

The Mediating Role of Organizational Commitment: Linking Transformational Leadership to Job Performance in the Ethiopian Electric Utility

By:

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Abstract

In recent years, much scholarship has been dedicated to the impact of transformational leadership on the creation of positive work behaviors in workers. While there have been many findings made on this issue, there is still lack of information on how this style of leadership affects job performance through psychological mechanisms. This problem becomes even more evident when one considers the field of public utilities functioning in developing countries. In this regard, the current research is dedicated to the impact of transformational leadership on employee job performance, with organizational commitment being used as a mediating factor in the context of operations at Ethiopian Electric Utility (EEU). The current study is based on a quantitative method, which involved collecting data from a sample of employees selected based on their department and geographical location through stratified random sampling techniques. 454 questionnaires were distributed, 440 out of which were found to be complete and usable, leading to a response rate of 96.9%. Results of analysis showed that transformational leadership has a significant impact on organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.464, p < 0.001$) as well as on employee job performance ($\beta = 0.409, p < 0.001$). The findings obtained through mediation analysis have further shown that the concept of organizational commitment serves as a complementary mediator between transformational leadership and performance, with a significant indirect effect being observed ($\beta = 0.138, p < 0.001$). Altogether, the findings obtained strongly support the idea that transformational leadership should be strategically integrated in the EEU as a tool to enhance employee commitment and improve performance levels.

Keywords: Transformational leadership, organizational commitment, job performance, PLS-SEM; Proportionate stratified sampling, public utilities, Ethiopia.

1. Introduction

In the current organizational landscape, where strategic success is inextricably linked to the optimal deployment of human resources, leadership functions as a fundamental driver of employee efficacy and long-term institutional sustainability. This dynamic is particularly pronounced in developing economies, where the quality of public service delivery and the

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successful navigation of organizational change are heavily contingent upon workforce dedication and voluntary initiative (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018; Deloitte, 2023). The Ethiopian Electric Utility (EEU) serves as a pertinent case, positioned at the core of the government's national agenda to attain universal electricity coverage by 2030. Despite this pivotal role, the corporation continues to face persistent obstacles, including underdeveloped infrastructure, severe budgetary restrictions, and recurring leadership volatility. Although substantial efforts are underway to elevate power generation from 4,478 megawatts to a targeted 19,900 megawatts and to broaden the customer base from five million to 24.3 million subscribers, measurable performance challenges persist (Planning and Development Commission of FDRE, 2021). This scenario underscores a fundamental organizational principle: technological upgrades and capital investment alone are insufficient to rectify performance deficits; instead, durable improvements demand superior human capital management frameworks (Bahta et al., 2025).

Transformational leadership which is characterized by its capacity to inspire, intellectually stimulate, and provide individualized consideration to followers emerges as a particularly suitable approach for galvanizing workforce outcomes (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Extensive meta-analytical evidence substantiates the robust positive association between this leadership paradigm and enhanced job performance across a wide array of industry settings (Hoch et al., 2018). Nevertheless, the intermediate psychological and affective processes through which transformational leaders translate their behaviors into measurable performance gains remain inadequately delineated, especially within the context of non-Western public sector entities. Organizational commitment, defined as the emotional attachment and psychological identification an employee forms with their employing organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990), potentially constitutes this crucial missing mechanism. This construct explains how leaders cultivate a deep-seated sense of loyalty and stimulate the discretionary, extra-role efforts that are essential for attaining superior performance benchmarks (Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

Within the Ethiopian academic context, the specific mediating pathway under investigation here has received remarkably little empirical attention. Existing scholarship has explored leadership-related questions predominantly in education and healthcare settings (Duressa & Kidane, 2024; Gashaye et al., 2023), leaving public utility enterprises largely outside the scholarly conversation. Research conducted within the EEU itself has tended to narrow its focus to how different leadership styles relate to employee job satisfaction (Zelege & Kifle, 2021), while broader performance-related outcomes and the potential intervening role of organizational commitment have been largely passed over. Adding to these blind spots, earlier studies in this domain have routinely relied on standard regression-based approaches, which are poorly suited to handling measurement error or capturing the layered, interdependent nature of leadership constructs (Shmueli et al., 2016). Meanwhile, more sophisticated analytical models, such as PLS-SEM, that were especially created to test mediation relationships, have rarely been used in the context of the research (Hair et al., 2021). In view of the above-mentioned gaps in knowledge, the current paper uses PLS-SEM approach based on survey data of 454 employees working at EEU to explore the role of organizational commitment as a mediator between transformational leadership and job performance of employees.

2. Objectives of the study

In this study, the main objective is to establish the degree to which organizational commitment acts as a mediating variable in the relationship between transformational leadership and

employee job performance at Ethiopian Electric Utility (EEU). To operationalize this overarching aim, the following more specific research objectives were developed:

- To determine the prevailing levels of transformational leadership, commitment, and job performance as perceived by employees of the EEU.
- To examine the direct effect that transformational leadership exerts on both organizational commitment and job performance among EEU employees.
- To explore the indirect pathway through which transformational leadership shapes job performance by way of organizational commitment.

3. Literature Review

Theoretical Foundations of Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership theory derives from the Full-Range Leadership Model (FRLM) framework created by Bass and Avolio (1994), where leadership is categorized along a continuum of passive avoiding at one end to proactive involvement at the other end. This particular type of leadership involves four main factors, such as idealized influence (being an ethical model), inspirational motivation (developing a strong future orientation), intellectual stimulation (promoting innovative problem solving), and individualized consideration (offering personalized coaching) (Bass and Riggio, 2006).

The foundations of this concept lie within the realms of Social Exchange Theory, which holds that leaders foster reciprocal exchange based on trust between themselves and their followers (Blau, 1964) and Self-Concept Theory, which argues that the transformational leader integrates the follower's self-concept into organizational activities to boost their intrinsic motivation (Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993). Numerous meta-analyses demonstrate a significant positive association between transformational leadership and organizational success (Hoch et al., 2018). As for the field of public administration, the transformational leadership style is especially valuable due to its ability to instill a clear organizational mission inside the organization (Hameduddin & Engbers, 2022).

Organizational Commitment

As conceptualized by Allen and Meyer (1990), organizational commitment captures the depth of the bond an employee develops with their organization and the degree to which that bond shapes their continued pursuit of organizational goals. This study draws on a three-component understanding of the construct, comprising the following dimensions:

- Affective Commitment — the sense of emotional belonging and personal identification that an employee feels toward their organization.
- Continuance Commitment — the perceived economic and social costs an employee associates with the prospect of leaving the organization.
- Normative Commitment — an internalized sense of duty that compels an employee to remain within the organization out of obligation rather than desire.

Among these three dimensions, affective commitment has consistently demonstrated the strongest predictive power over favorable organizational outcomes, including reduced staff turnover and a greater tendency toward extra-role performance behaviors (Meyer et al., 2002). Transformational leaders contribute to this dynamic by cultivating an inclusive workplace atmosphere in which employees come to see their personal values as closely aligned with those of the organization. Evidence drawn from African organizational contexts further suggests that leaders who blend cultural awareness with forward-looking goal orientation are particularly effective at deepening employee loyalty and fostering lasting commitment (Bolden & Kirk, 2009).

Job Performance

Performance refers to a combination of activities and results that will help achieve organizational objectives. The job performance can be categorized into three categories:

- Task Performance: Fulfilling the requirements specified by a formally written job description (Campbell, 1990). Measured through methods that match Williams & Anderson (1991) in terms of the in-role behavior (IRB).
- Contextual Performance: This form of performance is called Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), which is related to the supportive social and psychological context of the organization (Williams & Anderson, 1991).
- Adaptive Performance: Adaptability in times of change including crisis management, problem-solving and innovation, and cultural adaptation (Pulakos et al., 2000).

Such holistic perspective on performance is required in case of public utilities where besides technical efficiency, adaptability in regard to technological and regulative changes is needed.

The Link Between Leadership and Performance

It is reported by researchers who have studied using meta-analysis that transformational leadership is capable of explaining the variance of about 15% to 25% that is normally linked with job performance (Hoch et al., 2018). This is because the leaders provide clarity regarding the tasks and resources for task performance (Bass & Riggio, 2006), serve as role models for contextual performance (Podsakoff et al., 1990), and ensure psychological safety for adaptive performance (Shin & Zhou, 2003).

Organizational Commitment and Job Performance

Many studies have been conducted on the connection between organizational commitment and the performance of employees in organizational behavior literature. The committed employees will be motivated to work hard, persevere in their actions, and adapt to changes. All these affect the performance positively (Meyer et al., 2002; Riketta 2002). The positive relationship between affective commitment and performance in terms of task and contextual performance was proven through meta-analyses (Riketta 2002).

Organizational commitment affecting the performance of employees seems more logical when talking about the public sector since the employees working there usually find themselves working in situations where resources and conditions are scarce (Boyne, 2003; Van der Voet, 2014). The empirical studies that were conducted in public organizations have shown that the organizational commitment affects the performance and service quality (Kim 2005; Wright et al. 2012).

The Mediating Role of Organizational Commitment

Commitment is considered the most important tool used for leaders to influence the organizational results. As per Social Exchange Theory, the support and motivation provided by transformational leaders result in obligations and emotions (Blau, 1964; Meyer et al., 2002). Consequently, commitment ensures that the employees go beyond the bare minimum. There is evidence from various studies done in many countries, including Ghana (Donkor, Dongmei, & Sekyere, 2021), that this takes place only partly mediated. However, there is not much information available on this matter regarding Ethiopian public utilities.

Conceptual Framework

This study's theoretical framework is based on the use of both the Transformational Leadership Theory by Bass and Riggio (2006) and the Social Exchange Theory by Blau (1964). Rather than treating these frameworks in isolation, the study weaves them together into a unified explanatory lens that positions transformational leadership as a central force behind improved employee performance within the EEU — operating through a direct route as well as through an indirect channel in which organizational commitment serves as the connecting mechanism.

In the case of Transformational Leadership Theory, as per the Full-Range Leadership Model (FRLM), the theory suggests that leaders who exhibit idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration not only engage themselves in managing tasks, but also transform the psychological climate of the work environment, thus elevating the performance of employees to levels above the threshold of minimal acceptable performance (Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

Social Exchange Theory, on the other hand, accounts for why transformational leadership gives rise to organizational commitment in the first place. When employees interpret the behaviors of their leaders as genuine expressions of organizational care and investment in their personal development, they naturally develop a felt sense of obligation to reciprocate. This unspoken but powerful psychological arrangement — built on perceived mutual investment — manifests most visibly as heightened organizational commitment, particularly of the affective variety, which in turn drives stronger performance across task, contextual, and adaptive dimensions (Meyer et al., 2002; Pulakos et al., 2000).

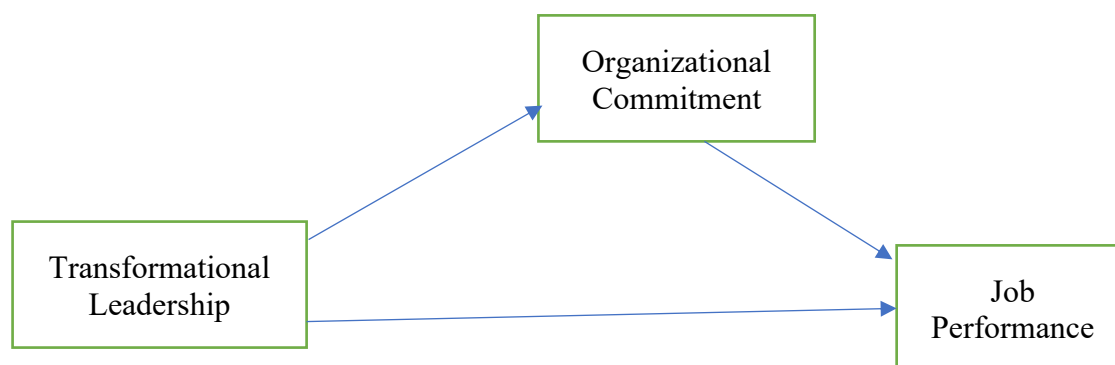


Figure 1. Conceptual framework for the study (Adapted from Bass & Avolio, 2004; Meyer & Allen, 2004; Williams & Anderson, 1991; Pulakos et al., 2000)

Drawing on the integrated theoretical framework illustrated in Figure 1; the study unpacks what has often remained an unexplained "black box" in the leadership-performance relationship by proposing four testable hypotheses:

H₁: Transformational leadership has a significant positive effect on the organizational commitment of employees within the EEU.

H₂: Transformational leadership has a significant positive effect on the job performance of employees within the EEU.

H₃: Organizational commitment has a significant positive effect on the job performance of employees within the EEU.

H₄: The relationship between transformational leadership and employee job performance is significantly mediated by organizational commitment.

4. Methodology

Research Design, Sample, and Data Collection

The explanatory research design has been adopted in this research to investigate the relationship between transformational leadership, organizational commitment, and the job performance of employees in the EEU context. The adoption of this research design was quite strategic, as explanatory research designs are known to be perfect for testing theoretical hypotheses and are especially suitable when the focus of the research is on investigating the mediation effects of the latent variables (Hair et al., 2019).

The target population of the research is comprised of all employees in the operating units of the Ethiopian Electric Utility. In order to ensure that the sample selected would be representative of the diverse workforce of the organization in question, the study resorted to the use of proportional stratified random sampling based on employees' preference for certain departments and geographical locations.

In the framework of the sampling process, all the employees within the head offices and regional offices were sampled according to their job role – Clerical & Custodian, Managerial, Professional, Semi-Professional, Senior Management, and Technical & Vocational. According to Yemane's (1967) sample size formula, the required sample size is calculated as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$$

Where,

- n = Sample Size
- N = Population Size (22,660 employees)
- e = Level of precision (0.05)

and the calculated sample size was approximately 394. In order to compensate for possible non-response bias, an additional 15% was added, resulting in a total sample size of 454. A multi-stage stratified sampling approach was used, considering all geographical areas (the Head Office inclusive), stratification according to employment type, proportional allocation in

proportion to the size of population, and random sampling at the stratum level to allow for equal representativeness.

In all, 454 structured questionnaires were administered to the employees. After screening the data, those who had incomplete answers and whose data contained straight lining or high levels of missing values were considered as invalid and were not used in the analysis. Thus, the total number of valid questionnaires collected was 440 out of 454, implying that the total response rate was 96.9%. This implies adequate power to test the model using the PLS-SEM analysis procedure based on guidelines for effect sizes (Hair et al., 2019).

Demographics of the participants indicate the typical features of the EEU's labor force. Majority of them are males (78.4%), which may be associated with the technical nature of the utility industry. About half (48.0%) of the respondents belonged to the age group of 26-35 years, meaning that the workforce is fairly young and efficient. As regards educational and professional background, about 57.5% had bachelor's degrees, while 45.2% had more than ten years working experience.

Measures and Instruments

All variables were assessed through reliable and valid measures that have been used before in empirical studies.

The measure of transformational leadership was done using 20 questions that were derived from Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5X). This tool was created and validated by Bass and Avolio (2004). The questions comprised the four aspects that make up the transformational leadership behavior dimensions: Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration.

The level of organizational commitment was measured using 20 items derived from Allen and Meyer's (1997, 2004) three-dimensional construct, that is, affective, continuance, and normative commitment. This scale had been widely used in various studies within both business organizations and the public sector.

Employee job performance was operationalized through a composite measurement scale consisting of 28 items in total. Items capturing task and contextual performance dimensions were drawn from the instrument developed by Williams and Anderson (1991), while those addressing adaptive performance were sourced from Pulakos et al. (2000). This combined approach ensured that the full scope of job performance was represented across its core behavioral dimensions.

A common five-point Likert scale was used to measure all three constructs. They were measured on a scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The adoption of a consistent response format across all measurement scales strengthened the comparability of scores between constructs and supported the integrity of cross-variable analysis throughout the study.

Statistical and Data Analysis

Statistical analysis was conducted using the PLS-SEM (Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling) with the help of SmartPLS software version 4.0 in compliance with

common methodological standards (Hair et al., 2019; Hair et al., 2021). The choice of PLS-SEM was justified by several aspects of the peculiarity of the present research. First, the study aimed at providing an explanatory and predictive character, especially focusing on demonstrating the mediating effect of organizational commitment. Furthermore, there were a number of latent variables included in the model with mediation effects, requiring the use of advanced analytical methods. Another reason for choosing the present methodology lies in the fact that the domain of investigation – public utility organizations – is characterized by lack of empirical data and requires a complex approach. In addition, PLS-SEM is methodologically convenient since it does not require multivariate normality of the dataset and allows conducting a complicated analysis with large sample sizes (Hair et al., 2019).

Following established PLS-SEM practice, the analysis unfolded in two sequential stages. The first stage involved evaluating the measurement model to determine whether the constructs were measured with adequate reliability and validity. The second stage proceeded to the structural model, where the hypothesized paths were tested and the predictive capacity of each construct was assessed.

Statistical significance across all estimated effects was determined through bootstrapping using 5,000 resamples. This resampling procedure yields dependable estimates of standard errors, t-values, p-values, and confidence intervals for both path coefficients and indirect effects, without requiring the data to conform to any specific distributional assumptions (Hair et al., 2021).

Model Specification

The proposed research model was specified as a mediation model in SmartPLS 4.0, comprising three latent constructs: transformational leadership (exogenous), organizational commitment (mediator), and employee job performance (endogenous). All constructs were modeled as reflective (Mode A), consistent with the theoretical foundations and the use of Likert-scale items, where indicators are manifestations of the underlying constructs (Hair et al., 2021).

The structural model included the following:

1. Direct paths from transformational leadership to organizational commitment (H_2) and to job performance (H_1),
2. A direct path from organizational commitment to job performance (H_3), and
3. A mediation path in which organizational commitment mediates the leadership–performance relationship (H_4).

Structural Model Equations

This study uses a partial mediation model in PLS-SEM, with transformational leadership (ξ_1) affecting employee job performance (η_2) both directly and indirectly through organizational commitment (η_1).

Latent Variables:

ξ_1 : Transformational Leadership (exogenous)

η_1 : Organizational Commitment (mediator)

η_2 : Employee Job Performance (endogenous)

Structural Equations:

$$\begin{aligned}\eta_1 &= \gamma_{11}\xi_1 + \zeta_1 \\ \eta_2 &= \beta_{21}\eta_1 + \gamma_{21}\xi_1 + \zeta_2\end{aligned}$$

Where:

γ_{11} : denotes the direct effect of transformational leadership on organizational commitment (H₂)

γ_{21} : denotes the direct effect of transformational leadership on job performance (H₁)

β_{21} : denotes the effect of organizational commitment on job performance (H₃)

ζ_1, ζ_2 : Disturbance terms (errors)

Mediation (Indirect Effect for H4):

$$\text{Indirect effect} = \gamma_{11} \times \beta_{21}$$

Total Effect of Transformational Leadership on Job Performance:

$$\text{Total effect} = \gamma_{21} + (\gamma_{11} \times \beta_{21})$$

5. Analysis and Results

Descriptive Statistics

Before proceeding to the main inferential analysis, descriptive statistics were computed to provide an initial characterization of how respondents perceived the three key constructs under investigation — transformational leadership, organizational commitment, and employee job performance. The resulting statistics, including mean scores, standard deviations, and observed ranges for each construct, are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

<i>Construct</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
Transformational Leadership	440	1.95	5.00	3.8943	0.52823
Organizational Commitment	440	2.20	5.00	3.8339	0.46439
Job Performance	440	2.32	5.00	4.0404	0.36271

Source: Survey, 2024/2025

According to the data presented in Table 1, the mean score was highest for the variable Job Performance (M = 4.0404, SD = 0.36271). This implies that the participants had the best perception regarding the level of effectiveness at work. It is also evident from the results that Transformational Leadership (M = 3.8943, SD = 0.52823) and Organizational Commitment (M = 3.8339, SD = 0.46439) were rated fairly high by participants.

Measurement Model Assessment

Within the PLS-SEM analytical framework, examining the measurement model constitutes a necessary prerequisite before any structural relationships can be meaningfully interpreted. The measurement model essentially maps the theoretical linkages between each latent construct and its corresponding observed indicators. Adhering to best practice guidelines, the present study evaluated the measurement model across four key dimensions: the reliability of individual indicators, the internal consistency of each construct, convergent validity, and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2019; Hair et al., 2022).

Indicator Reliability and Internal Consistency

Reliability of Indicators: Indicator reliability was evaluated by inspecting the standardized outer loadings associated with each observed indicator across the three constructs. By the standard guidelines recommended by Hair et al. (2019), an indicator loading above 0.70 was considered more desirable. As seen from Table 2, the preliminary investigation showed that most of the indicators satisfied this criterion. However, the loadings of twelve indicators (AP4, AP5, AP7, CP4, AC5, AC6, NC6, TRSFLS8, TRSFLS10, TRSFLS13, TRSFLS17, LFLS1) ranged between 0.60 and 0.70. By the suggestions of Hair et al. (2019), these indicators were included for the following three reasons: firstly, removing them would have brought down the AVE below the required level of 0.50 for their corresponding constructs; secondly, these indicators were needed to maintain content validity for these constructs; and thirdly, retaining them did not harm the composite reliability of the scales used.

Reliability of Internal Consistency: Internal consistency of the measures of reflective constructs was determined through Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR). As shown in Table 2 below, all the values were found to be above the suggested value of 0.70 by Hair et al. (2019), showing that the scales are reliable: Transformational Leadership (CA=0.902, CR=0.918), Organizational Commitment (CA=0.852, CR=0.888), and Job Performance (CA=0.890, CR=0.910).

Convergent Validity

The convergent validity measure, which captures how much similarity exists in the degree to which the measures of a particular construct are correlated with each other, was measured using Average Variance Extracted (AVE). According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), based on a criterion that has been widely accepted, any AVE value above 0.50 is needed in order to prove that the construct explains more than half of the variance in its measures. As per reported in Table 2, entirely the three constructs cleared this benchmark: Transformational Leadership (AVE = 0.506), Organizational Commitment (AVE = 0.532), and Job Performance (AVE = 0.506). While these figures sit modestly above the minimum threshold, they nonetheless satisfy the accepted criterion and provide sufficient evidence of convergent validity across the measurement model (Hair et al., 2019; Henseler et al., 2016).

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity, which guarantees that constructs included in the research model are clearly different both theoretically and practically, has been validated using the two-method procedure. The current method follows the recent recommendations for variance-based SEM (Hair et al., 2019).

The first method included using the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) whereby each construct should exhibit higher shared variance with its indicators than with all the other constructs in the model. For the above requirement to be fulfilled, the square root of AVE of each construct situated in the main diagonal of inter-construct correlation matrix needs to be higher than off-diagonal correlation in the same row and column.

The second and more rigorous criterion applied was heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations (Henseler et al., 2016). HTMT ratio serves to determine the true correlation of constructs and values lower than 0.90 suggest sufficient discriminant validity. All the calculated HTMT ratios presented in Table 4 were below this threshold. The outcomes of applying both Fornell-Larcker criterion and HTMT show strong evidence for discriminant validity of constructs in the model. With regard to the reliability & validity of the measurement model demonstrated, the focus is now shifted to testing the structural relationships.

Table 2: Measurement Model Results (Selected Indicators)

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Item Code</i>	<i>Loading</i>	<i>Outer Weights</i>	<i>CA</i>	<i>CR</i>	<i>AVE</i>
Transformational Leadership				0.902	0.918	0.506
	TRF1	0.729	0.198			
	TRF2	0.861	0.205			
	TRF3	0.830	0.221			
	TRF4	0.871	0.206			
	TRF5	0.813	0.208			
Organizational Commitment				0.852	0.888	0.532
	OC1	0.827	0.289			
	OC2	0.774	0.311			
	OC3	0.884	0.329			
	OC4	0.719	0.319			
Job Performance				0.890	0.910	0.506
	JP1	0.727	0.269			
	JP2	0.886	0.425			
	JP3	0.817	0.355			
	JP4	0.743	0.198			

Note: CA = Cronbach's Alpha; CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted

Source: Survey, 2024/2025

Table 3: Discriminant Validity - Fornell-Larcker Criterion

<i>Construct</i>	<i>JP</i>	<i>OC</i>	<i>TRF</i>
Job Performance (JP)	0.711		
Organizational Commitment (OC)	0.486	0.729	
Transformational (TRF)	0.547	0.464	0.711

Note: Diagonal elements (in bold) are the square root of AVE

Source: Survey, 2024/2025

Table 4: Discriminant Validity – HTMT Ratio

<i>Construct</i>	<i>JP</i>	<i>OC</i>	<i>TRF</i>
Job Performance (JP)			
Organizational Commitment (OC)	0.548		
Transformational (TRF)	0.604	0.520	

Source: Survey, 2024/2025

Assessment of Structural Model

After determining the reliability and validity of the measurement model, the structural model was then subjected to assessment following the recommended steps in the application of PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2019; Hair et al., 2022). The criteria used in evaluating the structural model included the following: multicollinearity, fit of the model, R-squared (explanatory power), Q-square (predictive relevance), and effect sizes.

The potential multicollinearity between the predictor constructs was assessed by means of calculating VIF values within the inner model. If the VIF values are less than five, there is no indication of multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2022). Based on the results shown in Table 5, all VIF values were much lower than that number, implying that the structural estimates are not threatened by multicollinearity.

The overall fit of the model was calculated with the help of SRMR. If the value is less than 0.08, then the fit of PLS-SEM models is considered acceptable (Henseler et al., 2016). The calculated SRMR value fulfilled this condition, suggesting that the model adequately reflects reality.

The explanatory power of the model was evaluated using the R^2 and adjusted R^2 statistics, evaluated in relation to the criteria of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 indicating strong, moderate, and weak explanatory power respectively (Hair et al., 2019). The R^2 value for job performance was found to be 0.368 (adjusted $R^2 = 0.365$), thus showing moderate explanatory power; meanwhile, organizational commitment gave an R^2 value of 0.215 (adjusted $R^2 = 0.214$), indicating weak explanatory power, as seen in Table 6 below.

Predictive relevance was confirmed through the blindfolding method by using the Q^2 predict statistic. The endogenous variables showed positive scores greater than zero, namely organizational commitment ($Q^2 = 0.202$) and job performance ($Q^2 = 0.285$); thus, meeting the minimum required threshold for predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2022).

The size of effects was measured with the help of Cohen's (1988) guidelines, which consider f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 representing small, medium, and large effects respectively. Transformational leadership showed medium effects on organizational commitment ($f^2 = 0.274$) and job performance ($f^2 = 0.208$); meanwhile, organizational commitment exerted small to medium effects on job performance ($f^2 = 0.109$). See Table 7 below.

Collectively, these diagnostic results affirm the validity, interpretability, and predictive value of the structural model, providing a sound basis from which to proceed to formal hypothesis testing.

Table 5: Collinearity Statistics (Inner VIF Values)

<i>Structural Path</i>	<i>VIF</i>
Transformational → Organizational Commitment	1.000
Transformational → Job Performance	1.274
Organizational Commitment → Job Performance	1.274

Source: Survey, 2024/2025

Table 6: Model Predictive and Explanatory Power

Construct	R^2	R^2 Adjusted	Q^2 predict	SRMR
Job Performance	0.368	0.365	0.285	0.068
Organizational Commitment	0.215	0.214	0.202	

Source: Survey, 2024/2025

Table 7: Effect Size Analysis (f^2)

Structural Path	f^2
Transformational → Job Performance	0.208
Transformational → Organizational Commitment	0.274
Organizational Commitment → Job Performance	0.109

Source: Survey, 2024/2025

Hypothesis Testing and Mediation Analysis

Path significance and mediation effect were assessed using bootstrapping analysis of 5,000 samples (Hair et al., 2019; Hair et al., 2022). Structural model and its coefficients, R^2 values and loadings are presented in Figure 2.

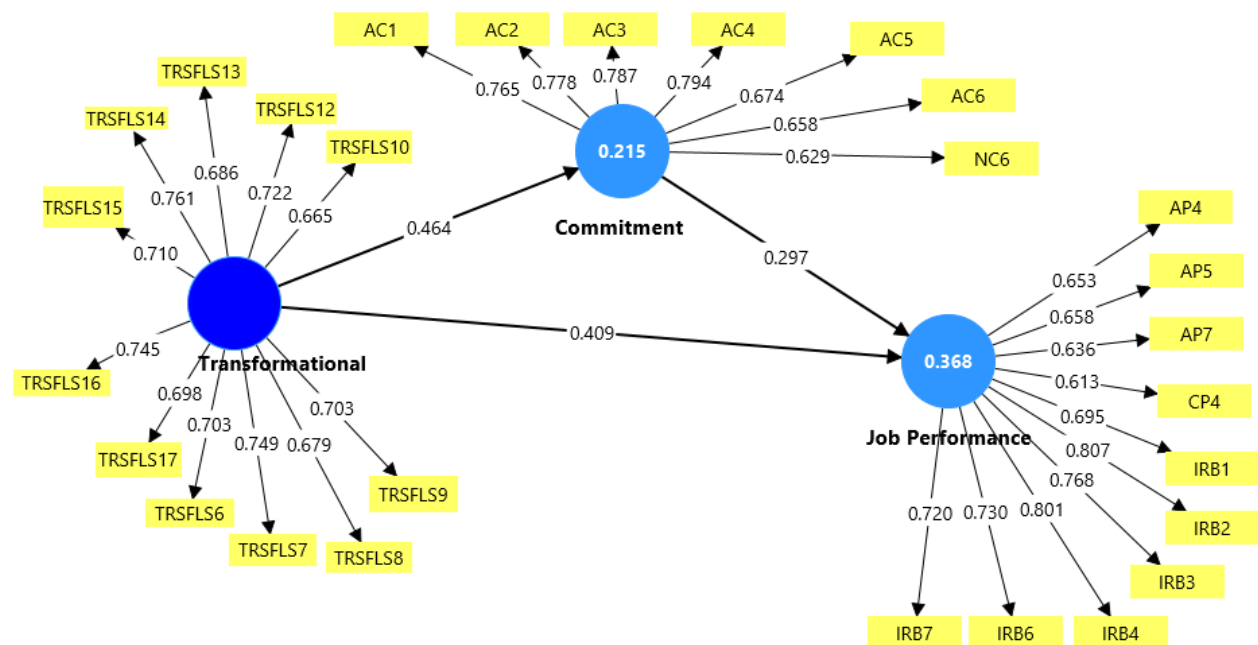


Figure 2 PLS-SEM Estimated Structural Model Results

*(Note: Path Coefficients with Significance Indicated: $**p < 0.001$. Loadings on outer model above 0.70 desirable; those below retained with explanation in measurement model. R^2 values: Organizational Commitment=0.215; Job Performance=0.368).

Direct Effects

All the paths presented in Table 8 have positive coefficients and are statistically significant at $p < 0.001$. Referring to Hypothesis 1 (H_1), it is clear from the above results that there exists a positive relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment ($\beta =$

0.464, $t = 8.463$, $p < 0.001$). It means that when transformational leadership increases in the case of EEU managers, their organizational commitment also enhances.

Turning to Hypothesis 2 (H_2), organizational commitment was found to bear a positive and significant effect on employee job performance ($\beta = 0.297$, $t = 5.013$, $p < 0.001$). This result lends weight to the notion that employees who feel a stronger bond with their organization tend to channel that attachment into higher levels of job performance relative to their less committed counterparts.

Support for Hypothesis 3 (H_3) is equally strong. Transformational leadership was found to have a direct, positive and significant impact on employee job performance ($\beta = 0.409$, $t = 6.898$, $p < 0.001$). This confirms the fact that the impact of transformational leadership on employee performance exists both via commitment and directly.

Table 8: Direct Effects (Path Coefficients and Hypotheses Testing)

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Structural Path</i>	β	<i>t-value</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>Decision</i>
H_1	Transformational $\rightarrow$ Organizational Commitment	0.464	8.463	< 0.001	Supported
H_2	Organizational Commitment $\rightarrow$ Job Performance	0.297	5.013	< 0.001	Supported
H_3	Transformational $\rightarrow$ Job Performance	0.409	6.898	< 0.001	Supported

Source: Survey, 2024/2025

Mediation Analysis

To validate Hypothesis 4 (H_4), the study examined whether organizational commitment meaningfully transmits the influence of transformational leadership onto job performance. Based on bootstrapping analysis, it was found that the indirect effect that flows through transformational leadership to job performance via organizational commitment had both positive and significant values ($\beta = 0.138$, $t = 4.899$, $p < 0.001$). As can be seen in Table 9, the direct effect of transformational leadership on job performance remained significant along with the indirect effect. The outcome indicates that organizational commitment amplifies the leadership-performance relationship without entirely replacing the direct pathway through which transformational leadership operates. On this basis, Hypothesis 4 (H_4) is supported.

Table 9: Mediation Analysis (Specific Indirect Effect)

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Indirect Path</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>Decision</i>
H_4	Transformational $\rightarrow$ Organizational Commitment $\rightarrow$ Job Performance	0.138	4.899	< 0.001	Supported

Source: Survey, 2024/2025

Total Effects

The overall effect of transformational leadership on job performance (direct + indirect) was ($\beta = 0.547$, $t = 10.817$, $p < 0.001$, see Table 10). In other words, though leadership has a great deal

of influence, its overall effectiveness is greatly increased if it succeeds in creating commitment among employees to the organization.

Table 10: Total Effects

Structural Path	β	t-value	p-value
Transformational $\rightarrow$ Organizational Commitment	0.464	8.463	< 0.001
Organizational Commitment $\rightarrow$ Job Performance	0.297	5.013	< 0.001
Transformational $\rightarrow$ Job Performance	0.547	10.817	< 0.001

Source: Survey, 2024/2025

6. Discussion

In this study, direct and indirect effects of transformational leadership on organizational commitment and employee performance have been analyzed with respect to Ethiopian Electric Utility (EEU). Organizational commitment has been considered the mediator, and it has proved itself both theoretically and empirically for the model being studied. The findings will enrich the literature of leadership and organizational behavior in public sector organizations and developing countries.

This relationship was found to be significant and positively correlated, thereby lending empirical evidence to Hypothesis 1. This finding conforms to transformational leadership theory, as transformational leaders motivate subordinates through the provision of a clear vision of what they do and by paying attention to them individually. Intellectual stimulation is yet another essential dimension of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994). Previous empirical research performed in both private and public organizations has always shown that transformational leadership behavior leads to increased affective and normative commitment of employees (Avolio et al., 2004; Dumdum et al., 2013; Mwesigwa et al., 2020). It may be suggested that in the case of the EEU, whose employees work under highly challenging technical and institutional conditions, transformational leadership is especially crucial in terms of building their sense of purpose and attachment to the organization.

The findings also support Hypothesis 2 in that organizational commitment was seen to have a positive and significant impact on the job performance of the employees. This is supported by the commitment-performance framework, which states that committed individuals put in discretionary effort, are resilient, and align their actions to organizational objectives (Meyer et al., 2002; Riketta, 2002). Also, empirical studies conducted in the public sector show that organizational commitment is a predictor of performance, both task-based and contextual (Jaramillo et al., 2005). With regards to the EEU, higher commitment will mean increased responsibility, reliability, and performance of service.

The study further validates Hypothesis 3 in the sense that there is a strong direct influence of transformational leadership on the performance of employees. It helps validate the fundamental premise of the transformational leadership theory in that it entails the influence of leaders in enhancing the performance of their followers through motivating them to transcend selfish interests for the benefit of the group (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985). Various empirical studies have established the fact that transformational leadership has a positive influence on the performance of employees (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Wang et al., 2011; Banks et al., 2016). For the EEU context, transformational leaders can directly enhance employee performance through clear expectation setting and proactive problem solving.

In addition to the direct impact, the mediation analysis provided some valuable insights into the mechanism by which the impact of transformational leadership on job performance is formed. In particular, it was found out that organizational commitment partly mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and employee job performance. Consequently, Hypothesis 4 was proven right. To put it differently, this research reveals the fact that transformational leadership positively influences the job performance of employees both directly and indirectly via their higher levels of organizational commitment. Such results are consistent with the social exchange theory, which predicts such reciprocity of employees in relation to transformational leadership (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Blau, 1964).

The occurrence of complementary partial mediation in the current study indicates that whereas transformational leadership can contribute to performance independently, organizational commitment represents an important mediating pathway in this respect. Such mediating paths have also been noted in studies involving leadership practices whereby organizational commitment has been used as an intervening variable between leadership practices and performance (Gong et al., 2009; Eliyana et al., 2019).

Overall, the results reiterate the pivotal role of transformational leadership in influencing employee attitudes and performance outcomes. By having both organizational commitment and job performance influenced by transformational leadership practice, transformational leadership proves to be a useful leadership model in public utility organizations like the EEU. In this regard, the primary contribution that this study makes is the empirical confirmation of such relationships in a developing country's public sector environment.

7. Conclusion

This research aimed to investigate how transformational leadership directly or indirectly influences employee job performance in the Ethiopian Electric Utility (EEU) via surveys using PLS-SEM methodology. The findings of this study provided consistent empirical support for all relationships that were hypothesized to be included in this model.

An important discovery made in the study is that transformational leadership possesses considerable positive effects on organizational commitment. Thus, it may be suggested that transformational leaders who work on motivation of their subordinates, help them grow individually and provide a clear vision of the organization contribute significantly to the development of psychological bond between their employees and organization. At the same time, organizational commitment turned out to be an important attitude by itself and proved to have considerable ability to improve the job performance of the employees. Besides, transformational leadership was proven to have considerable direct effect on performance that is not dependent on its effect on organizational commitment.

It seems that the most revealing result of the mediation analysis is the demonstration that organizational commitment acts as an additional partial mediator in the relationship between leadership and performance. It means that while transformational leaders are able to enhance performance directly through their behavioral effects, a large part of their influence is exerted indirectly through the increased commitment that they manage to create among their subordinates. Overall, this study confirms the theoretical claims of both transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985) and social exchange theory (Blau, 1964).

8. Implications

Findings from the current research provide many contributions not only in terms of theory but also in practical terms in regards to management and leadership development in the public sector. From the theoretical standpoint, the results obtained from the empirical data reveal the importance of the notion of organizational commitment as an intervening variable that explains the association between transformational leadership and employee job performance. Even though there are many studies that provide empirical evidence on the connection between leadership and performance, the current research makes a significant contribution to the existing body of literature by pointing at the importance of the notion of an intervening variable.

In terms of management, the findings highlight the strategic significance of developing transformational leadership skills among the members of the EEU. The managers who have an ability to create vision, encourage participation of the employees, and develop personal relationships with them can achieve better outcomes as far as having a committed work force goes. In this regard, the leadership development programs must go further than mere administrative and technical education. Such programs must concentrate on inspirational communication, empowerment, and ethical behavior so that the leaders can develop a sense of psychological attachment of the followers.

Moreover, the results show that performance improvement initiatives in public organizations cannot depend only on hard regulations, policies, procedures, or transactions. The organization's policy and human resource management should be consciously created in such a way as to build up the affective and normative identification of workers with the organization. The system of performance appraisal, promotion, and training that fosters transformational values can foster a work environment where the workers are motivated to go above their job responsibilities. Building organizational commitment is a sustainable strategy to achieve success in the EEU's service delivery.

9. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Although the study brings many benefits, it is important to note that it does not lack limitations, which are actually important for upcoming studies. Firstly, the cross-sectional research design makes it impossible to draw any clear conclusions about the relationship between the variables as regards causality. Even though the structural model shows strong relationships, further research may be conducted in order to prove the causality through the use of longitudinal research designs.

Secondly, the self-reported nature of data makes the presence of common method variance and response biases likely. However, since reliable measurement tools were used and advanced statistical analysis was performed, this issue could be addressed in future research. Multi-source data could be used as an addition to the employee self-reported measures in order to provide more reliable assessment of job performance.

Thirdly, whereas this research concentrated on transformational leadership style in particular, there exist other types of leadership style in the wider leadership environment. Comparative analysis on the relationship between transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles is suggested for future studies as it will give a comprehensive and holistic view of the relationship that exists within these leadership styles in relation to the specific impact of commitment and performance in the public sector.

Lastly, it is necessary to keep in mind that the empirical context used for testing this model was a public utility enterprise. This restricts the applicability of the findings of the research since it

may not necessarily apply to other organizations. Further research on replication of the model in other contexts such as the public sector, private organizations, and other cultural backgrounds is recommended. The model can also be extended in future to include other mediating or moderating variables such as job satisfaction and organizational culture.

Abbreviations

AVE	: Average Variance Extracted
CA	: Cronbach's Alpha
CR	: Composite Reliability
EEU	: Ethiopian Electric Utility
FRLM	: Full-Range Leadership Model
HTMT	: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations
IRB	: In-Role Behaviours
MLQ-5X	: Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Form 5X)
OC	: Organizational Commitment
OCB	: Organizational Citizenship Behaviour
PLS-SEM	: Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling
SET	: Social Exchange Theory
SRMR	: Standardized Root Mean Square Residual
TL/TRF	: Transformational Leadership
VIF	: Variance Inflation Factor

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Author's Contributions

Moges Abera Enigda: Conceptualization, Methodology, Data collection, Formal analysis, Investigation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review and editing.

Asemamaw Tilahun Debas: Supervision, Conceptualization, Methodology guidance, Validation, Writing – review and editing.

Teshale Birhanu Tiruneh: Supervision, Validation, Writing – review and editing. This study was conducted as part of the corresponding author's (Moges Abera Enigda) PhD dissertation, under the academic supervision and advisory guidance of the co-authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Statements and Declarations

Consent to Participate

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants (employees of the Ethiopian Electric Utility) included in the study prior to data collection. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of their involvement, and their right to withdraw at any stage without consequence to their employment or standing within the organization.

Consent for Publication

Not applicable. This manuscript does not contain any individual person's data, images, or identifiable information requiring separate publication consent.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used AI tools, namely ChatGPT and Claude, to improve the language, grammar, clarity, and readability of the text. These tools were not used to generate original research content, data, analysis, interpretations, or conclusions. After using these tools, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and originality of the published article.

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