



# The Differential Impact of Transformational Leadership Dimensions on Academic Staff Performance: Evidence from Ugandan Universities

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**Abstract:** *Despite transformational leadership having received a wide authorship globally, very few studies have specifically focused on how the individual dimensions predict academic staff performance in Ugandan universities. A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was employed, targeting 844 full-time academic staff across six public and private universities. Data were collected using questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS V25 to establish the link among constructs. The findings suggest that academic leaders in Ugandan universities practice transformational leadership across all the four dimensions. However, only Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, and Individualized Consideration were significant predictors of staff performance, while Intellectual Stimulation did not demonstrate a unique predictive effect within this context. The study advances leadership theory by emphasizing the multidimensional and context-dependent nature of transformational leadership, particularly within culturally distinct African higher education settings. Practically, it underscores the necessity for targeted leadership development programs emphasizing moral integrity, motivational capabilities, innovative thinking, and individualized mentorship. This paper's contribution lies in empirically validating the differentiated applicability of transformational leadership dimensions in a non-Western context, challenging the prevalent aggregate approach and offering actionable insights for leadership practices in African universities. This study therefore makes a distinct and valuable contribution to both theory and practice by unpacking the nuanced role of transformational leadership dimensions in shaping academic performance in Ugandan universities.*

**Keywords:** *Transformational Leadership, Dimensions, Academic Staff, Performance, Universities*

## How to cite this work (APA):

Arinaitwe, J. B., Maket, L. J. & Chepkwony, J. (2025). The Differential Impact of Transformational Leadership Dimensions on Academic Staff Performance: Evidence from Ugandan Universities. *Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education*, 9(4), 1045 – 1057. <https://doi.org/10.59765/lnh48>.

## 1. Introduction

As competition intensifies, organizations rely on highly performing individuals to achieve their goals and sustain competitive advantage (Alessa, 2021). This requires entities to establish clear performance evaluation mechanisms. Academic staff who demonstrate high performance often experience job satisfaction, mastery,

and pride-attributes that are essential in higher education institutions (HEIs). These academic staff underpin the quality of teaching, research output, and institutional reputation. In the context of Ugandan universities, academic staff performance is central to achieving national development goals, fostering innovation, and enhancing global competitiveness. While universities have implemented performance appraisal systems, training

initiatives, pay enhancements, and professional development programs, academic staff performance remains a persistent challenge, as reflected in declining teaching quality, low research output, and limited community engagement (Arinaitwe et al., 2021; Kasule et al., 2021; Rwothumio et al., 2021; Obedgiu et al., 2022). To address this enduring performance gap, the present study examines whether leadership dimensions matter (Okoth, 2018).

Effective leadership within HEIs plays a vital role in driving transformation and has therefore attracted substantial scholarly interest, particularly in relation to transformational leadership (Hilton et al., 2021). This leadership approach emphasizes inspiring and motivating staff toward a shared vision, fostering innovation, and developing individual potential attributes viewed as essential for academic excellence and organizational change (Abolnasser et al., 2023). Transformational leaders influence followers' attitudes, behaviors, and performance through four key dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978). Existing research across diverse educational contexts indicates that transformational leadership positively correlates with several performance-related outcomes, such as staff motivation, satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Selamat, Nordin, & Adnan, 2013; Aydin, Savier, & Uysal, 2013; Habeeb & Eyupoglu, 2024). In the Ugandan context, however, studies assessing academic performance have largely focused on other predictors such as HR practices, training, and performance appraisal, leaving gaps in leadership-focused evidence (Arinaitwe et al., 2021; Kasule et al., 2021; Rwothumio et al., 2021).

Although prior studies provide valuable insights, most have concentrated on primary and secondary education systems, corporate environments, or non-African regions such as Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. Evidence from countries like Yemen and Kuwait shows that transformational leadership enhances staff performance (Alsaedi & Male, 2013; Early & Davenport, 2010), but such findings may not fully apply to African higher education systems, where distinct socio-economic, cultural, and institutional dynamics shape leadership-performance relationships (Kiron & Sen, 2011). Furthermore, scholarship seldom examines the individual effects of transformational leadership dimensions. Most studies treat transformational leadership as an aggregate

construct, yet theory suggests that its dimensions may exert differential effects on staff attitudes, motivation, and performance. This theoretical gap is particularly salient in African higher education institutions, including Ugandan universities, where limited empirical evidence explores how specific transformational leadership dimensions influence academic staff performance.

To provide conceptual grounding, this study is anchored in Transformational Leadership Theory (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985), which explains how leaders inspire followers to transcend self-interest and achieve higher performance. By introducing the theoretical lens in the introduction, this study situates its arguments within an established framework that clarifies the expected relationships between leadership behaviors and academic performance. Through this lens, transformational leadership dimensions are not merely managerial behaviours but psychological mechanisms that shape how academic staff engage with their core functions such as teaching, research, and community service. Overall, this study contributes to addressing a notable gap in the Ugandan higher education landscape by examining how individual transformational leadership dimensions differentially predict academic staff performance. By doing so, the study challenges the common aggregated approach to transformational leadership and offers nuanced, context-specific insights that can guide leadership development and performance improvement efforts within African universities.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

We anchored our study on Transformational Leadership Theory (TLT), one of the most influential frameworks in leadership scholarship. TLT, initially conceptualized by Burns (1978) and extended by Bass (1985), posits that effective leaders inspire followers to transcend their self-interests and achieve exceptional performance through four key behavioral dimensions: Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration. These dimensions are theorized to enhance follower motivation, creativity, and commitment by shaping both emotional and cognitive processes (Bass & Riggio, 2006). To strengthen the theoretical application in this context, we explicitly position each leadership dimension as a distinct behavioral

mechanism expected to influence academic staff performance differently, aligning with recent calls for more dimension-specific analyses rather than aggregated transformational leadership measures (Dinh et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2019). TLT is well-suited to higher education institutions where leadership interactions are relational, developmental, and intellectual, yet its assumptions may not fully capture contextual challenges in African universities, such as resource constraints and hierarchical cultures. This underscores the need for empirical testing of its dimensions within Uganda's academic setting.

## 2.2 Empirical Literature Review and Study Hypotheses

### Idealized Influence and Academic Staff Performance

Idealized Influence refers to leaders acting as ethical role models whose values, integrity, and behavior inspire trust and admiration (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Studies consistently show that leaders who demonstrate professionalism and ethical conduct foster higher employee commitment, creativity, and performance. For example, Ngaithe et al. (2016) found that ethical leadership behaviors enhance research productivity and innovation in academic settings. Lai et al. (2020) similarly highlights that ethical role modeling increases job satisfaction and collaborative engagement.

However, a critical synthesis of existing studies reveals that most evidence originates from Western or Asian education systems, with limited research validating whether Idealized Influence predicts academic staff performance in African public universities, where governance structures, socio-cultural expectations, and leadership norms differ substantially.

Furthermore, existing research often treats transformational leadership as a single composite variable, obscuring the unique predictive effects of Idealized Influence. This masks potentially important nuances in contexts where ethical leadership may hold greater weight due to institutional instability or trust deficits. Empirical Gap: Few studies in Uganda examine whether Idealized Influence specifically predicts academic staff performance indicators such as teaching effectiveness and research output.

*H1: Idealized influence positively affects the performance of academic staff in Ugandan universities.*

### Inspirational Motivation and Academic Staff Performance

Inspirational Motivation refers to leaders' ability to articulate a compelling vision, express optimism, and inspire enthusiasm among staff (Bass, 1985). Research indicates that such motivational leadership drives employee engagement, resilience, and proactive behavior. Quin et al. (2015) observed that Inspirational Motivation enhances innovative thinking among academic staff, while Militaru (2014) found that leaders who express clear expectations and shared visions improve research productivity and teaching effectiveness.

Recent studies emphasize that in resource-constrained environments, such as Sub-Saharan Africa, motivational leadership becomes even more critical for sustaining staff morale (Sengendo & Eduan, 2024). However, existing studies rarely examine the unique contribution of Inspirational Motivation apart from other transformational leadership dimensions, resulting in a knowledge gap regarding its isolated predictive power. Additionally, most African leadership studies focus on secondary education, not universities, limiting their applicability to faculty who operate with greater professional autonomy and academic responsibilities. Empirical Gap: There is limited evidence on whether Inspirational Motivation independently predicts academic staff performance within Ugandan universities.

*H2: Inspirational motivation positively influences the performance of academic staff in Ugandan universities.*

### Intellectual Stimulation and Academic Staff Performance

Intellectual Stimulation occurs when leaders challenge staff to think critically, question assumptions, and innovate (Bass & Riggio, 2006). International studies have linked intellectual stimulation to improved research output, problem-solving skills, and innovative teaching practices (Ali & Jalal, 2018; Sosik & Jung, 2010). Leithwood and

Jantzi (2005) found that such leaders encourage reflective practice and experimental approaches in pedagogy.

Despite this evidence, critical analysis reveals inconsistencies. Several studies in East Africa report that Intellectual Stimulation has minimal or non-significant effects on performance when other leadership dimensions are controlled (Ogola, 2017; Musyoki, 2022). This suggests that in hierarchical and resource-limited environments, cognitive stimulation may be overshadowed by relational and motivational leadership behaviors that resonate more with staff needs. Additionally, Limited technological infrastructure and heavy teaching loads in Ugandan universities may weaken the practical impact of intellectual stimulation. Empirical Gap: Little research has examined whether Intellectual Stimulation plays a distinct predictive role in academic staff performance in Uganda, where contextual barriers may limit its effectiveness.

**H3:** *Intellectual stimulation positively affects the performance of academic staff in Ugandan universities.*

**Individualized Consideration and Academic Staff Performance**

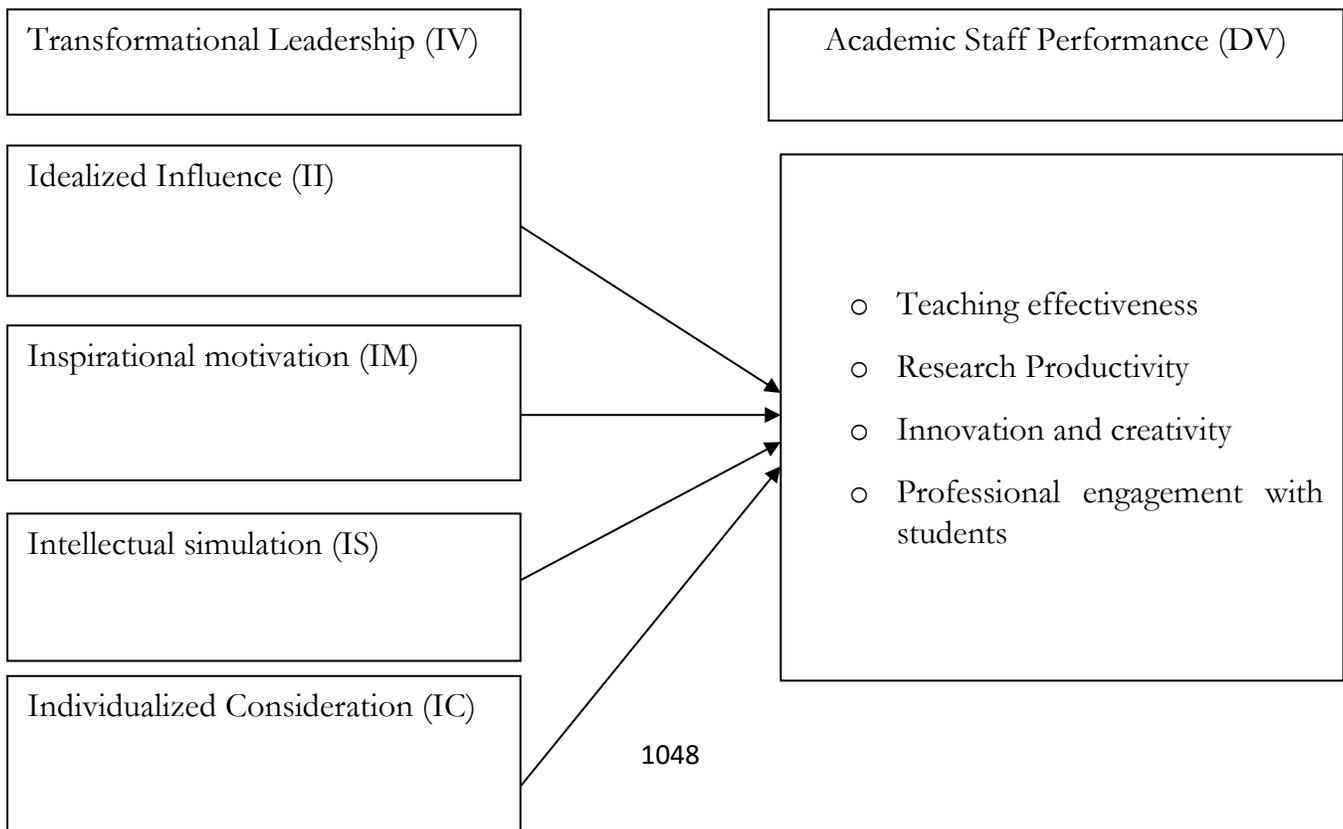
Individualized Consideration (IC) involves leaders providing personalized support, mentorship, and

professional development tailored to individual staff needs (Bass, 1985). Studies consistently link individualized support to improved academic engagement, creativity, and organizational commitment (Ngaithe et al., 2016; Lai et al., 2020). In higher education, individualized mentorship contributes to improved teaching quality, research output, and job satisfaction.

However, critical synthesis shows that few studies in African universities have isolated the role of Individualized Consideration from other transformational leadership dimensions. Additionally, contextual constraints such as high student-staff ratios, limited mentorship structures, and inconsistent leadership training in Ugandan universities raise questions about whether IC can meaningfully predict performance under such conditions. Moreover, the cultural expectation of personalized support in many African institutions suggests that this dimension may have heightened relevance-but this has not been empirically tested. Empirical Gap: There is a lack of evidence on the unique predictive effect of Individualized Consideration on performance in Ugandan universities.

**H4:** *Individualized consideration positively influences the performance of academic staff in Ugandan universities.*

Based on the above review of literature, the following hypothetical model is developed:



**Figure 1: Conceptual Model:** Authors (2025) modified in concurrence with Transformational Leadership Theory (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985).

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design and Approach

The study employed a quantitative approach using a cross-sectional survey design. This design was chosen because it allows the collection of standardized data from a wide range of academic staff across multiple universities at a single point in time, facilitating the statistical testing of hypothesized relationships (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This design is appropriate for examining associations between transformational leadership dimensions and academic staff performance without manipulating variables, and it provides a practical means of capturing naturally occurring leadership–performance dynamics within universities.

#### 3.2 Population, Sample, and Sampling Procedure

The target population consisted of 844 full-time academic staff drawn from six public and private universities across Uganda’s four geographical regions (Central, Eastern, Northern, and Western). A multi-stage sampling approach was used to ensure representativeness.

First, universities were clustered by region to capture geographical variation in leadership practices and institutional structures. Second, simple random sampling was employed within each cluster to select academic staff, ensuring equal probability of inclusion and minimizing sampling bias. This approach aligns with recommended probability-based procedures for educational research where populations are spread across multiple institutions (Roberts, 2025). A total of 727 complete surveys were received, representing an effective response rate of 86.2%, which is considered strong for organizational survey research. The demographic profile of respondents included gender, age distribution, rank, and faculty affiliation to support a deeper understanding of sample characteristics.

#### 3.3 Measurement of Study Variables

To enhance reliability and validity, the study adopted previously validated instruments with minor modifications to suit the Ugandan higher education context.

#### Transformational Leadership Dimensions:

Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration were measured using the short version of the Transformational Leadership Questionnaire developed by Carless et al. (2000). The instrument has demonstrated high internal consistency in previous studies, and the adapted version was pretested with a small sample of Ugandan academic staff to ensure cultural and contextual appropriateness.

#### Academic Staff Performance:

Academic staff performance was assessed using indicators derived from Molefe (2010), encompassing teaching effectiveness, research productivity, innovation and creativity, and professional engagement with students. Items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

#### Reliability:

Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for all constructs exceeded the acceptable threshold of .70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency.

#### 3.4 Data Collection Procedure

A structured self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data. The questionnaire was distributed both physically and electronically to accommodate institutional differences in accessibility and staff schedules. Prior to data collection, permission to conduct the study was obtained from each participating university through their respective Research or Academic Registrars’ offices.

Data collection took place over a three-month period, during which research assistants coordinated distribution and follow-up to improve response rates. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the estimated time required to complete the questionnaire (approximately 15–20 minutes). Completed questionnaires were checked for completeness before being coded for analysis.

#### 3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the relevant institutional review board. Participation was

voluntary, and informed consent was obtained before respondents completed the survey. Anonymity and confidentiality were assured by avoiding the collection of identifying personal information, storing data securely, and using aggregated results for reporting. These measures helped minimize social desirability bias and adhered to ethical standards for social science research.

### 3.6 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS Version 25. The analysis followed several sequential steps:

#### Data Cleaning and Screening:

Missing values, outliers, and inconsistencies were assessed and addressed before analysis.

#### Descriptive Statistics:

Means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis were computed to understand the distribution of variables.

#### Correlation Analysis:

Pearson correlations were used to assess relationships between leadership dimensions and academic staff performance, and to check for multicollinearity. Correlation values ranging from .058 to .689 indicated no multicollinearity issues.

#### Common Method Variance:

Harman's single-factor test revealed that the largest single factor accounted for 18.59% of the variance, below the 50% threshold, suggesting CMV was not a significant concern.

#### Hierarchical Regression Analysis:

Regression models were used to test the incremental predictive power of each transformational leadership dimension. Model 1 included demographic controls (age, gender). Models 2–5 sequentially added Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration. This

approach allowed isolation of the unique contribution of each dimension, aligning with the study's focus on differential effects.

#### Assumption Checks:

Normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and independence of residuals were evaluated. A Durbin–Watson statistic of 1.965 indicated no autocorrelation, supporting the validity of the regression models.

## 4. Results and Discussion

In this section, findings of the study as per the objectives are outlined besides highlighting presentation of findings as well as discussions.

### 4.1 Results

#### 4.1.1 Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations for each transformational leadership dimension alongside academic staff performance (ASP). Descriptive statistics indicated that lecturers perceived their leaders as moderately exhibiting transformational leadership behaviors, with mean scores ranging from 3.289 (Intellectual Stimulation) to 3.591 (Inspirational Motivation) on a 5-point scale. Standard deviations varied between 0.397 and 0.698, reflecting moderate variability in perceptions, particularly for Individualized Consideration. Correlation analysis demonstrated significant positive associations between the dimensions and academic staff performance, with Idealized Influence ( $r = 0.614, p < 0.01$ ) and Individualized Consideration ( $r = 0.689, p < 0.01$ ) showing the strongest relationships. Inspirational Motivation was also robustly correlated ( $r = 0.582, p < 0.01$ ), while Intellectual Stimulation exhibited a weaker but still significant correlation ( $r = 0.107, p < 0.01$ ). These findings suggest that transformational leadership behaviors are not only moderately practiced but also meaningfully linked to enhanced academic staff performance, underscoring the importance of ethical leadership and individualized support in academic settings. In addition, with correlations ranging between .058 and .689, suggests our data is free from multicollinearity.

**Table 1: Descriptive and Correlations**

Variable	Mean	SD	II	IM	IS	IC	ASP
Idealized Influence (II)	3.457	.3967	1				
Inspirational Motivation (IM)	3.591	.6278	.533**	1			
Intellectual Stimulation (IS)	3.289	.6454	.058	.157**	1		
Individualized Consideration (IC)	3.348	.6975	.557**	.545**	.091*	1	
Academic Staff Performance (ASP)	3.510	.558	.614**	.582**	.107**	.689**	1

Note: N = 727, \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ .

#### 4.1.2 Regression Analysis

After conducting the preliminary analysis, the results showed a significant association warranting entering them into a regression model. The model summary in table 2 presents the results of a hierarchical regression analysis examining how transformational leadership dimensions predict academic staff performance, while also accounting for demographic variables (age and gender). In Model 1, age and gender, explain a very small portion of the variance in academic staff performance (R Square = 0.010, Adjusted R Square = 0.008), indicating that these demographics have minimal predictive value. The F change is statistically significant but very low, and the model fit is poor. In Model 2 Idealized Influence was added, the model's explanatory power improves notably (R Square increases to 0.379), meaning that age, gender, and Idealized Influence together explain 37.9% of the variance in academic staff performance. The R Square Change (0.368) shows that Idealized Influence significantly adds to the model's predictive capability (Sig. F Change < 0.001). In Model 3,

we included Inspirational Motivation, the model's R Square rises to 0.477. This represents a substantial additional contribution, with an R Square Change of 0.098, indicating Inspirational Leadership's significant role (Sig. F Change < 0.001). In Model 4, Intellectual Stimulation was introduced but does not further improve the model (R Square remains 0.477, R Square Change = 0.000, Sig. F Change = 0.576), suggesting this dimension does not add significant incremental predictive value beyond the previous variables. Finally, in Model 5 we incorporated Individualized Consideration and achieves the highest explanatory power (R Square = 0.615, Adjusted R Square = 0.611), meaning all predictors together explain 61.5% of the variance in academic staff performance. The R Square Change is substantial (0.137), and the improvement is highly significant (Sig. F Change < 0.001). The model's standard error is lowest here, indicating improved fit. Further, the Durbin-Watson value (1.965 in the final model) suggests that there is essentially no autocorrelation in the residuals, meaning the residuals are independent and the regression model meets one of the key assumptions for linear regression.

**Table 2: Hierarchical Regression**

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
	Beta	Beta	Beta	beta	Beta
Gender	.057	-.022	-.008	-.005	-.113
Age	-.084	-.029	-.100	-.098	-.174
Idealized Influence		.614***	.403***	.404***	.214***
Inspirational Motivation			.380**	.377***	.224***
Intellectual Stimulation				-.016	-.025
Individualized Consideration					.504***
R <sup>2</sup>	.010	.379	.477	.477	.615
ΔR <sup>2</sup>	.010	.368	.098	.000	.137
F	3.826	428.188***	135.976***	.313	256.396***
Durbin-Watson					1.965

Note: Dependent variable: Academic staff Performance, \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

## 4.2 Discussion

The results of this study unequivocally identify Idealized Influence as the most potent predictor of academic staff performance within Ugandan universities, underscoring the critical role of ethical, visionary leadership in shaping academic outcomes. This finding extends the transformational leadership discourse by delineating the differentiated impact of leadership dimensions, thus challenging prior literature that often aggregates these constructs or underestimates the primacy of role model behaviors (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Ngaihe et al., 2016). The pronounced influence of Idealized Influence in this context signals that academic staff performance is not only contingent upon transactional incentives but fundamentally anchored in leaders' embodiment of values that inspire trust, respect, and commitment, which are particularly salient within the socio-cultural milieu of Ugandan higher education institutions. Contextually, Ugandan universities operate within complex environments characterized by resource constraints, evolving governance structures, and aspirations for global academic competitiveness. In such settings, the presence of leaders who exemplify integrity and foster collective purpose can cultivate motivational climates conducive to enhanced teaching effectiveness, research productivity, and innovation (Lai et al., 2020; Javed et al., 2019). Practically, this suggests that investment in leadership development programs emphasizing ethical role modeling and vision articulation constitutes a strategic imperative for institutional performance enhancement. Moreover, the distinct predominance of Idealized Influence highlights a nuanced pathway through which academic leaders may galvanize staff engagement beyond technical management,

emphasizing impression management and symbolic actions that resonate deeply with faculty values and societal expectations.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the refinement of transformational leadership frameworks by empirically substantiating the differential potency of leadership dimensions in non-Western academic contexts, thereby inviting reconsideration of universalistic claims and advocating for contextualized models attentive to cultural specificity and organizational dynamics (Dinh et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2019). It enriches motivational theories by evidencing that moral exemplification serves as a critical antecedent to performance outcomes, an insight that informs integration with authentic leadership and social identity perspectives. Therefore, by elevating the distinct role of Idealized Influence, this study advances both practical leadership development and theoretical sophistication within the domain of academic performance management in Uganda, offering actionable pathways for universities seeking robust, ethically grounded educational excellence.

The findings of this study establish Inspirational Motivation (IM) as a significant predictor of academic staff performance in Ugandan universities, underscoring its unique and differentiated role among the transformational leadership dimensions. This result illuminates the critical importance of leaders' ability to articulate an inspiring vision and foster optimism, which energizes staff engagement and commitment to institutional goals. Unlike prior studies that often aggregate transformational leadership into composite scores, this investigation highlights Inspirational Motivation's distinct motivational

influence on performance outcomes, providing a nuanced understanding aligned with the contextual realities of Ugandan higher education. Within Ugandan universities facing challenges such as resource constraints, evolving governance, and a push for enhanced academic quality the capacity of leaders to inspire a shared purpose and instill confidence emerges as a vital pathway to elevating teaching effectiveness, research productivity, and innovation (Sengendo & Eduan, 2024; Javed et al., 2019). Practically, institutions should invest in leadership development initiatives that prioritize skills in vision communication, emotional appeal, and fostering collective efficacy, thereby cultivating a culture of sustained motivation and high performance. Theoretically, this study refines the understanding of transformational leadership by empirically demonstrating the differential predictive power of Inspirational Motivation in the African academic context, challenging Universalist assumptions and advocating for culturally and institutionally grounded leadership models (Dinh et al., 2014). It also integrates motivational and social cognitive perspectives, positioning inspirational motivation as a catalyst that transforms individual attitudes into collective academic performance. Overall, by emphasizing Inspirational Motivation's distinctive contribution, this research advances both theoretical frameworks and practical leadership approaches tailored to the dynamic and demanding landscape of Ugandan higher education.

Thirdly, our results do not support Intellectual Stimulation (IS) as a significant predictor of academic staff performance in Ugandan universities. Contrary to theoretical expectations and some earlier findings (Bass, 1985), the non-significant and negative beta coefficients observed for IS suggest that, within this context, fostering critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving among academic staff does not independently enhance performance when controlling for other transformational leadership dimensions. This aligns with recent empirical studies in Ugandan and East African education settings, which report that the effects of IS are frequently overshadowed by the stronger influence of individualized consideration, idealized influence, and inspirational motivation (Sengendo & Eduan, 2024; Musyoki, 2022; Ogola, 2017). Rather than serving as a unique catalyst, intellectual stimulation may overlap with or be subsumed by relational and motivational leadership behaviors, especially in resource-constrained or hierarchical environments where personalized support and ethical role modeling are more immediately valued.

Therefore, while IS remains a theoretically relevant dimension, its practical effect in this study is limited. These findings recommend that, Ugandan universities, leadership development programs should prioritize individualized

consideration, motivational communication, and ethical example, while also empirically re-examining the role of cognitive stimulation through further analysis and in-depth qualitative inquiry. Theoretically, our results call for a nuanced, multidimensional understanding of transformational leadership frameworks, integrating contextual differences and the potential for intellectual stimulation to operate indirectly or interactively with other dimensions (Kayombo, 2026; Ogola, 2017). Scholars are thus encouraged to re-evaluate universal leadership models, considering cultural and institutional heterogeneity to recalibrate interventions accordingly. In sum, this study refines the leadership-performance linkage by highlighting the limited and context-dependent contribution of Intellectual Stimulation in Ugandan academic institutions striving for excellence.

Finally, the findings of this study distinctly highlight Individualized Consideration (IC) as a significant and positive predictor of academic staff performance in the context of Ugandan universities. This underscores the critical importance of leaders who attend to the unique needs, aspirations, and developmental trajectories of individual staff members, thereby fostering an environment conducive to personalized growth, motivation, and enhanced performance outcomes. Unlike prior studies that have often subsumed IC under generalized constructs of transformational leadership, this research delineates its autonomous influence, deepening theoretical understanding and contextualizing the relevance of tailored leadership in resource-constrained and culturally complex Ugandan higher education institutions (Bass, 1985; Sengendo & Eduan, 2024). In Ugandan universities, where variability in staff capacity and institutional resources is pronounced, the capacity of academic leaders to provide individualized mentorship, coaching, and support emerges as a vital mechanism to nurture talent and foster professional engagement. Practically, this translates into actionable pathways emphasizing leadership development programs aimed at enhancing interpersonal skills, empathetic communication, and personalized professional development planning. Such interventions can markedly improve teaching effectiveness, research output, and innovation by empowering staff to realize their full potential in alignment with institutional goals.

Theoretically, these findings enrich transformational leadership literature by empirically establishing the discrete and impactful role of Individualized Consideration in academic settings, supporting calls for culturally sensitive and situational nuanced leadership models (Dinh et al., 2014; Wang & Li, 2022). This nuance advances motivational theories by integrating personalized leader-follower interactions as essential antecedents of individual and organizational performance. Overall, this study's

emphasis on IC contributes substantively to leadership theory and praxis, offering robust evidence for its pivotal role in fostering high performance within Ugandan universities' dynamic educational landscape.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusion

This study examined the differential effects of transformational leadership dimensions on academic staff performance within Ugandan universities. The findings demonstrate that all four dimensions—Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration—significantly predict performance, though with varying magnitudes. This pattern underscores a unique leadership–performance dynamic shaped by the institutional, cultural, and resource realities of Ugandan higher education.

Individualized Consideration emerged as the strongest driver of academic staff performance, reflecting the importance of personalized support, mentorship, and relational leadership in a context where formal developmental structures are often limited. Idealized Influence also exerted a strong effect, highlighting the role of ethical leadership in environments characterized by inconsistent governance, trust deficits, and institutional instability. Inspirational Motivation played a critical buffering role, helping academic staff sustain engagement amid resource scarcity and workload pressures. In contrast, Intellectual Stimulation—though significant—showed a comparatively weaker effect, suggesting that structural and resource constraints limit the extent to which academic staff can respond to cognitively stimulating leadership.

Collectively, these findings contribute contextually grounded insights to transformational leadership scholarship, revealing that leadership effectiveness is not uniform across settings but is shaped by institutional capacity, socio-cultural expectations, and environmental constraints. The study enhances theoretical understanding by demonstrating that transformational leadership dimensions do not exert equal influence in low-resource African university environments, and offers practical implications for strengthening academic staff performance through targeted leadership development.

### 5.2 Recommendations

1. Prioritize relational and ethical leadership development. Given the strong effects of individualized consideration and Idealized Influence, universities should invest in

leadership development programs that emphasize mentorship, personalized support, integrity, and professional role modeling. Leaders who demonstrate these behaviours help compensate for institutional gaps and build trust in environments characterized by governance challenges.

2. Strengthen visionary and motivational communication. Inspirational motivation played a key buffering role in mitigating resource and workload constraints. University leaders should therefore cultivate and institutionalize communication practices that articulate a clear vision, reinforce shared goals, and sustain morale, particularly in low-resource contexts.

3. Improve institutional structures that enable staff innovation and performance. The comparatively weaker effect of Intellectual Stimulation indicates that structural barriers constrain innovation. Universities should address these constraints by improving research infrastructure, reducing excessive teaching loads, and streamlining bureaucratic processes so that academic staff can fully respond to cognitively stimulating leadership.

4. Embed context-responsive leadership frameworks into policy and practice. The findings demonstrate that transformational leadership operates differently in Ugandan universities compared to high-resource settings. Institutions should therefore integrate context-specific leadership competencies into promotion, appraisal, and governance systems, ensuring alignment between leadership behaviour, institutional realities, and performance expectations.

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