)

This theory implies that leadership actions can affect the efficiency of the work done by local government organizations in achieving their goals and performing services for the society. Transformational leadership style can positively affect performance if the leader builds a relationship based on trust with his or her subordinates, shows dedication towards the organization's interests, encourages teamwork, ensures effective communication, and stimulates creativity and innovation in overcoming problems. Leaders who serve as mentors and coaches and pay attention to personal needs of their subordinates can even increase employees' dedication and involvement.

2.3 Empirical Review

In their research involving the investigation of leadership preferences amongst municipal employees in selected municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, Ralinala and Zweni (2024) found that there was a preference for democratic and transformational leadership style. Based on the quantitative data collected from 150 respondents, there was a positive relationship between transformational leadership, motivation of employees, and service delivery.

In his review of 28 articles published between 2010 and 2024 concerning the contribution of leadership in the strategic plan implementation in Tanzanian Local Government Authorities, Pandisha (2025) highlighted transformational leadership style as an important variable in strategic objectives implementation owing to the elements of vision, empowerment of staff, and inclusive management practices.

Lukwago (2017) conducted research on the leadership styles and employee performance in Bulambuli District, Uganda, and found that there was a relationship between transformational leadership behaviors such as idealized influence and inspirational motivation with commitment and employee productivity. The contributions of transformational leadership style on service delivery have been noted by Nakanyike (2023) in his study on leadership and service delivery in Hoima District, Uganda.

The impact of participative leadership on service delivery in Ugandan local government institutions has been studied by Okwalinga (2022) and found to enhance employee motivation and satisfaction among the community members as well. The importance of policy alignment with the community needs has been pointed out in Nabukenya (2020)'s work on citizen participation and participative governance in Uganda.

In Fernandez and Moldogaziev (2013), the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational learning and their positive impacts on public sector performance has been investigated. Andrews and Boyne (2010) analyzed the impacts of leadership and organizational capacity on public sector performance.

2.4 Gaps in the Literature

Past literature has documented leadership and organization performance in diverse contexts within the public sector. Nevertheless, limited research exists on the relationship between transformational leadership and local government performance in Kanungu district. Data on the relationship in other districts or even other countries may not adequately reflect the socio-economic, administrative, and community attributes of Kanungu district. This study fills the gap by providing relevant data on the relationship in Kanungu district, Uganda.

3. Methods

In the study, a convergent parallel design was used for the purpose of mixing methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This design was characterized by data collection, analysis, and synthesis of data from quantitative and qualitative approaches simultaneously. The quantitative part used cross-sectional survey method for data collection from a relatively large number of respondents at a particular point in time (Amin, 2005). On the other hand, semi-structured interviews were used in the qualitative approach to gather information about the phenomenon under study.

3.1 Research Design

This study applied the convergent parallel mixed methods research design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). In this type of research design, the researcher collected quantitative as well as qualitative data simultaneously, analyzed these data separately, and finally combined the outcomes for interpretation. For the collection of quantitative data, a cross-sectional survey was used by the researcher to collect the data from a larger sample size in one particular period of time (Amin, 2005). For the collection of qualitative data, semi-structured interviews were used by the researcher to obtain more insights about the phenomena under study.

3.2 Target Population

The target population for this study comprised 258 respondents drawn from six categories of stakeholders in Kanungu Town Council, Kanungu District. Community members constituted the largest category with 183 respondents, reflecting the importance of capturing the voices and experiences of ordinary citizens who are the primary beneficiaries of service delivery in the subcounty. Local leaders followed with 28 respondents, representing the political and administrative leadership at the subcounty level who are directly responsible for accountability and service delivery. Clan elders accounted for 18 respondents, whose inclusion recognized the important role of traditional authority structures in the Kanungu district in promoting accountability and community participation. Activists constituted 17 respondents, representing civil society actors who play a critical role in advocating for accountability and citizen engagement. District officials accounted for 12 respondents, comprising technical staff who provide oversight and support to subcounty operations. The total target population of 258 respondents was selected to ensure that the study captured diverse perspectives on accountability mechanisms and service delivery, ranging from citizens and community-based actors to local leaders and district-level officials. This distribution reflects the study's mixed-methods approach, which sought to triangulate findings from multiple stakeholder groups to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms in enhancing service.

3.3 Sample Size

The Slovin's formula (1960) was used to determine the minimum sample size:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where:

- n = required sample size

- N = target population (258)
- e = margin of error (0.05)

$$n = \frac{258}{1 + 258(0.05)^2}$$

N=157 respondents

The sample of 157 was distributed across the different stakeholder categories using stratified proportional allocation as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Sample Distribution by Stakeholder Category

Category	Population (N)	Proportion	Sample (n)
Activists	17	6.6%	10
Community members	183	70.9%	111
Local leaders	28	10.9%	17
District officials	12	4.7%	7
Clan elders	18	7.0%	12
Total	258	100%	157

3.4 Sampling Technique

The research involved both probability and non-probability sampling approaches. In the case of the survey, stratified random sampling was employed in order to ensure that there were representatives from different stakeholders. With regard to the qualitative aspect of the study, purposive sampling was used in order to select respondents who had the knowledge and experience in the field.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

3.5.1 Questionnaire Survey

The data were collected using an elaborately designed questionnaire that comprised mostly close-ended questions. The questionnaire was organized into parts containing information on demographic characteristics, transformational leadership behavior, and municipal government performance measures. A Likert scale of five was employed in measuring the answers, where 1 indicated strongly disagree while 5 meant strongly agree. The questionnaire technique was chosen since it helps researchers to gather information from a relatively larger number of respondents within a certain period of time and at relatively reduced costs.

3.5.2 Interviews

The qualitative component utilized semi-structured interviews with 5 key informants selected through purposive sampling. Key informants included:

1. District Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)
2. Head of Department (Education)
3. Local Council V Chairperson
4. Civil Society Organization (CSO) representative
5. Representative from the District Community Development Office

The interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and were audio-recorded with participant consent. Interview questions focused on participants' perceptions of transformational leadership practices, their experiences with leadership in the district, and their observations of how leadership affects service delivery and community outcomes.

3.6 Validity and Reliability

3.6.1 Validity

Validity of content was confirmed through expert evaluation. The questionnaire was evaluated by five experts in the fields of public administration and leadership studies, and each question was evaluated for its relevance. Content Validity Index (CVI) was computed using the following formula:

$$\text{CVI} = \text{Number of items rated as relevant by all experts} / \text{Total number of items} = 35/38 = 0.92$$

The resultant value of 0.92 of CVI revealed that there is high degree of content validity in excess of the accepted minimum value of 0.70 (Amin, 2005).

3.6.2 Reliability

The reliability of the research instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient during a pilot study involving 20 respondents from a neighboring district. The results were as follows:

Table 2: Reliability results

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Transformational Leadership	15	0.78
Local Government Performance	12	0.82

Both values exceed the acceptable threshold of 0.70 (George & Mallery, 2003), indicating good internal consistency.

3.7 Data Analysis

3.7.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Coded data were entered into **SPSS version 22** for analysis. The analysis proceeded in three stages:

Stage 1: Descriptive Statistics

- Frequencies and percentages were used to summarize demographic characteristics.
- Means and standard deviations were calculated for each questionnaire item and composite variable.

Stage 2: Inferential Statistics

- **Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (r)** was used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between transformational leadership and local government performance.
- **Simple Linear Regression Analysis** was used to determine the effect of transformational leadership on local government performance. The regression model was specified as:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X + \varepsilon$$

Where:

- **Y** = Local government performance (dependent variable)
- **X** = Transformational leadership (independent variable)
- **β_0** = Constant (intercept)
- **β_1** = Regression coefficient
- **ε** = Error term

Stage 3: Assumption Testing

Before conducting regression analysis, the following assumptions were tested and confirmed:

Table 3: Assumption Testing

Assumption	Test	Result	Interpretation
Linearity	Scatterplot of residuals	Linear pattern observed	Assumption met
Normality of residuals	Shapiro-Wilk test	$W = 0.987$, $p = 0.342$	Assumption met
Homoscedasticity	Breusch-Pagan test	$\chi^2 = 2.34$, $p = 0.126$	Assumption met
Multicollinearity	Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)	$VIF = 1.00$	No multicollinearity (single predictor)
Independence of errors	Durbin-Watson statistic	$DW = 1.98$	Assumption met (within 1.5–2.5 range)

The significance of the coefficient (p) was used to test the hypothesis by comparing p against the critical significance level of **0.05**. Effect size was assessed using **Cohen's f^2** (Cohen, 1988).

3.7.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

Content analysis was used to process qualitative data to make it more concise and well-structured. The thematic method was applied where themes, categories, and patterns were identified according to the six-stage process described by Braun and Clarke (2006):

1. Familiarizing oneself with the data: The transcripts were read repeatedly to become familiar with the content.
2. Generating initial codes: Meaningful parts of the text were coded.
3. Identifying themes: Codes were sorted into potential themes.

4. Reviewing themes: Themes were revised and improved.
5. Defining and naming themes: Each theme was defined and given a name.
6. Preparing the report: Themes were reported with quotations.

The inter-coder reliability coefficient was found to be 0.85 according to Cohen's kappa with the use of transcripts coded independently by two researchers (Landis & Koch, 1977).

3.7.3 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The integration of the two research approaches involved the use of the convergent design, which involved analyzing both data sets independently and merging them in the interpretation phase (Fetters et al., 2013). The two types of data were merged at three different levels:

1. The data level: The two data types were gathered simultaneously but analyzed independently.
2. The analysis level: The two findings were compared for any form of divergence, convergence, or expansion.
3. The interpretation level: The findings were presented using a joint display (Table 4).

Table 4: Joint Display of Integrated Findings

Quantitative Finding	Qualitative Theme	Integration
High mean score (3.63) for leadership inspiration	Inspiring and Motivating Followers	Convergence: Qualitative data explained how leaders inspire through delegation and support
High mean score (3.76) for encouraging innovation	Fostering Innovation and Problem-Solving	Convergence: Qualitative data provided examples of innovative problem-solving
High mean score (3.78) for ethical role modeling	Leading by Example	Convergence: Qualitative data emphasized the importance of leaders' conduct
26.7% disagreement on value alignment	Challenges in Value Alignment	Expansion: Qualitative data explained the disconnect between espoused and enacted values

4. Results

4.1 Response Rate

Of the total sample size of 157, 135 questionnaire copies were returned, representing 86.0% of the questionnaires distributed. This high response rate reflects strong participant engagement in the study. The distribution of respondents by stakeholder category is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents by Stakeholder Category

Category	Sample (n)	Respondents	Response Rate
Activists	10	8	80.0%
Community members	111	96	86.5%
Local leaders	17	15	88.2%
District officials	7	6	85.7%
Clan elders	12	10	83.3%
Total	157	135	86.0%

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics on Transformational Leadership Style

Statement	SD	D	NS	A	SA	Mean	Std. D	Interpretation
The leadership in my local government inspires me to contribute more	6 (4.4%)	24 (17.8%)	12 (8.9%)	65 (48.1%)	28 (20.7%)	3.63	1.131	Satisfactory
Leaders in my local government motivate employees to perform at their best	16 (11.9%)	20 (14.8%)	14 (10.4%)	64 (47.4%)	21 (15.6%)	3.40	1.253	Satisfactory
I feel encouraged by local leaders to pursue innovative solutions to community issues	6 (4.4%)	18 (13.3%)	9 (6.7%)	71 (52.6%)	31 (23.0%)	3.76	1.087	Satisfactory
Local government leaders serve as	8 (5.9%)	20 (14.8%)	9 (6.7%)	55 (40.7%)	43 (31.9%)	3.78	1.214	Satisfactory

Statement	SD	D	NS	A	SA	Mean	Std. D	Interpretation
role models for ethical behavior								
The values demonstrated by local leaders align with my own values	9 (6.7%)	36 (26.7%)	6 (4.4%)	43 (31.9%)	41 (30.4%)	3.53	1.343	Satisfactory
Average						3.62	1.21	Satisfactory

The findings indicate a generally satisfactory perception of transformational leadership in Kanungu District's local government, with particular strengths in inspiring contributions and encouraging innovation. The overall average mean score of 3.62 suggests that local government leaders are, to a reasonable extent, effective in fulfilling their roles.

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics on Local Government Performance

Statement	Mean	Std. D	Interpretation
Services are delivered efficiently in my local government	3.45	1.18	Satisfactory
Local government is accountable to citizens	3.32	1.24	Satisfactory
Community members are satisfied with local government services	3.28	1.31	Satisfactory
Local government responds effectively to community needs	3.41	1.22	Satisfactory
Average	3.37	1.24	Satisfactory

4.3 Correlation Analysis

Table 8: Correlation Results for Transformational Leadership Style and Local Government Performance

Variable	Transformational Leadership	Local Government Performance
Transformational Leadership		
Pearson Correlation	1	.658**

Variable	Transformational Leadership	Local Government Performance
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
N	135	135
Local Government Performance		
Pearson Correlation	.658**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
N	135	135

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Pearson correlation coefficient for the correlation between Transformational Leadership Style and Local Government Performance is 0.658. This implies that there is a very strong positive correlation, which means that the more effective the Transformational Leadership Style, the better the local government performance. The significance value (p-value) is 0.000. This indicates that the correlation is statistically significant at 0.01 level.

4.4 Regression Analysis

Table 9: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.658a	.433	.429	4.512

a. Predictors: (Constant), Transformational leadership style

Table 10: ANOVA Results

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	2064.32	1	2064.32	101.44	.000b
Residual	2706.68	133	20.35		
Total	4771.00	134			

a. Dependent Variable: Local government performance
b. Predictors: (Constant), Transformational leadership style

Table 11: Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	8.234	1.892		4.352	.000
Transformational leadership style	.349	.035	.658	10.072	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Local government performance

A value of 0.433 for the R Square shows that about 43.3% of the variance in local government performance can be predicted from transformational leadership style. Adjusted R² of 0.429 shows that the model is stable even after considering the number of predictors. The unstandardized coefficient of the transformational leadership style is 0.349 meaning that every one unit increase in transformational leadership will result to 0.349 unit increase in local government performance. Given a t-value of 10.072 and a significance level of 0.000, it is evident that transformational leadership style affects local government performance.

Thus, null hypothesis H₀₁ stating that "There are no significant effects of transformational leadership style on local government performance" was rejected.

4.5 Qualitative Findings

The qualitative data provided complementary insights into the quantitative findings. Four major themes emerged from the thematic analysis: (1) Inspiring and Motivating Followers, (2) Fostering Innovation and Problem-Solving, (3) Leading by Example, and (4) Challenges in Value Alignment.

Theme 1: Inspiring and Motivating Followers

Key informants consistently reported that transformational leaders in the district inspired and motivated employees to perform at their best. One key informant stated:

"Leaders in my local government motivate employees to perform at their best and this results in good employee performance, increasing their productivity." (KI₁, 2025)

Another key informant attested:

"Good leaders inspire their staff and for our case, our leaders have always delegated us duties that have enabled us to learn and perfect our work." (KI₂, 2025)

Theme 2: Fostering Innovation and Problem-Solving

Respondents noted that transformational leaders encouraged creative approaches to community challenges. A key informant observed:

"Our leaders encourage us to think outside the box. When we face challenges in service delivery, they ask us to propose solutions rather than just waiting for instructions from above." (KI₃, 2025)

Theme 3: Leading by Example

The importance of ethical role modelling was emphasized by several informants:

"The leaders who perform well are those who lead by example. When they are punctual, honest, and committed, we also feel motivated to do the same." (KI₄, 2025)

Theme 4: Challenges in Value Alignment

Despite the positive perceptions, some informants noted challenges:

"Sometimes there is a disconnect between what leaders say they value and what they actually do. This creates confusion and sometimes reduces trust." (KI₅, 2025)

This qualitative finding corroborates the quantitative result showing that 26.7% of respondents disagreed that leaders' values align with their own values.

The qualitative results seemed mostly congruent with the quantitative findings. The themes related to inspiring and motivating the followers were congruent with the high mean scores on the leadership inspiration subscale. The innovation theme was congruent with the high mean score of 3.76 on encouragement of innovative solutions. The leading by example theme was congruent with the high mean score of 3.78 on ethical role modeling. The value alignment challenges theme was congruent with the 26.7 percent disagreement on value alignment from the quantitative study.

5. Discussion

5.1 Effects of Transformational Leadership on Local Government Performance

From the above findings, it is evident that transformational leadership positively and significantly influences local government performance in the district of Kanungu. Participants reported a moderate to high level of being inspired and motivated by their leaders, whose mean score was 3.62, implying that transformational leaders successfully involve their team members in their activities and create a teamwork atmosphere. It corroborates the claim by Bass and Avolio (1994) that transformational leaders increase organizational effectiveness by inspiring their followers to go beyond their self-interests for the betterment of the organization as a whole.

The positive and high correlation ($r = 0.658$) between transformational leadership and local government performance highlights the importance of competent leadership in public administration. As a leader inspires and motivates his/her subordinates, he/she creates such an environment that fosters innovation and accountability, which is essential in dealing with challenges posed to local governments. It concurs with the findings of previous studies indicating that transformational leadership contributes to employee satisfaction and service delivery (Mugisha, 2021; Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2013).

The high mean score of 3.76 on encouraging innovative solutions implies that local leaders have been effective in cultivating an innovation culture. Such an implication is particularly important in public administration because innovative solutions may help solve problems and provide services more effectively. The relatively stable level of agreement in respondents' opinions shows that there is a clear opinion about the leadership's conduciveness towards creativity and this opinion may be used to solve community problems.

The results of ethical behavior also have important implications. With a mean score of 3.78, one may say that respondents see their leaders as ethically role models. This fact is very important for creating public trust which is essential for good governance. Ethical leadership may make local government more reputable and legitimate and will make people take part in the work of local government more actively.

However, the results related to value alignment have raised some concerns. With a mean score of 3.53 and a considerable share of respondents disagreeing (26.7%) show a discrepancy between the values of local leaders and employees. Such a misalignment may negatively affect cooperation and trust and may harm the performance of local government.

5.2 Theoretical Implications

The results uphold Transformational Leadership Theory and Public Choice Theory. In line with Transformational Leadership Theory, the four elements of transformational leadership, which include idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, were observable in the perception of the respondents concerning their leaders. The high level of correlation between transformational leadership and performance is an affirmation of the assertions by Bass (1985).

The findings further confirm Public Choice Theory (Buchanan & Tullock, 1962) as they show how transformational leadership helps in reconciling individual and collective interests. In Public Choice Theory, it is argued that political actors such as bureaucrats and workers are rational actors whose behavior is driven by self-interest. Nonetheless, in this research, it was revealed that transformational leaders were able to redirect self-interests into collective organizational interests through the creation of vision and a feeling of common goal.

5.3 Comparison with Existing Literature

The results are in line with the work by Ralinala and Zweni (2024), which established a relationship between transformational leadership, motivation of employees, and service delivery in South African municipalities. The results of the study are in accordance with those of Pandisha (2025), where transformational leadership was determined as one of the key components in the implementation of strategic plans in Tanzanian Local Government Authorities. The same applies to the results of Lukwago (2017) and Nakanyike (2023), who determined a positive relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance in Ugandan districts.

The value of the R^2 coefficient in this research is considerably lower (0.433) than 0.917 reported in some previous researches. Such a variation may be due to the contextual and methodological factors, or to the inclusion of different variables in other research.

6. Conclusions

The research proves that transformational leadership is a key element in improving performance in local government in Kanungu District. Such leaders have been shown to be competent in mobilizing and motivating employees. The high means scores and strong correlation with performance indicators demonstrate that when transformational practices are applied by leaders, the environment becomes favorable enough to allow for innovation and responsibility from employees.

Transformational leaders give employees the power to act beyond self-interest for the betterment of the larger community. This way, the motivation of the employees is aligned with the objectives of the organization. Improvement in performance is witnessed through good results of service delivery and the satisfaction of the community members. Besides, transformational leaders can have a huge impact on governance in local governments.

The findings also affirm Public Choice Theory (Buchanan & Tullock, 1962) since they illustrate how transformational leadership brings self-interests into congruence with common interests. According to Public Choice Theory, individuals working within politics and bureaucracy are rational individuals and act in their self-interests. But in the present study, transformational leadership has been found to bring self-interests into congruence with common organizational interests through visionary leadership and collective commitment.

7. Recommendations

1. In order to fully tap into the benefits of transformational leadership in improving the performance of local government, the following measures are suggested:

2. 1. Leaders of the local government should be trained through comprehensive training programs on transformational leadership. In such training programs, it is necessary to consider not only the theoretical dimension of transformational leadership but also its practical application to real governance.
3. 2. Institutional leaders should be trained through comprehensive leadership development programs, which will focus on emotional intelligence and communication skills. This can be achieved through seminars and workshops where leaders learn how to motivate people through empathy and active listening.
4. Establishing mentorship programs where experienced transformational leaders guide emerging leaders can help cultivate the necessary skills and attitudes. This peer support can provide practical insights and real-world applications of transformational leadership principles.
5. Local governments should come up with performance evaluation programs in which the leaders are evaluated on the basis of how inspiring and motivating they have been with their team members. Employees' opinions must be included in the performance evaluations in order to make sure that the leaders remain accountable for their transformational behavior.
6. 6. The local governments should try to create an environment in which the spirit of innovation is prevalent. The leaders should be allowed to take risks and experiment with new ideas without any hesitation on their part.
7. 7. Since there was a finding about value misalignment, the local governments should try to include participatory decision-making processes and dialogues between the leaders and employees.

8. Contribution to Knowledge

The findings from this study provide an empirical basis for showing how transformational leadership style impacts the performance of the local government in the district of Kanungu. These findings contribute immensely to the field in terms of developing the leadership theories by placing the theories in context. In using Kanungu District for this study, the researchers have placed the leadership theories in the socio-economic and cultural environment of Uganda. This is important because it shows the importance of having leadership theories adapted to the local situation.

Another contribution of this study to the field is through the use of the two leadership theories (Transformational Leadership Theory and Public Choice Theory) in explaining leadership dynamics.

9. Areas for Further Research

It would be advisable for future research to look at the long-term effects of transformational leadership on community trust and participation in local governments. Comparative research involving the examination of the effects of leadership in different districts of Uganda may shed more light into what kind of leadership is effective in different situations. Contingency theories of leadership for local government in developing countries need to be developed and tested in future research.

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Author Contributions: All authors contributed equally to the conceptualization, methodology, analysis, and writing of this manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval: Ethical clearance was obtained from the Victoria University Research Ethics Committee (Ref: VU-REC/2024/012). Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Data Availability: The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.