



THE ROLE OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN ENHANCING STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN ETHIOPIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract: The primary research question that the study attempted to address was: What impact does the transformational leadership practice of school principals have on students' academic performance in the eyes of teachers? The research design used in the study was a convergent parallel mixed method. The methodology for gathering data was sound, utilizing an open ended semi-structured interview during the qualitative phase and a modified MLQ-based questionnaire during the quantitative phase. Student academic performance was the dependent variable in the study. In contrast, transformational leadership behaviors, including idealized influence (IF), inspirational motivation (IM), intellectual stimulation (IS), and individualized consideration (IC), were the independent variables. Purposive sampling was used to choose the subjects, guaranteeing a representative and diverse sample for the research. The study's target population comprised 5956 teachers and 95 public secondary schools in Ethiopia's Sidama region. An appropriate sample approach was employed to conduct the study, which involved 362 teachers from 24 public secondary schools. Twenty teachers participated in the qualitative portion of the study. The collected data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. According to the study's findings, most teachers perceived and agreed that their school's principal adopt transformational leadership practices. The study also showed that, with an overall correlation value of $r = .779$ ($p < .01$), the principal's transformational leadership practices significantly and positively impact students' academic attainment. The linear multiple regression analysis revealed that changes in the principal's transformational leadership approach account for 61.4% of the variation in student academic performance.

Keywords: Leadership, Transformational leadership, School principal, Teachers, Student academic performance.

1. INTRODUCTION

Preserving the quality of education is a top priority for Ethiopian school administrators. School administration and leadership significantly impact student learning and the quality of education. School leadership qualities positively impact teacher dedication, which has an excellent trickle-down effect on learning outcomes. Quin,

Deris, Bischoff, and Johnson (2015) contended that there is a greater manifestation of transformational leadership attributes among principals in high-achieving schools than those in lower-performing schools. According to Bush (2008), school leadership can motivate subordinates to fulfill the school's objective. Similarly, leadership is essential for efficacy and a dynamic learning environment, according to Leithwood and Jantzi (2006). Successful school principals, according to Day, Sammons, Leithwood, Hopkins, GU, Brown, and Ahtaridou (2011), are also considered to be able to decide the course of the school while creating a conducive learning environment and establishing the school's vision based on stakeholders' expectations.

Numerous studies show that a critical element influencing education quality and school improvement is the efficacy and competency of school principals as leaders. Based on past experiences, the researcher concurs with the scholars' assessment that all other elements influencing student learning outcomes are influenced by good school leadership. Based on how well school principals lead, there is a glaring disparity in students' learning results between schools (Day, Gu & Sammons, 2016). In schools with more effective leadership, students score higher on the national exam (MOE, 2021). According to Anastasiou and Garametsi (2021), school leadership significantly impacts a school's effectiveness. Similar arguments were made by Ibrahim (2021) and Harris, Jones, Adams, and Cheah (2019), who claimed that distinct academic performance variations exist among students depending on the leadership styles examined and that effective school leadership can alter students' academic outcomes.

Teachers have a crucial role in enhancing students' academic performance and the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers are instructional leaders in the teaching-learning process and interact directly with students in the classroom. Principals must inspire teachers to use creativity and more efficacy in their teaching. This suggests that principals must exhibit leadership qualities to encourage teachers to give their best effort. Teaching staff members can be inspired by principals who exhibit transformational leadership traits. Teachers' opinions of the principal's leadership style are crucial to improving schools and boosting student achievement. Consequently, it was imperative to investigate the teachers' perceptions regarding their administrators' leadership practices.

2. Research question and objectives

Main Research Question: The study's primary research question is: What are the teachers' perceptions of principals' transformational leadership practice and its effect on students' academic performance in the Sidama region of Ethiopia?

The main objectives of this study were;

- To determine the perceptions of the teachers about principals' transformational leadership practice in the Sidama region of Ethiopia;
- To determine the possible effects of principals' transformational leadership on students' academic performance in the Sidama region of Ethiopia

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. The concept of leadership

The definition of leadership varies according to the viewpoint of the person attempting to define it (Stodgill, 1974). Adding to the complexity and diversity of perspectives on leadership, Burns (1978:2) stated that "leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth." Gill (2006) said that various people have different perspectives on leadership.

According to Bass (1999), leadership is the process of personal development that results in acquiring particular qualities. Bass further argued that leadership inspires people to meet organizational goals by demonstrating these traits. Kouzes and Posner (2006) further describe leadership as an interpersonal interaction. According to the

authors, leadership is created through interactions between individuals who want to lead and those who would instead follow (Kouzes & Posner, 2006). Yukl (2010) also states that influence persuades subordinates to pursue preset organizational objectives. Yukl (2013) further argued that a critical element of leadership is persuading subordinates to strive toward common goals. According to Northouse (1997:3), leadership is "a process by which an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal." In addition, Northouse reaffirmed the idea of leadership as an influence in his later works, where a leader motivates others to achieve common organizational goals (Northouse, 2016).

Being a leader involves influence in social interactions. Controlling or exerting influence over others is not the only aspect of being a leader. However, what makes a leader is their ability to encourage, inspire, and acknowledge others' talents and creativity (Northouse, 2018). Rather than being bestowed upon people based on their unique abilities or expertise, leadership, according to Yukl (2012) and Northouse (2018), is a dynamic process engaging individuals in a specific interaction environment. According to Yukl (2012) and Northouse (2018), leadership is required to accomplish organizational goals. It requires particular relationships with individuals engaged in the system's interaction process, according to Kouzes and Posner (2006). Leaders must convey their vision and objective clearly and succinctly to motivate followers to work towards it. Because of this positive association, the subordinate may become more driven to meet organizational objectives.

3.2 Transformational Leadership

In his 1978 book "Leadership Concepts," Burns presented the idea of transformational leadership. The term "leadership" was first used by James Downton in 1973, before Burns' detailed explanation. In his first book, Burns' transformational leadership theory was used to analyze political leaders. Burns thereby connected the function of leadership with followership (Northouse, 1997). According to Burns (p. 20), transformational leadership is characterized by "one or more individuals interacting with others in a way that inspires and elevates one another to higher moral standards." As stated by Burns, the primary objective of transformational leadership is to inspire and encourage individuals to take the initiative to accomplish organizational objectives and move beyond themselves. Using these drives, executives may achieve organizational goals and give employees a sense of pride in the company's success.

Nickerson (2021) states that Bass (1990) expanded upon and clarified the concept of transformational leadership. Bass thus makes the following arguments: (i) people are motivated to follow; (ii) someone possessing a strong sense of purpose and vision can do great things; and (iii) the best way to complete tasks is to approach them with vigor and excitement. Transformational leadership holds that for employees to give their all, they need to be inspired and motivated. According to Wen, Ho, Kelana, Othman, and Syed (2019), transformational leaders create and embrace a company vision that inspires people to be their best selves while exhibiting an open and sincere perspective.

Burns' theory of transformational leadership was broadened and reinterpreted by Bass (1985, 1990) to encompass organizational leadership. According to Bass, a leader encourages people to surpass their first objectives. He made the case that people get more driven when they understand how important results are and how to get there. Bass claims that leaders inspire their people to prioritize the demands of the group or organization over their own. Furthermore, according to Bass (1985), transformational leaders accomplish outstanding organizational performance by giving their team members an inspiring future vision and ensuring their ambitions align with the organization's goals.

According to Griffin (2013), transformational leadership is typified by leaders who motivate and inspire their team members. Studies on transformational leadership have shown that it promotes followers' performance and

progress above and above what is expected (Avolio & Gibbons, 1988; Bass, 1985; Bass & Riggio, 2006). In addition, transformational leaders surpass expectations to achieve more critical organizational goals, according to Bush (2018) and Northouse (2016).

Transformational leaders are captivating people who offer their followers intellectual stimulation, idealized influence, individualized consideration, and inspirational motivation, according to Bass (1999). According to Northouse (2016), transformational leadership is a tactic that encourages followers to behave with compassion by utilizing idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, individual concern, and inspirational motivation. The study employed these critical elements of transformational leadership as independent variables to investigate how teachers perceived the principal's leadership style and how it contributed to preserving students' academic performance in the Sidama region of Ethiopia.

Idealized influence is the degree to which a leader demonstrates exceptional behavior that causes followers to identify with them (Gill, 2006:52–53; Bass & Riggio, 2006). In this scenario, followers look up to the leader as an example (Northouse, 2007; Northouse, 2016). Leaders exhibit selflessness, moral commitment to followers, and integrity through idealized influence (Bass, 1985; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Barling, Christie, & Hopton, 2011). Idealized influence leaders reject pressure to make quick, unethical cuts in favor of putting the organization's and their employees' common interests first.

On the other hand, inspirational motivation assesses how well leaders inspire and convince their followers. It describes how leaders interact with their staff to inspire people to set high standards and commit to realizing the organization's common goal (Northouse, 2007; Shrestha, 2020). An inspiring leader gives the activity at hand a purpose, projects confidence for the future, and sets high standards for their followers (Northouse, 1997). A growing body of research suggests that inspirational motivators help their followers go above and beyond what they thought they could do (Bass, 1985; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Barling et al., 2011).

Intellectual stimulation quantifies the extent to which a leader enquires about the beliefs of their followers, challenges assumptions, and takes measured risks. Additionally, it fosters creativity and intelligence in addressing problems (Shrestha, 2020). According to Bass and Riggio (2006), this quality aids in motivating and encouraging followers' originality and inventiveness. Furthermore, it is asserted that transformational leaders who inspire their people to find solutions on their own stimulate their minds (Bass, 1985; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Barling et al., 2011).

According to Gill (2006), individualized consideration is a leader's capacity to attend to followers' requirements, act as a coach or mentor, and be cognizant of their concerns. According to Bass (1985), Bass & Riggio (2006), and Barling et al. (2011), it relates to the comprehension of each follower's unique wants. Barling et al. (2011) claim that motivating behavior allows followers to reach their full potential and develop their abilities. A leader carefully considers each follower and views them as unique individuals, personally and professionally. By acting as allies, coaches, and mentors, these leaders assist their peers in promoting organizational success (Bass, 1999, 2000 & Dartey-Baah (2015).

By exhibiting these four transformational leadership behaviors, principals can inspire teachers to innovate in improving school effectiveness and student learning. Teachers are committed to their work when principals encourage their teachers' independence of thought and innovation. Teachers can then use their creative energy to try to improve the learning outcomes for their students. Principals of schools can foster teachers' creativity and skill by modeling the intellectually stimulating behavior of transformational leadership. This will enhance the learning results for students. Principals like these can inspire teachers to devise new approaches to improve learning environments and student achievement (Bass, 1985; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Barling et al., 2011). The

primary challenge schools encounter in the study area is low student academic achievement, as national test scores indicate. According to Burns (1978) and Bass (1985), school principals can encourage and support teachers in meeting school goals because they significantly impact students' academic performance. It is possible to ensure and motivate students to work hard and creatively when teachers are motivated and supported to be open, innovative, and constantly evolving (Sun & Leithwood, 2017).

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research design and approach

A mixed-method research strategy, which incorporates both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, was used for this study (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2017). According to Hafsa (2019) and George (2021,2022), this method addresses the study topic by integrating qualitative and quantitative components.

4. 2. Population and Sampling

The study population consisted of teachers of public secondary schools in the Sidama region. The study's target population was the 5956 teachers from these secondary schools in the Sidama region.

4.2.1 Sample and sampling procedures for Phase 1: The quantitative phase

According to the Regional Education Bureau, the Sidama region has 95 public secondary schools, employing 5956 teachers. Using a purposive sample approach, 24 (25%) of the 95 regional public secondary schools (grades 9–12) were chosen. Teachers from the selected schools were chosen using proportional and basic random sampling methods.

The sample size of the study population of teachers was selected based on the statistical formula derived from www.surveymonkey.com as;

$$\text{Sample size} = \frac{z^2 \times p(1-p) / e^2}{1 + (z^2 \times p(1-p) / e^2 \times N)}$$

Where;

N = population size e = Margin of error (percentage in decimal form); accepted error margin = 5% z = z-score = 1.96, (for desired confidence level 95%, z- score is 1.96) p standard deviation based on population proportion of expected prevalence, normally 50% or .5

$$\text{Sample size} = \frac{(1.96)^2 \times 0.5(1-0.5)}{1 + (0.05)^2 \times 5956} = 362.$$

As a result, 362 teachers were selected as study subjects using simple and proportional random approaches that took gender into account.

4.2.2 Sample and sampling procedures for Phase 2: The qualitative phase

In phase two, 20 teachers were interviewed. The participant teachers were chosen from ten secondary schools based on their academic achievement. The participants were carefully selected, considering the duration they spent at the school.

4.3 Instrumentation and Data Collection

4.3.1 Instrumentation and data collection in Phase 1: The quantitative phase

To assess principals' transformational leadership practices, the quantitative phase used the Multi-Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), developed by Bass (1985) and refined by Bass and Avolio (2000). The researcher modified the MLQ for the study and included additional information. The questionnaire described leadership styles using descriptive statements. Respondents were asked to rate the descriptive statements on a Likert scale from one to five, with one being the least descriptive and five being the most descriptive.

Data on student academic performance were gathered from the Sidama Region Education Bureau. Based on the national test, the student's four-year academic performance in secondary school was collected and categorized for future investigation. Teachers were asked to grade students' academic performance based on the number of scores. The national high school test has a 700-point scoring system based on seven (7) natural science courses. Likewise, students studying social sciences take six (6) 600-point subjects. As a result, the student's grades were categorized as 500-700, 400-499, 300-399, 200-299, and below 200. The rates were provided for the categorized intervals. As a result, five are allocated for the interval between 500 and 700, 4 for the 400–499, 3 for the 300–399, 2 for the 200–299, and 1 for points below 200. The student's academic achievement was categorized and evaluated using the number of students who scored points in each category. The four-year academic performance (2019, 2020, 2021, 2022) was taken. For additional correlational analysis, the average was collected and scored on a scale of 1 to 5.

4.3.2 Instrumentation and data collection in Phase 2: The qualitative phase

Taherdoost (2021) defines qualitative data as nominal and descriptive non-numeric data expressed in words or sentences. According to Taherdoost (2021, 2022), qualitative data addresses "why and how" questions in research studies and expresses respondents' feelings, perceptions, and emotions concerning the factors under consideration. In the qualitative phase, structured and semi-structured open-ended interview questions were administered to selected teachers (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). The researcher conducted one-on one interviews with the selected respondents to clarify the quantitative data. This phase included interviews with thirty participants. The participants were chosen from ten secondary schools based on their academic achievement. The researcher could transcribe and code data from individual interview sessions throughout data analysis using an audio tape recorder.

4.4 Reliability and Validity

The researcher used Cronbach's Alpha to test the instrument's internal consistency. According to George and Malley (2019), a Cronbach Alpha value of more than 0.7 indicates that the test items are credible. The reliability test was based on the variables under inquiry (IF, IM, IS, and IC). The findings are shown in the following tables.

Table 1. Reliability test of data from 350 respondents/teachers, Sidama region, Ethiopia, 2024 (N=50)

Independent and Dependent Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items	Leveled as to George and Mallery
TIF	0.828	13	Good
TIM	0.828	13	Good
TIS	0.854	13	Good
TIC	0.891	11	Good
Overall	0.929	50	Very Good

Source: Computed from survey data, Sidama region, Ethiopia, 2024

The validity of the research data is essential to determine the study's quality. According to Middleton (2019), the precision and consistency of a metric are reflected in its data validity. It is common practice to assess a notion's validity by looking at its convergence validity. The degree of correlation between the variables under investigation is known as convergent validity (Jain and Chetty, 2021, 2022). The Kaiser-Varimax rotation method converted factor loading into the most straightforward interpretation pattern (Kaiser, 1958). A factor analysis loading value of 0.5 and higher is widely accepted as indicating the presence of a meaningful construct between variables (Ahmad, 2016; Hair, Hair, Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2016, 2021). The results are shown in the following tables.

Table 2: Convergent Validity based on loading factors (using SPSS) and AVE on constructs from Standardized estimate (using AMOS), Sidama region, Ethiopia, 2024

V	Factor loads
TIF	0.663
TIM	0.891
TIS	0.701
TIC	0.765
SAP1	0.881

Source: Authors' calculation, 2024. Extraction Method: Teachers Component Analysis Varimax Rotation with Kaiser Normalization, Sidama region, Ethiopia.

The factor analysis results mentioned above showed a positive association between the variables. They asserted that the methodology gauges principals' intent to employ transformational leadership to impact students' academic performance appropriately.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

5.1 Quantitative Data Analysis and Presentation

Data analysis is the process of utilizing an appropriate statistical method to summarise, characterize, and assess the collected data. According to Kelley (2022), data analysis is the process of "cleaning, changing, processing raw data, and extracting actionable information." In the quantitative phase, SPSS 25 and MS were used for quantitative data analysis. Closedended questions were rated using the Likert scale. The researcher validated the transformational leadership practices of the school principals and their effect on the student's academic accomplishment in the study area by analyzing the data using frequencies, percentages, means, and weighted means.

5.1.1 Questionnaires Return Rate

A total of 362 questionnaires were distributed to teachers; 350 of them were filled out and returned, representing a 96.67% response rate.

5.1.2. Biographic data information

According to descriptive statistics on the teachers' biographic data, 86% of respondents were male, with only 13.4% being female teachers. Most of the respondent teachers were between the ages of 30 and 40. Of the teachers who responded, 45.4% were between 40 and 49. Teachers under the age of 30 constituted a sizable proportion, accounting for 27.1%. Within the population inquired, 17.1% of teachers were between 40 and 49, with 10.3% being 50 or older.

The analysis of teachers' academic qualifications revealed that most of them, 224 (64%), held bachelor's degrees. Additionally, 34.6% had Master's degrees. Notably, only 1.4 percent had diploma-level degrees, making them unable to teach in secondary schools. 37.1% of the respondent teachers had at least 16 years of experience. As a

result, 26.6% had 11-15 years of experience, while 24.9% had 6-10 years. Furthermore, 11.4% (40 teachers) reported having one to five years of experience.

Table 3: Academic performance of students, Sidama region, Ethiopia, 2024

School code	500-700 (5)	400-499 (4)	300-399 (3)	200-299 (2)	199 and below (1)
01	1	8	169	206	387
02	4	32	122	126	160
03	0	2	12	81	168
04	0	0	2	46	129
05	0	2	32	143	324
06	0	5	51	77	214
07	0	1	94	231	298
08	2	16	56	116	373
09	0	0	2	32	250
10	3	26	116	162	176
11	1	7	88	88	509
12	12	195	705	493	447
13	1	15	136	283	345
14	1	16	47	76	119
15	0	16	196	241	482
16	3	25	148	150	478
17	0	6	46	89	214
18	1	26	30	86	360
19	0	3	36	79	104
20	0	0	0	19	136
21	1	9	66	67	146
22	0	10	172	186	81
23	1	22	58	55	392
24	4	53	182	203	348
Total	35	495	2565	3335	6640

Source: Secondary data from Regional Education Bureau, Sidama region, Ethiopia, 2024

5.2 Teachers perception about transformational leadership practices of principals

To understand teachers' perceptions and understandings of transformational leadership and school principals' practices, the researcher asked teachers to express their agreement status by rating how often their principal practices transformational leadership. The four transformational leadership factors served as independent variables. Mean and standard deviation were used to assess teacher responses to each component of transformational leadership.

5.2.1 Teacher response to the idealized influence practice of principals

Teachers were asked to rate the frequency with which school principals use idealized behavior to affect students' academic achievement at their school. The response was based on a Likert scale of 1 to 5. The outcomes are shown in the section below.

Table 4: Teacher response to the idealized influence of principals, Sidama region, Ethiopia, 2024 (N=350)

Descriptive statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
My principal Displays high moral values	350	3.68	.952
Acts according to his words	350	3.64	1.061
Exercises high expectations	350	3.66	1.058
Fosters trust and respect in teachers	350	3.19	1.206
Demonstrates high ethical values	350	3.45	1.106
Articulates values that promote student academic success	350	3.46	1.124
Demonstrates necessary skills and competencies on the job	350	3.51	1.140
His attitude toward school vision encourages teachers and students	350	3.58	1.070
Shows high integrity	350	3.49	1.117
The principals' manner made me to be pleasant of being school member	350	3.61	1.062
Is exemplary	350	3.24	1.178
He is a source of my professional development	350	3.26	1.206
Displays energy and enthusiasm for own work	350	3.74	.945
Valid N (listwise)	350	3.48	0.61525

Source: Computed from survey data, Sidama region, Ethiopia, 2024

Teachers were given 13 items to determine their agreement level with principals' idealized influence practices. Teachers generally agreed that principals exhibit idealized behavior in their schools, with an overall mean of 3.48 and a standard deviation of 0.615. In line with the findings above, Gyansah (2020), Beyene (2016), and Musyoki (2022) find that school principals employ idealized influence to inspire teachers to meet academic objectives.

5.2.2 Teacher response to the inspirational motivation practice of principals.

Teachers were asked to express their agreement on the frequency with which their principals used inspirational motivation and the potential consequences on pupils' academic progress. The table below shows the outcomes of the responses.

Table 5: Teacher response to the principal's inspirational motivation practice, Sidama region, Ethiopia, 2024 (N=350)

Descriptive statistics	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Always talks enthusiastically about the academic objectives and outcomes of the school	350	3.48	1.096
Inspires confidence in teachers	350	3.51	1.109
Talks and looks hopeful about the future of the school as relating student performance	350	3.49	1.088
Inspires team spirit among teachers and staff members	350	3.50	1.099
Ensures that staff members enjoy working in groups/teams to enhance teaching and learning	350	3.30	1.197
Ensures that we have adequate involvement in decision-making related to programs and instruction.	350	3.40	1.136
Motivates a sense of purpose in teachers.	350	3.52	.989
Describes a clear vision to improve student academic performance.	350	3.47	1.037
Has instituted programs that inspire teachers to deliver as expected.	350	3.55	.976
Exhibits commitment to the academic goals of the school.	350	3.61	1.047
Gives encouragement and support to staff members aimed at improving students' academic achievement.	350	3.53	1.091
Regularly encourages us to evaluate our progress toward achieving school goals	350	3.57	.998
Communicates school vision to staff and students	350	3.48	.992
Valid N (listwise)	350	3.48	0.61345

Source: Computed from survey data, Sidama region, Ethiopia, 2024

The study's findings on teacher perceptions revealed that teachers agreed that principals practice inspirational motivation behavior at a mean of 3.48 and a standard deviation of 0.613. The teacher's response to the inspiration motivation component is consistent with MendezKeegan's (2019) findings. In his doctoral dissertation, Mendez-Keegan (2019) argued that a principal's inspirational motivation encourages instructors to work tirelessly to raise pupils' academic achievement.

5.2.3 Teacher response to the intellectual stimulation practice of the principal.

Teachers were asked to rate their agreement with intellectual stimulation items on a Likert scale from 1 to 5, and the results are shown in the table below.

Table 6: Teacher response to the principal's intellectual stimulation practice, Sidama region, Ethiopia, 2024 (N=350)

Descriptive statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Stimulates ideas and creativity from teachers.	350	3.59	1.025
Encourages teachers to be innovative and creative.	350	3.65	1.068
Stimulates teachers to think about what they are doing for students' academic success.	350	3.66	1.052
Encourages me to try new practices consistent with my interests	350	3.26	1.174
Stimulates new ideas relevant to student academic performance	350	3.45	1.090
They urge staff to be imaginative and creative.	350	3.48	1.135
Supports critical thinking that guides effective teaching and learning	350	3.50	1.157
Injects the appropriate enthusiasm and energy to execute teaching and learning activities well.	350	3.55	1.050
Entertains different opinions when solving problems related to teaching and learning	350	3.56	1.066
Design new techniques for looking at how to complete academic assignments that will enhance student performance	350	3.60	1.074
Encourage teachers and students to look at academic challenges from many different angles and work to challenge the problems	350	3.37	1.175
Has the capacity to solve the problems	350	3.46	1.124
Challenges status quo	350	3.59	.958
Valid N (listwise)	350	3.50	0.671

Source: Computed from survey data, Sidama region, Ethiopia, 2024

Teachers agreed that their principals engage in intellectual stimulation behaviors in their respective schools, according to the results of their perception based on the 13 items of transformational leadership intellectual stimulation behaviors. The overall mean value of the results was 3.50, with a standard deviation of 0.6713. The results above support Musyoki's (2022) conclusions. Musyoki claimed in his doctoral thesis that, with a mean score of 4.15 and a standard deviation of 0.83, most teachers concurred that their principals engage in intellectual stimulation. According to Ikedimma and Okorji (2023), principals can inspire teachers' dedication and improve students' academic achievement.

5.2.4 Teacher response to the practice of individualized consideration of the principal

Teachers were asked to indicate how often their principal demonstrates the individualized consideration behavior of transformational leadership. The table below displays the findings.

Table 7: Teacher response to the individualized consideration practice of the principal, Sidama region, Ethiopia, 2024 (N=350)

Descriptive statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Always appreciate teachers and other staff for their successful work	350	3.51	1.112
Pay attention to teachers' needs and assist them accordingly	350	3.66	.979
Listens to teachers' concern	350	3.70	1.091
Creates new opportunities for teachers	350	3.57	1.155
Mentor teachers to improve personal and professional growth	350	3.65	1.031
Coaches and advises teachers and students on academic issues	350	3.56	1.024
Understand that each teacher and student has different needs, abilities, and aspirations from others.	350	3.69	1.064
Appreciate the performance of individual teachers	350	3.70	1.080
Encourages my professional development	350	3.39	1.135
Provides moral support by making me feel appreciated for my contribution to the school	350	3.32	1.082
Encourages me to pursue my own goals for professional learning.	350	3.25	1.186
Valid N (listwise)	350	3.53	0.6048

Source: Computed from Survey Data, Sidama region, Ethiopia, 2024

According to the above table, teachers, with an overall mean value of 3.53 and a standard deviation of 0.6048, agreed with the principals' transformational leadership individualized consideration. These findings supported Gyansah's (2020) mixed-method research on the influence of school leaders on students' academic performance, which found that most teachers agreed that principals practiced individualized consideration in their schools, with an average mean value of 3.7.

5.3 Teachers' Perceptions of the Transformational Leadership Practices of the Principal and the Academic Achievement of the Students

The study evaluated the degree of correlation between the independent and dependent variables using Pearson's correlation coefficient. The test results are shown in the tables below.

Table 8: Pearson's correlation matrix analysis for teachers' response, Sidama region, Ethiopia, 2024 (N=350)

		Correlations T					
		TIF		TIS	TIC	TL	SAP
TIF	Pearson Correlation	1	.463**	.230**	.398**	.665**	.567**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	350	350	350	350	350	350
TIM	Pearson Correlation	.463**	1	.630**	.640**	.885**	.696**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	350	350	350	350	350	350
TIS	Pearson Correlation	.230**	.630**	1	.352**	.720**	.554**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	350	350	350	350	350	350
TIC	Pearson Correlation	.398**	.640**	.352**	1	.798**	.583**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	350	350	350	350	350	350
TL	Pearson Correlation	.665**	.885**	.720**	.798**	1	.779**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	350	350	350	350	350	350
SAP	Pearson Correlation	.567**	.696**	.554**	.583**	.779**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	350	350	350	350	350	350

** . The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Computed from survey data, Sidama region, Ethiopia, 2024

Based on the teacher responses in the table, Pearson's correlation analysis results showed a significant and positive relationship between students' academic performance and the independent variables (transformational leadership components: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration). Based on these results, an overall correlation value of $r = .779$ ($p < .01$) suggests that the principal's transformational leadership positively impacts educational performance. The results presented above align with those of Marzano et al. (2005), Osagie and Momoh (2016), Buenvinida and Ramos (2019), Gyansah (2020), and Musyoki (2022). They all concurred that the principal's transformational leadership techniques favorably impacted teachers and other school stakeholders, increasing student academic achievement.

According to the linear multiple regression results, changes in the principal's transformational leadership practices can account for 61.4% of the variation in students' academic performance. This suggests that principals play a significant role in influencing their students' academic outcomes.

Table 9: Regression Standardized Residuals (teacher component), Sidama region, Ethiopia, 2024 (N=350)

Model Summary ^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.784 ^a	.614	.609	.37796	2.042
a. Predictors: (constant), TIC, TIM, TIF, TIS					
b. Dependent Variable: Dependent SAP (student academic performance)					

Source: Model output, Sidama region, Ethiopia, 2024

The ANOVA analysis of teacher perception is presented in the table below.

Table 10: ANOVA analysis for the teacher component, Sidama region, Ethiopia, 2024 (N=350)

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	78.376	4	19.594	137.162	.000 ^b
	Residual	49.284	345	.143		
	Total	127.660	349			
a. Dependent variable: SAP1						
b. Predictors: (constant), TIC, TIS, TIF, TIM						

Source: Model output, Sidama region, Ethiopia, 2024

The ANOVA analysis in the table above shows that the model has a statistically significance level of 0.000, below the selected P-value (0.05). Additionally, the F ratio of 137.162, greater than 1, suggests that the data fit well with the model.

5.4 Qualitative data analysis and presentation

For the qualitative phase, the researcher selected ten (10) schools based on the academic performance of their students. Twenty (20) teachers were selected from these schools.

When discussing the principal's idealized influence practice, most teachers agreed that principals use idealized influence behavior to foster a pleasant teaching environment. Most teachers agreed that their principal demonstrates positive and exemplary behavior toward them, such as respecting them, showing integrity and discipline, being punctual, and acting according to his words. However, a few teachers who participated in the interview expressed mistrust regarding the idealized influence behavior of their principal.

Depending on several factors, teachers were also asked to discuss how their principals inspire and motivate them. Most teachers said the principal does this by presenting a broad picture of the school's vision and encouraging them to improve student academic performance. However, a few teachers responded that they need more confidence in principals' inspirational motivation practices.

While discussing their school principals' intellectual stimulation approaches, teachers noted that the primary purpose of intellectual stimulation is to encourage teachers to consider creative activities that improve students' academic achievement. The majority concurred that their principals support teachers' efforts and foster creativity. Regarding individual consideration, most interviewed teachers explained that principals execute individualized considerate behaviors to varied degrees to meet each teacher's needs.

5.5 Triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data

The results of the quantitative and qualitative data analyses agreed. Additionally, the qualitative data provided more profound insight into teachers' comprehension of transformational leadership approaches. Quantitative and qualitative data analysis revealed that principals' leadership styles positively impact students' academic performance and the school environment. The study and presentation's findings showed a substantial positive relationship between principals' leadership styles and students' academic success.

6. Discussion of the study's findings

The study's findings were discussed using the objectives derived from the research questions and the study's primary goal. The study's main research question was: What are the teachers' perceptions of principals' transformational leadership practice and its effect on students' academic performance in the Sidama region of Ethiopia?

6.1 Findings regarding the first research objective: To determine the understanding and perception of teachers about transformational leadership practices of principals

The study's first objective was to determine how the teachers perceived the principal's transformational leadership style. To this end, the researcher employed survey questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with teachers. The research results for this objective were arranged according to the following transformational leadership components.

Teachers were given 13 items to assess their level of agreement with the principals' idealized influence tactics. The study's results demonstrated that principals practiced transformational leadership behavior, with an average score of 3.37 and a standard deviation of 0.80. A review of qualitative data from teacher interviews revealed that school principals practice idealized influence transformational leadership behaviors. The study's findings regarding teachers' perceptions of the principal's inspirational motivation showed that, on average, principals exhibit this behavior, with a mean value of 3.35 and a standard deviation of 0.647. Teachers also agreed that their principals engage in intellectual stimulation behaviors in their respective schools, according to the results of their perception based on the 13 items of transformational leadership intellectual stimulation behaviors. The overall mean value of the results was 3.50, with a standard deviation of 0.6713. Conversely, with an overall mean score of 3.53 and a standard deviation of 0.6048, teachers indicated that they agreed with the principals' individual consideration practices. The qualitative data of the above perceptions also concurred with the quantitative data findings. Therefore, quantitative and qualitative data analysis from teachers' perceptions indicated that school principals practice the four components of transformational leadership behavior in various ranges.

6.2 Findings regarding the second research objective: To establish what possible impact the transformational leadership style of school principals may have on student academic achievement

The study's second objective was to examine the possible implications of principals' transformational leadership approaches on student academic performance. To determine the relationship between the independent and dependent variables and the impact of the principals' leadership style on students' academic achievement, the study employed Pearson's correlation coefficient. According to Pearson's correlation of teachers' perceptions, students' academic performance and the principal's transformational leadership techniques were significantly and favorably correlated. An overall correlation value of $r = .779$ ($p < .01$) suggests that the principal's transformational leadership practice positively affects student academic success.

7. CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

7.1. Contribution to Knowledge

The transformational leadership theories or models of Burns (1978), Bass (1985), and Leithwood Kenneth (1990) served as the study's main theoretical underpinnings. The study's findings showed a significant and positive relationship between students' academic achievement and principal transformational leadership approaches. This research validates and supplements the theories of Burns (1978) and Bass (1985), who contend that transformational leadership is essential to improving organizational performance. The study further found that students' academic progress increases with principals' transformational leadership. It additionally enhanced upon earlier theories and practices by illustrating how school principals raise their student's academic achievement.

7.2. Contribution to Practice

The study found that school principals who use transformational leadership may enhance the school environment in general and the academic performance of their students in particular. Teachers and students can work hard to accomplish school goals because of the inspirational and motivating activities of principals who exhibit transformational leadership. The results also allow principals to show how committed they are to the school's academic goals.

7.3. Contribution to policy formulation

Policymakers should know that a school principal's leadership style can alter the learning environment and student's academic achievement. The study's results showed a strong correlation between student academic achievement and the principal's transformational leadership style. School administrators who exhibit transformational leadership qualities may be able to persuade teachers and other staff members to exert all of their effort toward improving student achievement. The results mandate that to guarantee transformational leadership practices in schools, policymakers must take the necessary steps in recruiting and preparing school principals. The study's conclusions further highlight the necessity for the Ministry of Education and Universities to establish a transformational leadership training program for school principals.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE STUDY

- 8.1 According to the literature review, transformational leadership is a strategy leaders use to inspire a group of people to accomplish organizational goals. The study concludes that transformational leaders can influence their followers by applying transformational leadership behaviors.
- 8.2 Transformational leadership behaviors can enhance students' academic performance. Therefore, school principals should employ these transformational leadership practices to address students' diminishing levels of academic success.
- 8.3 The study found a solid favorable relationship between the student's academic achievement and the principal's use of transformational leadership behaviors. Accordingly, the study proposes that to boost the area's students' deteriorating academic performance, it is essential to recognize the principals and support them in applying transformational leadership.
- 8.4 The study's results also demonstrated a significant difference in the principal leadership styles of the study area's high- and low-achieving schools. The regional education bureau should routinely train principals in transformational leadership techniques and support transformational leadership initiatives to raise student achievement in the classroom.

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