

Transformational Leadership and Employees' Performance in the Community Outreach Program of the Department Of Sports in Nairobi City County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance in the Community Outreach Program of the Department of Sports, Nairobi City County, Kenya. The study was guided by the research question: What is the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance in the Community Outreach Program of the Department of Sports, Nairobi City County, Kenya? The study was anchored in Full Range Leadership Theory and employed a mixed-methods census design. The target population comprised 32 staff members of the Community Outreach Program, including managers, supervisors and technical staff. All 32 staff members were included in the quantitative component, and seven key informants were purposively selected for interviews. Data were collected using structured questionnaires, semi-structured interview guides and a document analysis checklist. Twenty-eight valid questionnaires were analysed, representing a response rate of 87.5%, while all seven key informants participated in the interviews. Quantitative data were analysed using means, standard deviations, Pearson product-moment correlation and simple linear regression, while qualitative data were analysed thematically. Transformational leadership was assessed through idealized influence, inspirational motivation and individualized consideration, while employee performance was assessed through task accomplishment, efficiency, and quality of work, commitment, initiative and teamwork. The findings showed that transformational leadership was highly rated ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.43$), as was employee performance ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.35$). Pearson correlation analysis established a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance ($r = .842$, $p < .001$). Simple linear regression further showed that transformational leadership significantly predicted employee performance ($\beta = .842$, $p < .001$; $R^2 = .709$). Idealized influence and inspirational motivation were strongly evident, while individualized consideration was comparatively less pronounced. The study concludes that transformational leadership has a significant positive relationship with employee performance in the Community Outreach Program. The Department of Sports should strengthen transformational leadership practices, particularly individualized consideration, through employee recognition, mentoring, personalized feedback and staff development.

KEYWORDS

Transformational leadership, Employees' Performance, Community Outreach Program, Nairobi City County

I. INTRODUCTION

Employee performance is central to the effectiveness of community-based programmes, where employees are responsible for translating organizational objectives into services delivered to communities. Leadership plays an important role in shaping how employees understand organizational goals, participate in decision-making, respond to service demands and perform their assigned responsibilities. Supportive leadership has been associated with improved task performance and organizational citizenship behaviour, while leadership practices more broadly shape employees' perceptions of their roles and contributions.

Transformational leadership has received particular attention in studies of employee performance. The style is characterized by the articulation of a shared vision, individualized support and intellectual stimulation, with these practices associated with employee commitment, creativity and performance. In community-based programmes, such leadership practices can be relevant to employees who require direction, encouragement, recognition and opportunities to contribute to programme activities. The emphasis on employee development and engagement also provides a basis for examining how transformational leadership relates to performance within public-sector service programmes.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, organizational structures and resource constraints can influence employees' opportunities to exercise initiative and participate in organizational processes. Transformational and participatory leadership approaches have consequently attracted attention for their potential to strengthen employee involvement and ownership in resource-constrained organizations.

In Kenya, public-sector reforms have similarly emphasized improved service delivery, employee engagement and leadership practices, although the extent of employee participation and inclusive decision-making varies across public institutions (Kinyua, 2025). Within Nairobi City County, the Community Outreach Program of the Department of Sports relies on employees to plan, coordinate, mobilize communities, implement activities, monitor programmes and deliver sports-related services. These responsibilities require leadership practices that provide direction while encouraging employee involvement and commitment. Evidence from county-led programmes has associated leadership practices involving employee recognition and engagement with improved performance. However, limited empirical evidence specifically addresses the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance within the Community Outreach Program of Nairobi City County.

A. *Statement of the Problem*

The Community Outreach Program of the Department of Sports, Nairobi City County, is expected to effectively plan, coordinate, mobilize communities, implement activities, monitor programmes and deliver sports-related services. Achievement of these responsibilities requires employees to perform their assigned duties effectively and consistently. The programme therefore requires leadership practices that support employee engagement, coordination, accountability and achievement of planned targets.

However, performance concerns have been documented within the wider Nairobi City County public service, including low employee morale, inadequate supervisor communication, absenteeism, low productivity and difficulties in achieving planned targets. County planning and performance-management documents have consequently emphasized staff coaching and mentorship, improved communication, employee engagement, leadership development, and recognition and reward mechanisms. Similar concerns are evident in the sports sector. Asiimwe et al. (2025) reported moderate levels of service delivery and customer feedback among sports federations in Nairobi, while employee satisfaction and financial performance were relatively lower. Wanyama and Aila (2022) also established a significant relationship between strategic management and performance in the State Department of Sports.

Such performance challenges can affect the capacity of the Community Outreach Program to implement planned activities, coordinate community engagements and deliver sports-related services effectively. Where employee performance is inadequate, programme targets and the quality and consistency of service delivery can be affected.

Despite the documented performance concerns, limited empirical evidence establishes the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance within the Community Outreach Program of the Department of Sports, Nairobi City County. Existing studies have examined performance in the wider county public service, sports federations and the State Department of Sports, but they have not specifically addressed how transformational leadership relates to employee performance within this community-based sports programme. This leaves a contextual empirical gap regarding the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance in the programme. The study therefore examined the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance in the Community Outreach Program of the Department of Sports, Nairobi City County, Kenya.

B. Purpose of the Study

To determine the influence of transformational leadership on employees' performance in the Community Outreach Program of the Department of Sports in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

C. Research questions

To what extent is transformational leadership influencing employees' performance in the Community Outreach Program within Nairobi City County's Department of Sports?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW: THEORETICAL REVIEW

The study was based on the Full Range Leadership Theory (FRLT) developed by Avolio and Bass (1991) and Bass and Avolio (1994) (Avolio, 2004). The theory conceptualizes leadership behaviour along a continuum ranging from active and engaged leadership to passive and avoidant behaviours. It incorporates transformational leadership and provides a framework for examining how leadership behaviour relates to employee outcomes. FRLT proposes that leadership behaviours influence employee motivation, attitudes and performance. Transformational leadership focuses on behaviour that encourage employees to pursue shared organizational goals and extend their efforts beyond immediate individual

interests (Sosik, 2006). These behaviours include articulating a shared vision, providing individualized consideration, stimulating employees intellectually, encouraging innovation and supporting employee development. Through these behaviours, transformational leaders can influence employee motivation, involvement and commitment to organizational objectives, which can in turn enhance employee performance.

Nonetheless, transformational leadership behaviours can overlap in practice, making clear classification within a single leadership category difficult. FRLT also gives greater attention to leader behaviours than to organizational and contextual factors that influence employee performance, including resources, organizational structures and working conditions

Despite limitations, FRLT was applied by focusing on transformational leadership as the independent variable and employee performance as the dependent variable. Transformational leadership was examined through the leadership behaviours reflected in the study instrument, while employee performance was assessed using the identified performance indicators. The theory provided the basis for examining the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance and informed the formulation of the study hypothesis.

A. Empirical Review

Transformational leadership involves behaviours through which leaders articulate a shared vision, provide individualized consideration, stimulate employees intellectually, encourage innovation and support employee development. These behaviours influence how employees understand organizational goals, respond to work responsibilities and contribute to organizational performance. Employee performance encompasses the extent to which employees effectively accomplish assigned duties and contribute to the achievement of organizational objectives.

Globally, empirical studies have established a positive relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance across different organizational settings. Agag et al. (2025), in a cross-cultural meta-analysis involving 519 samples from 39 nations, found that transformational leadership positively predicted task performance, citizenship behaviour and innovation. Similarly, Sertel, Karadag and Ergin-Kocatürk (2022), in a meta-analysis of 79 studies, established a positive relationship between transformational leadership and performance across different sectors. In the Chinese hospitality sector, Jiatong et al. (2022) found that transformational leadership had both direct and indirect effects on job performance, with affective commitment and employee engagement accounting for part of the relationship.

In Africa, evidence also indicates a positive relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance. In Ghana, Donkor, Sekyere and Oduro (2022) found that transformational leadership was associated with improved employee performance through organizational commitment, although the mediating effect was not consistently established. The findings indicate that the relationship between transformational leadership and performance can operate through employee-related mechanisms and that the strength of these mechanisms can vary across organizational settings.

In Kenya, studies conducted within public-sector organizations have reported similar findings. Shukri and Gatobu (2024), in Mandera County Government, found that individualized consideration had a significant positive influence on employee performance. In Embu County Government, Kibai and Awuor (2024) found that innovation-oriented transformational leadership was associated with improvements in organizational performance, although the relationship was influenced by the availability of resources. These findings provide evidence of the relationship between transformational leadership and performance within Kenyan public-sector settings.

Despite these findings, the existing evidence has largely been drawn from general organizational settings, hospitality, sports-related organizations and county government institutions outside the Community Outreach Program of Nairobi City County. The studies also differ in the dimensions of transformational leadership examined and, in the measures, used to assess performance. Limited evidence therefore exists on the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance among employees involved in community-based sports outreach within a county government setting. This study addressed this gap by examining the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance in the Community Outreach Program of the Department of Sports, Nairobi City County, Kenya.

III. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study employed a mixed-methods design to examine the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance in the Community Outreach Program of the Department of Sports, Nairobi City County, Kenya. The quantitative component assessed employees' perceptions of transformational leadership and employee performance, while qualitative data provided contextual information on how leadership practices influenced employees' day-to-day work.

The target population comprised 32 staff members of the Community Outreach Program, including managers, supervisors and technical staff involved in planning, coordinating and implementing programme activities. A census approach was used, allowing all 32 staff members to participate in the study. Seven key informants, comprising the Director of the Department of Sports, two senior programme officers, two team leaders and two long-serving community outreach officers, were purposively selected for the qualitative component.

Quantitative data were collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire. Six five-point Likert-scale items measured transformational leadership through idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration, while six items measured employee performance through task accomplishment, efficiency, and quality of work, commitment, initiative and teamwork. Qualitative data were collected using a semi-structured interview guide focusing on experiences of leadership and its influence on employees' day-to-day work and performance. A document analysis checklist was also used to review departmental reports, staff performance appraisal summaries, programme strategic plans and management meeting minutes.

The questionnaire and interview guide were pre-tested among staff of the Community and Youth Sports Outreach Unit of Kiambu County Government. The pilot involved 10 questionnaire respondents and two key informants. Face, content and construct validity were assessed before the main data collection, while internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha. A coefficient of 0.70 or higher was considered acceptable. The instruments were revised where necessary before administration to the study population.

Data collection was conducted after obtaining institutional ethical approval, a NACOSTI research permit and authorization from relevant Nairobi City County authorities. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants. Questionnaires were administered at participants' duty stations, while interviews were conducted by appointment and audio-recorded with consent. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, and inferential statistics; Pearson's correlation and simple regression to establish the strength and direction of the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance as well as its influence on the dependent variable respectively. Qualitative interview data were analyzed thematically, while documentary evidence was used to corroborate and contextualize the quantitative and qualitative findings. Confidentiality, anonymity and voluntary participation were maintained throughout the study.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Response Rate

Response rate analysis was conducted to establish the level of participation in the quantitative and qualitative components of the study.

Table 1: Response Rate

Category	Administered	Completed	Response Rate (%)
Questionnaires	32	28	87.5
Key informant interviews	7	7	]

Source: Field Data (2026)

Twenty eight of the 32 questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 87.5%. All seven scheduled key-informant interviews were conducted. The achieved response rates provided sufficient data for the quantitative and qualitative analyses.

B. Reliability Test Results

Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha.

Table 2: Reliability Results

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Transformational leadership	6	.902
Employee performance	6	.889

Overall instrument	30	.866
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Source: Field Data (2026)

The transformational leadership scale recorded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .902, while the employee performance scale recorded .889. All coefficients exceeded the minimum acceptable threshold of .70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency of the scales used in the study.

C. *Descriptive Statistics for Transformational Leadership*

The study examined the respondents' perception of transformational leadership through three indicators: idealized influence, inspirational motivation and individualized consideration.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Transformational Leadership

Measurement Item	Mean	S. D
Idealized influence		
Leads by example with integrity, fairness and professionalism	4.36	.49
Demonstrates confidence in employees' abilities	4.32	.48
Inspirational motivation		
Communicates a clear and inspiring vision	4.29	.46
Encourages creative thinking and new ideas	3.93	.66
Links daily tasks to broader community impact	4.14	.52
Individualized consideration		
Recognizes individual strengths and offers personalized support	3.57	.50

Source: Field Data (2026)

The findings showed that transformational leadership was generally perceived transformational leadership positively ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.43$). Idealized influence was strongly reflected in supervisors' role modelling, integrity, fairness, professionalism and confidence in employees. Leading by example recorded the highest mean ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 0.49$), followed by demonstrating confidence in employees' abilities ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 0.48$). These findings suggest that supervisors were perceived to demonstrate behaviours that encouraged employees to trust their leadership and follow expected standards of conduct.

Inspirational motivation was also highly rated. Communicating a clear and inspiring vision recorded a mean of 4.29 ($SD = 0.46$), while linking employees' daily tasks to broader community impact recorded a mean of 4.14 ($SD = 0.52$). Encouragement of creative thinking and new ideas received a comparatively lower mean of 3.93 ($SD = 0.66$). The findings indicate that supervisors were more strongly perceived as communicating programme direction and purpose than encouraging new ideas and creative approaches to work.

Individualized consideration recorded the lowest mean among the transformational leadership indicators. Recognition of individual strengths and provision of personalized support recorded a mean of 3.57 ($SD = 0.50$). This suggests that although supervisors

demonstrated strong role modelling and communicated programme goals effectively, attention to employees' individual strengths and support needs was less pronounced. Additionally, qualitative findings supported the quantitative results. Key informants explained that the supervisor regularly communicated the programmes vision and helped employees understand how their individual contributions fitted within broader programme goals

The findings were consistent with Full Range Leadership Theory, which conceptualizes transformational leadership through behaviours that motivate employees, communicate a shared purpose, stimulate new thinking and provide individualized support. The relatively lower rating for individualized consideration is also consistent with the findings of Mwaniki, Muhoho and Njoroge (2020), who found that individualized transformational leadership had a positive and significant influence on organizational performance in selected SACCOs in Kiambu Town. Similarly, Gachira & Ntara (2024) identified intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration as important dimensions in examining performance among senior managers in Kenya's private sector.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that transformational leadership was highly evident in the Community Outreach Program, particularly through idealized influence and inspirational motivation, while individualized consideration was less pronounced. Overall, the study concluded that transformational leadership practices are associated with improved employee performance within the programme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Practical Implications

The Department of Sports should strengthen transformational leadership, particularly individualized consideration, through employee recognition, mentoring, personalized feedback and staff development.

B. Policy Implications

Nairobi City County should incorporate transformational leadership competencies, employee recognition, and mentoring and staff development into leadership and performance-management policies.

C. Theoretical Implications

The findings support Full Range Leadership Theory by demonstrating a significant positive relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance in a county government community sports programme.

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