

THE DYNAMICS OF TRANSFORMATIONAL AND SERVANT LEADERSHIP: THE IMPLICATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE AND CULTURE IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: Leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping organizational performance, efficiency, and workplace culture. Among contemporary leadership approaches, transformational and Servant leadership have attracted growing scholarly and practical interest due to their emphasis on motivation, ethical conduct, and people-centered management. Transformational leadership focuses on inspiring followers through vision, innovation, and individualized support to achieve organizational goals. In contrast, servant leadership prioritizes the needs, growth, and well-being of employees, fostering collaboration and ethical organizational cultures. Understanding the implications of these leadership styles is particularly important in dynamic and culturally diverse environments. Within the Nigerian organizational context, leadership effectiveness is influenced by socio-cultural values, economic conditions, and institutional structures. These contextual factors shape how leadership behaviors are perceived and how they affect employee attitudes, performance, and organizational culture. Transformational leadership may be especially effective in promoting innovation, competitiveness, and goal attainment in performance-driven organizations.

In contrast, servant leadership may enhance employee commitment, ethical behavior, and supportive workplace relationships in contexts that emphasize communal values and interpersonal connections. Through a qualitative approach, the study examines transformational and Servant leadership styles and analyzes their implications for organizational performance and culture in Nigeria. It compares the two leadership approaches, identifies their strengths and limitations, and examines the contextual factors that influence their effectiveness. The findings provide practical insights for organizational leaders, policymakers, and human resource practitioners seeking to improve leadership practices that enhance productivity, uphold ethical standards, and foster positive organizational cultures. The study also contributes to the broader leadership literature by contextualizing leadership theory within a culturally nuanced environment.

Keywords: *Dynamics, Transformational Leadership, Servant Leadership, Organizational Performance and Culture*

Introduction

Leadership is a crucial factor in determining an organization's success, influencing not only productivity and efficiency but also the culture and values within a workplace. Among the various leadership approaches, transformational and Servant leadership have gained significant attention for their potential to drive both individual and organizational performance. Transformational leadership emphasizes inspiring and motivating followers through a clear vision, innovation, and personalized support. In contrast, Servant leadership prioritizes employees' needs and growth, promoting ethical behavior, collaboration, and a culture centered on people. Understanding how these leadership styles operate and their implications for organizational outcomes is particularly relevant in dynamic and culturally diverse environments.

The Nigerian organizational context presents unique challenges and opportunities for leadership practice. Cultural factors, socio-economic dynamics, and organizational structures influence how leaders are perceived and how their strategies affect employees and organizational outcomes. Transformational leadership may foster innovation and goal achievement in competitive corporate settings. In contrast,

Servant leadership may enhance employee loyalty, ethical conduct, and a supportive workplace culture, especially in sectors where interpersonal relationships and community values are highly significant. Examining these styles within the Nigerian context provides insights into how leadership approaches interact with local culture to influence performance and workplace norms.

This study aims to explore the dynamics of transformational and Servant leadership and their implications for organizational performance and culture. By comparing these leadership styles, the paper seeks to identify the strengths, limitations, and contextual factors that influence their effectiveness. The study will guide organizational leaders, policymakers, and human resource practitioners in Nigeria and similar contexts, strengthening leadership practices that enhance productivity, promote ethical standards, and nurture a positive organizational culture. This work will contribute to the growing body of knowledge on leadership theory and its practical application in culturally nuanced environments.

Conceptual Foundations of Transformational and Servant Leadership

Concept of Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is widely regarded as a leadership approach that focuses on inspiring and motivating followers to transcend personal interests for the sake of collective goals and long-term organizational vision. It emphasizes change, innovation, and moral purpose by reshaping followers' values, beliefs, and attitudes toward achieving higher levels of performance and commitment. Contemporary scholars describe transformational leadership as a process through which leaders engage followers intellectually, emotionally, and ethically, thereby fostering intrinsic motivation rather than reliance on external rewards (Northouse, 2022; Banks et al., 2016).

Central to transformational leadership is the leader's ability to influence followers to promote trust, commitment, and shared purpose. This form of leadership is not merely about directing tasks but about transforming individuals and organizations through vision, empowerment, and ethical conduct. Research consistently shows that transformational leadership enhances job satisfaction, organizational citizenship

behavior, creativity, and overall effectiveness across sectors such as education, business, healthcare, and religious organizations (Hoch et al., 2018; Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

Transformational leadership is commonly explained in terms of four interrelated dimensions known as the "Four I is": idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. These characteristics collectively define how transformational leaders interact with followers and shape organizational culture.

Idealized influence refers to the extent to which leaders serve as role models who are admired, respected, and trusted by their followers. Leaders exhibiting idealized influence demonstrate high ethical standards, integrity, and consistency between words and actions. Through moral conduct and commitment to shared values, they gain followers' confidence and loyalty. Followers often internalize the leader's vision and values, aspiring to emulate their behavior. Recent studies emphasize that idealized influence strengthens ethical climates and promotes trust-based relationships, which are essential for sustainable leadership effectiveness (Eva et al., 2019; Northouse, 2022).

Inspirational motivation involves the leader's ability to articulate a compelling vision that stirs enthusiasm, optimism, and a sense of meaning among followers. Transformational leaders communicate high expectations clearly and passionately, encouraging followers to see their work as valuable and purpose-driven. By fostering a sense of collective mission, leaders motivate followers to commit themselves emotionally and persist in the face of challenges. Empirical research indicates that inspirational motivation is strongly associated with increased employee engagement, resilience, and goal commitment, particularly in environments undergoing change or uncertainty (Breevaart et al., 2021; Yukl, 2020).

Intellectual stimulation is another defining feature of transformational leadership, characterized by the leader's encouragement of creativity, innovation, and critical thinking. Leaders challenge existing assumptions, question traditional practices, and invite followers to explore new perspectives and solutions. Rather than discouraging

mistakes, transformational leaders treat errors as learning opportunities, thereby cultivating an environment of psychological safety and continuous improvement. Recent leadership studies show that intellectual stimulation enhances organizational learning and adaptability, especially in knowledge-based and dynamic contexts (Anderson, Potočnik, & Zhou, 2019; Hoch et al., 2018).

Individualized consideration refers to a leader's attentiveness to each follower's unique needs, strengths, and aspirations. Transformational leaders act as mentors or coaches, providing personalized support, feedback, and developmental opportunities. By recognizing individual differences and potential, leaders foster personal growth and professional development. This dimension contributes significantly to follower satisfaction and commitment, as individuals feel valued and supported. Contemporary research affirms that individualized consideration plays a crucial role in talent development, leadership succession, and employee well-being (Kark & Van Dijk, 2019; Northouse, 2022).

Historical Development and Theoretical Foundations of Transformational Leadership

The theoretical foundation of transformational leadership can be traced to the seminal work of James MacGregor Burns in 1978. Burns introduced the concept of transformational leadership in his distinction between transactional and transforming leadership. He conceptualized transforming leadership as a process in which leaders and followers engage in a mutual relationship that elevates both parties to higher levels of motivation and morality. According to Burns, transformational leadership is grounded in shared values, ethical purpose, and collective good, rather than mere exchanges of rewards for compliance. His work emphasized the moral dimension of leadership and highlighted leadership as a dynamic process of social change (Burns, 1978). Burns' contribution was primarily normative and philosophical, focusing on political and social leadership. He argued that authentic leadership must be transformative, fostering moral development and societal progress. Although his framework lacked empirical measurement, it laid the intellectual groundwork for later scholars to refine and operationalize the concept within organizational contexts.

Building on Burns' ideas, Bernard M. Bass significantly advanced transformational leadership theory during the 1980s and beyond. Bass expanded the concept by demonstrating that transformational leadership could be systematically observed, measured, and applied in organizational settings. Unlike Burns, Bass argued that transformational leadership is not exclusively moral or altruistic but can coexist with transactional leadership. He posited that effective leaders often combine both approaches, using transactional mechanisms while also inspiring followers to exceed expectations (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Bass further identified and formalized the four dimensions of transformational leadership, providing a more transparent theoretical structure. He developed the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), which enabled empirical research on transformational leadership behaviors and outcomes. Through extensive studies, Bass demonstrated that transformational leadership positively influences follower motivation, performance, satisfaction, and organizational effectiveness across cultures and industries. Recent meta-analyses continue to confirm the robustness and global applicability of Bass's model (Banks et al., 2016; Hoch et al., 2018).

Over time, transformational leadership theory has been integrated with contemporary leadership perspectives, including ethical, Servant, and authentic leadership. Scholars increasingly emphasize the ethical, relational, and developmental aspects of transformational leadership, particularly in contexts requiring trust, innovation, and long-term sustainability. Today, transformational leadership remains one of the most influential and empirically supported leadership theories, providing a valuable framework for understanding leadership effectiveness in complex and changing environments (Yukl, 2020; Northouse, 2022).

Concept of Servant Leadership

Servant leadership is a leadership philosophy that places the needs, growth, and well-being of followers above the personal interests of the leader. Unlike traditional leadership models that emphasize authority, power, and positional influence, servant leadership begins with a genuine desire to serve others. Leadership, in this perspective, emerges naturally from service, as leaders prioritize empowering

individuals and fostering community rather than controlling outcomes. Contemporary scholars describe Servant leadership as a people-centered approach that promotes ethical behavior, trust, and sustainable organizational performance (Northouse, 2022; Eva et al., 2019).

At the heart of Servant leadership is the belief that effective leadership is rooted in moral responsibility and relational influence. Servant leaders seek to enhance the personal and professional development of followers, enabling them to become healthier, wiser, more autonomous, and better able to serve others in turn. This approach aligns leadership effectiveness with long-term human flourishing rather than short-term productivity alone. Research across organizational, educational, and religious contexts consistently links Servant leadership with higher levels of follower satisfaction, commitment, trust, and organizational citizenship behavior (Liden et al., 2014; Hoch et al., 2018).

One of the essential principles of Servant leadership is service to others. Servant leaders view leadership fundamentally as an act of service, in which authority is exercised for the benefit of followers rather than for personal advancement. This service orientation encourages leaders to listen attentively, respond compassionately, and act selflessly in decision-making processes. By placing followers' needs first, servant leaders foster a culture of mutual respect and shared responsibility. Empirical studies suggest that this principle strengthens relational bonds and enhances follower engagement, particularly in value-driven organizations such as faith-based institutions and non-profit organizations (Eva et al., 2019).

Empathy is another defining principle of Servant leadership. Servant leaders seek to understand followers' experiences, emotions, and perspectives, recognizing the inherent dignity and worth of each individual. Through empathetic engagement, leaders build trust and psychological safety, allowing followers to express concerns, ideas, and challenges without fear of judgment. Empathy enables leaders to respond appropriately to individual circumstances and fosters inclusive environments that respect diversity and personal differences. Recent leadership research highlights empathy as a critical factor in effective people management, conflict resolution, and

emotional intelligence within servant leadership frameworks (Spears, 2010; Northouse, 2022).

Stewardship represents a further core principle of Servant leadership and refers to the responsible management of organizational resources, authority, and influence. Servant leaders understand themselves as caretakers rather than owners of power, entrusted with the responsibility to serve the broader community and future generations. This sense of stewardship encourages ethical decision-making, accountability, and transparency. Leaders guided by stewardship seek to balance organizational goals with social responsibility, ensuring that actions contribute positively to stakeholders and society at large. Contemporary scholars emphasize that stewardship distinguishes Servant leadership from self-serving leadership styles and supports sustainable organizational practices (Van Dierendonck, 2011; Eva et al., 2019).

A final essential principle of Servant leadership is a commitment to the growth of people. Servant leaders invest intentionally in the personal, professional, and moral development of their followers. They provide opportunities for learning, mentoring, and empowerment, recognizing that organizational success is closely tied to human development. This commitment extends beyond immediate job performance to include followers' long-term well-being and leadership capacity. Research indicates that such developmental orientation enhances leadership succession, innovation, and organizational resilience (Liden et al., 2014; Hoch et al., 2018).

Theoretical Foundations of Servant Leadership

The theoretical foundation of Servant leadership is primarily attributed to Robert K. Greenleaf, who first introduced the concept in his seminal essay, "The Servant as Leader," published in 1970. Greenleaf proposed that the actual test of leadership lies in whether followers grow as persons, becoming healthier, wiser, freer, and more likely to serve others. His work was influenced by ethical philosophy, religious thought, and humanistic values, emphasizing moral authority over positional power. Greenleaf's ideas challenged conventional leadership paradigms by redefining

leadership as a calling grounded in service, humility, and responsibility to others (Greenleaf, 1977).

Greenleaf conceptualized Servant leadership as a conscious choice to serve first, from which leadership flows organically. He argued that institutions and organizations thrive when leaders place human development at the center of their mission. Although Greenleaf's work was initially philosophical rather than empirical, it provided a robust normative framework that reshaped leadership discourse, especially within education, healthcare, non-profit, and faith-based organizations. His emphasis on ethics, community, and shared power continues to influence contemporary leadership theory and practice.

Building on Greenleaf's foundational ideas, Larry C. Spears played a critical role in clarifying and popularizing the concept of Servant leadership. Spears identified ten core characteristics of Servant leadership, including listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community. These characteristics translated Greenleaf's philosophical insights into practical leadership behaviors, making servant leadership more accessible and applicable across organizational contexts (Spears, 2010).

Spears' contributions strengthened the conceptual clarity of Servant leadership and facilitated empirical research by providing observable dimensions of servant leader behavior. His framework emphasized relational influence rather than coercive authority, reinforcing the idea that leadership effectiveness emerges from trust, service, and shared purpose. Recent scholars have integrated Spears' characteristics into validated measurement models, demonstrating that servant leadership positively predicts ethical behavior, employee well-being, and organizational sustainability (Van Dierendonck, 2011; Eva et al., 2019).

In contemporary leadership studies, Servant leadership is often situated alongside transformational, ethical, and authentic leadership theories. While sharing similarities with these approaches, Servant leadership remains distinct in its explicit prioritization of followers' needs and moral responsibility. The theoretical

foundations laid by Greenleaf and refined by Spears continue to shape modern interpretations of leadership that emphasize humility, empathy, stewardship, and long-term human development. As organizations increasingly confront ethical challenges and demands for inclusive leadership, Servant leadership offers a robust theoretical and practical framework for responsible and people-centered leadership (Northouse, 2022; Hoch et al., 2018).

Comparison of Transformational and Servant Leadership Styles

Transformational leadership and Servant leadership are two influential leadership approaches that emphasize people-centered leadership, ethical conduct, and sustainable outcomes. Although they emerged from different theoretical traditions and emphasize distinct leadership priorities, both styles share essential similarities in their concern for followers' development and moral leadership. At the same time, they differ in their fundamental orientation toward organizational goals, motivation strategies, and the primary focus of leadership influence. Understanding both the convergences and divergences between these leadership styles provides valuable insight into their application across organizational, educational, and faith-based contexts.

Similarities between Transformational and Servant Leadership

One significant similarity between transformational and Servant leadership lies in their strong focus on followers. Both leadership styles prioritize the growth, development, and empowerment of followers rather than reliance on positional authority or coercive power. Transformational leaders seek to elevate followers' motivation and performance by inspiring them to transcend self-interest in pursuit of collective goals. In contrast, servant leaders focus on nurturing followers' personal and professional growth so they can achieve their full potential. Despite these differences in emphasis, both approaches recognize followers as central to leadership effectiveness and view leadership as a relational process (Northouse, 2022; Hoch et al., 2018).

Another shared characteristic is their ethical orientation. Both transformational and Servant leadership are grounded in moral values such as integrity, trust, fairness, and

responsibility. Transformational leadership emphasizes moral influence through idealized influence, where leaders act as ethical role models who inspire trust and admiration (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Similarly, Servant leadership is explicitly rooted in ethical responsibility, humility, and concern for others, emphasizing stewardship and service as moral obligations of leadership (Greenleaf, 1977; Van Dierendonck, 2011). Empirical research suggests that both leadership styles are positively associated with ethical climates and reduced unethical behavior within organizations (Eva et al., 2019; Banks et al., 2016).

Both leadership styles also share a long-term vision and future-oriented perspective. Transformational leaders articulate compelling visions that guide followers toward long-term organizational change and innovation. Their focus is on transforming systems, cultures, and mindsets to achieve sustainable success (Yukl, 2020). Servant leaders, although less vision-driven in rhetoric, are equally committed to long-term outcomes, particularly the sustainable growth of people and communities. By investing in followers' development and well-being, servant leaders contribute to organizational resilience and continuity over time (Liden et al., 2014). In this sense, both leadership approaches prioritize enduring impact rather than short-term gains.

Differences between Transformational and Servant Leadership

Despite these similarities, transformational and Servant leadership differ significantly in their primary focus and underlying purpose. Transformational leadership is primarily focused on achieving organizational or collective goals. Leaders inspire followers to align their personal values with the organization's mission and vision, thereby enhancing performance, innovation, and change. While follower development is essential, it is often viewed as a means to achieving broader organizational objectives (Bass, 1985; Yukl, 2020).

In contrast, servant leadership places serving others as the central purpose of leadership. The leader's foremost responsibility is to meet followers' needs, support their growth, and promote their well-being. Organizational success is considered a natural outcome of effective service rather than the primary driving force. Greenleaf (1977) argued that institutions become healthier when leaders focus first on serving

people, suggesting a reversal of traditional leadership hierarchies. Thus, while transformational leadership prioritizes organizational transformation, servant leadership prioritizes human transformation.

A further distinction lies in their approach to motivation. Transformational leaders primarily motivate followers through inspiration, vision, and intellectual stimulation. By articulating ambitious goals and encouraging innovative thinking, they energize followers to exceed expectations and embrace change. Motivation is driven by shared vision, challenge, and a sense of collective purpose (Bass & Riggio, 2006). This approach is efficient in dynamic environments requiring change, innovation, and strategic realignment.

Servant leadership, on the other hand, motivates followers through care, support, and empowerment. Rather than emphasizing visionary challenges, servant leaders foster motivation by building trust, showing empathy, and providing individualized support. Followers are motivated because they feel valued, respected, and genuinely cared for. Research indicates that servant leadership enhances intrinsic motivation by fulfilling followers' psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Eva et al., 2019; Van Dierendonck, 2011).

Another key difference concerns the direction of influence. In transformational leadership, influence flows primarily from leader to followers, as leaders articulate vision and inspire change. In Servant leadership, influence is more reciprocal and community-oriented, emphasizing shared decision-making and collective responsibility. Servant leaders often lead quietly through persuasion rather than charisma or authority, reinforcing a culture of collaboration and mutual accountability (Spears, 2010).

Comparison of Transformational and Servant Leadership

Dimension	Transformational Leadership	Servant Leadership
Core Orientation	Achieving organizational or collective goals through inspiration and change	Serving followers first to promote personal growth and well-being
View of Leadership	Leader as visionary and change agent	Leader as Servant, steward, and facilitator

Focus on Followers	Followers are developed to help achieve organizational transformation	Followers are nurtured as an end in themselves
Ethical Foundation	Emphasis on moral influence and role modeling	Emphasis on humility, empathy, and moral responsibility
Motivation Approach	Inspiration, vision, intellectual challenge	Care, empowerment, trust, and support
Power and Influence	Charisma and inspirational influence	Persuasion, shared power, and service
Long-Term Emphasis	Organizational sustainability and innovation	Human development and community sustainability
Key Theorists	Burns (1978), Bass (1985)	Greenleaf (1977), Spears (2010)

Application to Church and Ministry Leadership

In church and ministry contexts, both transformational and Servant leadership offer valuable frameworks for guiding leaders in fulfilling spiritual, organizational, and pastoral responsibilities. However, their emphases shape leadership practice in distinct yet complementary ways.

Transformational leadership is particularly effective in ministry settings that require visionary change, renewal, and growth. Church leaders who adopt a transformational approach articulate compelling spiritual visions that inspire congregations toward mission-driven goals such as evangelism, discipleship, and social impact. By motivating members to transcend personal interests for the collective mission of the church, transformational leaders foster commitment, innovation, and organizational vitality. Scholars note that transformational leadership aligns well with ministry contexts facing change, such as church revitalization, leadership transition, and expanding outreach programs (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Yukl, 2020).

Servant leadership, on the other hand, resonates deeply with the theological and pastoral foundations of Christian ministry. Rooted in the example of Christ's servant model, servant leadership emphasizes humility, compassion, and care for congregants' spiritual and emotional well-being. Leaders guided by this approach prioritize pastoral care, mentoring, and the holistic development of members. By focusing on service, stewardship, and community building, Servant leadership fosters

trust, unity, and spiritual maturity within the church (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 2010). Research suggests that Servant leadership is particularly effective in sustaining long-term ministry health, promoting volunteer commitment, and reducing leadership conflicts in faith-based organizations (Eva et al., 2019).

While transformational leadership tends to emphasize what the church must become, servant leadership emphasizes who the people are becoming. In practice, effective church leaders often integrate both styles—casting vision and inspiring growth while simultaneously serving, nurturing, and empowering members. Northouse (2022) observes that leadership effectiveness in value-driven organizations is enhanced when leaders balance inspirational direction with genuine service to followers. Thus, in ministry leadership, transformational leadership provides momentum and direction, whereas Servant leadership provides depth, care, and relational stability. Together, these approaches offer a holistic leadership model that supports both organizational mission and spiritual formation.

Contextual Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Transformational and Servant Leadership in Organizations

Leadership effectiveness does not occur in a vacuum; somewhat, it is shaped by the context within which leadership is exercised. Both transformational and servant leadership styles are highly contingent on organizational, cultural, and situational factors that can either enhance or constrain their impact. While each leadership approach emphasizes people-centered values and ethical influence, their effectiveness varies depending on environmental demands, organizational culture, follower characteristics, and leadership structures. Scholars increasingly argue that understanding these contextual factors is essential for applying leadership styles appropriately and sustainably (Yukl, 2020; Northouse, 2022).

One critical contextual factor influencing the effectiveness of transformational leadership is the nature of the organizational environment. Transformational leadership tends to be particularly effective in organizations facing rapid change, uncertainty, or the need for innovation. In dynamic, competitive environments, leaders who articulate a compelling vision, challenge existing assumptions, and

inspire followers to embrace change are better positioned to foster adaptability and strategic renewal. Research indicates that transformational leadership enhances performance and innovation in environments characterized by complexity and volatility, such as technology-driven and reform-oriented organizations (Hoch et al., 2018; Anderson et al., 2019). In contrast, in highly stable or rule-bound organizations, excessive emphasis on change and vision may encounter resistance or be less impactful.

Organizational culture also plays a significant role in shaping leadership effectiveness. Transformational leadership thrives in cultures that value innovation, learning, and shared purpose. Cultures that encourage openness, collaboration, and risk-taking provide fertile ground for intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation. Where organizational culture is rigid, hierarchical, or resistant to change, transformational leaders may struggle to gain follower commitment or enact meaningful transformation (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Yukl, 2020). Servant leadership, however, tends to be more effective in cultures that emphasize trust, care, and relational harmony. Organizations with strong communal or value-driven cultures often respond positively to servant leaders who model empathy, stewardship, and humility (Van Dierendonck, 2011; Eva et al., 2019).

Another important contextual factor is organizational structure and power distribution. Transformational leadership often aligns well with moderately centralized structures where leaders have sufficient authority to articulate vision and mobilize resources for change. In such contexts, charismatic and visionary leadership can effectively align organizational systems and processes with strategic goals. Servant leadership, by contrast, is particularly effective in decentralized or participatory structures that encourage shared leadership and empowerment. Because Servant leadership emphasizes persuasion rather than authority, it flourishes in settings that support shared decision-making and collective responsibility (Liden et al., 2014; Spears, 2010).

Follower characteristics and expectations also significantly influence the effectiveness of both leadership styles. Transformational leadership is more effective among followers who seek inspiration, challenge, and opportunities for growth,

particularly those who are highly skilled, achievement-oriented, or motivated by vision and purpose. Such followers often respond positively to intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation (Bass, 1985; Breevaart et al., 2021). Conversely, Servant leadership tends to resonate more strongly with followers who value relational support, personal development, and ethical leadership. In contexts where followers experience vulnerability, stress, or a strong need for belonging, such as service-oriented or faith-based organizations, Servant leadership can be especially impactful (Eva et al., 2019; Northouse, 2022).

Cultural context, especially national and societal culture, further shapes leadership effectiveness. Transformational leadership is broadly effective across cultures, particularly in societies that value achievement, vision, and collective purpose. However, its emphasis on charisma and individual influence may be less effective in cultures that prioritize modesty or egalitarianism. Servant leadership, with its focus on humility, community, and service, aligns well with collectivist cultures that emphasize social harmony and relational interdependence. Cross-cultural studies suggest that Servant leadership is particularly effective in contexts where moral authority and relational trust are highly valued (House et al., 2014; Eva et al., 2019).

The ethical climate and organizational values also influence leadership effectiveness. Transformational leadership depends heavily on moral credibility and trust; where ethical standards are weak, or leadership integrity is questioned, inspirational influence may lose legitimacy. Servant leadership, by contrast, often strengthens ethical climates by modeling stewardship, accountability, and care for stakeholders. Organizations facing ethical challenges or trust deficits may therefore benefit more from Servant leadership approaches that rebuild moral foundations and relational trust (Van Dierendonck, 2011; Hoch et al., 2018).

Finally, the organizational life cycle and leadership maturity affect how each leadership style functions. Transformational leadership is particularly effective during periods of organizational growth, change, or crisis, when vision and direction are urgently needed. Servant leadership is often more effective during periods of consolidation and sustainability, where nurturing people, strengthening culture, and developing future leaders become priorities. Scholars suggest that leadership

effectiveness increases when leaders adapt their style to the organization's developmental stage rather than applying a single approach rigidly (Yukl, 2020; Northouse, 2022).

Implications for Organizational Performance and Culture in the Nigerian Context

Leadership plays a critical role in shaping organizational performance and culture, particularly in developing economies such as Nigeria, where organizations operate within complex socio-economic, cultural, and institutional environments. Transformational and Servant leadership styles have attracted increasing scholarly attention in Nigeria due to their emphasis on ethical conduct, people development, and sustainable performance. In a context characterized by hierarchical traditions, collectivist values, leadership crises, and trust deficits, these leadership approaches offer important implications for both organizational outcomes and workplace culture.

Transformational Leadership and Organizational Performance in Nigeria

Transformational leadership has significant implications for organizational performance in Nigeria, especially in sectors undergoing rapid change, such as education, banking, telecommunications, manufacturing, and faith-based organizations. Nigerian organizations often face challenges related to low employee motivation, resistance to change, and weak institutional capacity. Transformational leaders address these challenges by articulating compelling visions, inspiring commitment, and encouraging innovation. By aligning individual goals with organizational objectives, transformational leadership enhances employee engagement, productivity, and performance outcomes (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Yukl, 2020).

Empirical studies in Nigeria indicate that transformational leadership positively influences organizational performance through improved job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee creativity. For example, Ogbonna and Harris (2000), whose findings have been widely applied in African contexts, argue that leadership styles emphasizing vision and inspiration significantly affect performance and competitive advantage. More recent Nigerian studies suggest that transformational leadership improves service delivery and operational effectiveness

in both public and private sector organizations by fostering adaptability and proactive behavior among employees (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Adeyemi, 2019).

From a cultural perspective, transformational leadership contributes to the development of performance-oriented organizational cultures in Nigeria. Rigid hierarchies and centralized authority traditionally characterize many Nigerian organizations. Transformational leaders challenge these norms by promoting shared vision, intellectual stimulation, and participation. This shift encourages openness, learning, and innovation, gradually transforming organizational culture from a control-oriented to a mission-driven, growth-focused one. However, scholars caution that transformational leadership must be grounded in ethical integrity to avoid the misuse of charisma in contexts with high power distance (Northouse, 2022).

Servant Leadership and Organizational Performance in Nigeria

Servant leadership is particularly relevant to Nigeria due to its strong communal values, religious orientation, and emphasis on interpersonal relationships. Servant leadership's focus on humility, empathy, and service aligns closely with African communal philosophies, including the principle of collective responsibility and mutual care. In Nigerian organizations, Servant leadership has been shown to enhance organizational performance by fostering trust, cooperation, and employee well-being (Greenleaf, 1977; Van Dierendonck, 2011).

Research within Nigerian organizations indicates that Servant leadership positively influences employee commitment, morale, and discretionary effort. In contexts where employees often experience job insecurity, limited welfare structures, and leadership mistrust, servant leadership creates psychologically safe environments that encourage loyalty and dedication. Studies in Nigerian educational institutions and faith-based organizations show that Servant leadership improves performance indirectly by strengthening relational bonds, reducing conflict, and promoting shared ownership of organizational goals (Akinwale, 2020; Eva et al., 2019).

Culturally, servant leadership contributes to the development of ethical and people-centered organizational cultures in Nigeria. Many organizations struggle with corruption, favoritism, and the abuse of authority. Servant leaders counter these

challenges by emphasizing stewardship, accountability, and moral responsibility. By prioritizing employee growth and well-being, Servant leadership fosters cultures of trust, transparency, and mutual respect. This cultural shift supports long-term organizational sustainability rather than short-term gains (Spears, 2010; Van Dierendonck, 2011).

Combined Implications for Organizational Culture in Nigeria

When examined together, transformational and Servant leadership offer complementary benefits for organizational culture in the Nigerian context. Transformational leadership provides direction, vision, and momentum, while Servant leadership provides moral grounding, relational stability, and human development. Nigerian organizations often require both strong visionary leadership to drive change and servant-oriented leadership to heal relational fractures and build trust.

Scholars argue that leadership effectiveness in African contexts improves when leaders balance performance demands with communal values (House et al., 2014). Transformational leadership helps Nigerian organizations compete in a globalized economy by promoting innovation and excellence, whereas Servant leadership preserves the cultural values of community, care, and shared responsibility. Organizations that integrate both styles tend to develop adaptive cultures characterized by high performance, ethical conduct, and employee commitment (Hoch et al., 2018).

In practical terms, the adoption of transformational and Servant leadership in Nigeria has several implications. Leaders must be trained to articulate clear visions while remaining ethically accountable and people-focused. Organizational policies should support empowerment, participation, and leadership development at all levels. Additionally, leadership practices must be sensitive to Nigeria's socio-cultural realities, including respect for hierarchy, communal relationships, and religious values.

Conclusion

This study underscores the central role of leadership in shaping organizational performance and workplace culture, highlighting transformational and Servant leadership as influential approaches for achieving sustainable organizational success. Both leadership styles emphasize people-centered values, ethical conduct, and long-term development, yet they differ in orientation and application. Transformational leadership focuses on inspiring vision, innovation, and goal attainment, while Servant leadership prioritizes service, employee development, and moral responsibility. Together, these approaches offer complementary pathways for enhancing organizational effectiveness. Within the Nigerian organizational context, leadership effectiveness is powerfully shaped by cultural values, socio-economic conditions, and institutional structures. Transformational leadership has significant potential to drive innovation, competitiveness, and performance in fast-changing, results-oriented environments. Conversely, servant leadership aligns closely with Nigeria's communal and relational cultural values, fostering trust, employee commitment, ethical behavior, and supportive workplace cultures. The findings suggest that no single leadership style is universally sufficient; rather, effectiveness depends on contextual alignment and leadership adaptability.

An examination of the strengths, limitations, and contextual influences of transformational and Servant leadership provides valuable insights for organizational leaders, policymakers, and human resource practitioners. It emphasizes the need for leadership practices that balance performance objectives with ethical responsibility and human development. Eventually contributes to leadership scholarship by demonstrating the importance of contextualized leadership approaches and offering practical guidance for cultivating productive, moral, and culturally responsive organizations in Nigeria and similar environments.

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