

Talent Management and Employee Performance: The Moderating Effect of Transformational Leadership

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Abstract

The global competitive environment is shaping the way organizations manage, maintain, and improve employee performance. Literature has established that there are different mechanisms through which transformational leadership influences employee performance, yet few studies have tested the mode of influence on followers' attitudes, behaviors, and employee performance in public universities in Uganda. The study looks at the role of transformational leadership in moderating the relationship between talent management and employee performance in Ugandan public universities. The study draws on a cross-sectional and quantitative research approach. A random sampling technique was used to select 536 academic staff. Data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire. Multiple regression analysis was used to examine the direct and indirect effects. The findings show that talent management has a significant positive effect on employee performance. In addition, findings reveal that transformational leadership significantly and positively affects employee performance. Furthermore, it was discovered that transformational leadership exerts a significant moderating effect on the relationship between talent management and employee performance. This provides the psychological stimulus that innovates novel ways to execute job tasks; illuminating the role of transformational leadership in enhancing employee performance as the transformational leaders identify, motivate and stimulate employees to achieve extraordinary performance outcomes among academic staff of public universities in Uganda.

Keywords: Talent Management, Transformational Leadership, Employee Performance, Academic Staff, Public Universities

Introduction

The global competitive environment is shaping the way organization manage, maintain and improve employee performance amidst scarce resources (Cooper & Ezzamel, 2013). Employee performance carries more importance than ever before, especially when managers are grappling with performances related challenges to stay ahead of competition. Most organizations have devoted a significant amount of resources to manage employee performance in organizations to attain organizational success (Chow & Kleiner, 2002). Several scholars, practitioners, and consultants have developed numerous methods of measuring, monitoring, evaluating and managing employees (Schraeder & Jordan, 2011) to improve employee performance in organizations (Al-Amin, 2017). The value of employees cannot be underrated in an effort to achieve performance goals and compete favorably in the dynamic business environment (Singh

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& Sethi, 2017). Stiff competition has forced organizations to invest in talent management as a competence enhancing initiative that lead to personal growth, employee satisfaction and improvement in employee performance to sustain organizational goals (Siahaan, Gultom, & Lumbanraja, 2016). Extant literature has demonstrated that employee performance has a strategic imperative since organizational success is dependent on employee performance (Sopiah, Kurniawan, Nora, & Narmaditya, 2020).

Research has shown that the fate of an organization relies on its employees who are capable of driving organization to greater performance (Morgan, Okon, Amadi, Emu, & Ogar, 2021). This confirms the assertion that employee productivity is influenced by the employee's technical know-how (Karima & Uusiautti, 2018) that is theoretically linked to human capital theory as a competence enhancing initiative (Siahaan *et al.*, 2016). Adnan Bataineh (2019) described employee performance as a combination of efficiency and effectiveness of task performance comprising of performance agreement, implementation, measurement, support, feedback and positive reinforcement to shape work outcomes contingent on organizational practices, policies, knowledge management practices and employee engagement (Bateman & Snell, 2019) that prevent employees from falling into performance traps, which emerge due to lack of job knowledge, ineffective management, physical or emotional conditions and structural problems at the workplace as well as failure to understand job role that arise due to improper hiring procedures (Brown, Hesketh, & Williams, 2003; Fischer, 2019).

Gallup Survey (2015) reveals that 50% of the American workers surveyed said they were not aware of what is expected of them at the workplace (Reinhard, Feinberg, Choula, & Houser, 2015). Despite the rampant effort to establish clear goals and expectations, many employees felt they were left in the dark at workplace about their job roles and responsibilities (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2002). In the same vein, managing employees to accomplish performance expectations has always been a management puzzle as the nature of the job performance domain, combined with measurement error in both predictors and criterion, have resulted in relatively small prediction results, inconsistent findings, and often shortfalls in the observed impact of human resource interventions (Inuwa, 2017). Researchers have argued that performance problems are the result of deficiencies in job domain (Viswesvaran & Ones, 2000). Conceptually, there are various approaches of studying employee performance with no consensus on what constitutes employee performance and the concept remain a perennial and contemporary issue in management literature subject to further investigation (Mensah, 2015). Ideally, job performance is a complex and dynamic criterion variable influenced by several factors such as time, individual and job specific characteristics (Beal, Weiss, Barros, & MacDermid, 2005). Chow and Kleiner (2002) argued that there are many factors that affect employee performance. Inuwa and Abubakar (2017) state that the distinction between indicators and causal factors of employee performance remain a question not fully explored as there exist limited conceptualization in literature. Few literatures have focused on the role of transformational leadership in relation to talent management in performance related studies in a university setting, yet in essence, the level of performance is explained by talent management and other contingent factors (Collings, 2015).

Talent management is defined as a process of attracting and retaining high-quality employees, developing their skills, and continuously motivating the employees to improve on performance (Cappelli & Keller, 2014). Organizational leaders need to focus on talent management practices

right from the onset to enhance job performance. Barkhuizen, Mogwere, and Schutte (2014) pointed out that talent management practices provide commitment to employees leading to greater work involvement and increased performance. Despite the importance of talent management to organizational success, talent management remains a recent and evolving concept (Lewis & Heckman, 2006) with ambiguous definitions and dearth of empirical research (Cappelli, 2008; Collings & Mellahi, 2009). Studies have pointed that talent management in higher institution of learning have been poorly managed or ignored for lack of appropriate model to integrate employee work outcomes in developing countries (Du Plessis, Barkhuizen, Stanz, & Schutte, 2015).

Previous studies on transformational leadership observed that there is a considerable relationship between transformational leaders' behaviours and follower's performance (Chan & Mak, 2014; Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006). A meta-analytic study has shown that transformational leadership positively predicts a wide variety of performance outcomes including individual, group and organizational level variables that explains the leader's importance (Sahu, Pathardikar, & Kumar, 2017; Udin, 2020) in response to work situations (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Employees who are affected by high-level transformational leadership perceive the leader's support, care, and help to articulate vision, charisma and become role model (Miao & Cao, 2019). This transformative approach of leadership creates significant change in the life of followers and organizations using the leader's personality traits and abilities to cause a change by articulating an appealing vision and challenging goals. The extent to which a leader is transformational is gauged on the influence tactics applied that makes the followers to exhibit trust, admiration, loyalty and respect, which the leader build on to transforms and motivates followers using personal influence tactics of idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and individual consideration to meet performance expectations (Khan, Rehmat, Butt, Farooqi, & Asim, 2020).

Avolio, Walumbwa, and Weber (2009) stressed the need to establish the mechanisms that connect leaders' behaviours to organizational and individual outcomes. Hence, a need to investigate the moderating role of transformational leadership to clarify the worthiness of transformational leadership in organizations (Khan *et al.*, 2020). Chan and Mak (2014) contend that there is a variety of influence process through which transformational leadership may affect outcomes at individual, group and organizational levels, but limited studies have examined indirect influence of transformational leadership on follower's outcome at individual level, which provide the avenue to examine the process of how transformational leadership influence follower's attitudes and behaviors in relation to performance in public universities in Uganda. Uganda is the home of diverse higher education institutions like universities, tertiary institutions such as technical colleges, vocational institutions, teaching training colleges and private for-profit institutions (Nabawanuka, 2011). The quality of products produced by higher educational institutions like public universities is dependent on the performance of academic staff in the respective public universities. The quality of the academic staff in these universities is dependent on competent human capital required for national development. The number of academic staff, quality and effectiveness have impact on university education and output in society.

Therefore, for public universities in Uganda to enhance the country's national development needs, the capacity of academic staff need to be enhanced by maintaining competent and stable workforce who are capable of devoting their time to teaching, research, publication and community engagement. The limited empirical studies on employee performance in Ugandan

public universities makes it difficult to gauge their competitiveness at national and international levels (Nabawanuka, 2011). Extant literature demonstrates the empirical confirmation of the direct linkage between talent management, transformational leadership and employee performance. Nevertheless, limited research information exists on the moderating role of transformational leadership. Surprisingly, the psychological mechanism through which leaders influence talent management and employee performance remain an area of discontent (Bakker, Albrecht, & Leiter, 2011). This provides opportunity for further study to examine the specific mechanisms through which transformational leadership influence individuals' behavior and psychological state at individual level (Buil, Martínez, & Matute, 2019). Hence, the study provides the new comprehension of the circumstances under which transformational leadership interact with talent management to influence, transforms, motivate the followers to produce positive work outcomes among academic staff of public universities in Uganda.

Literature review and hypotheses development

Employee Performance

The concept of employee performance has attracted a considerable amount of research and practical interest among academicians and practitioners in recent years (Mensah, 2015). According to Sonnentag and Frese (2002) despite the importance placed on individual performance and the widespread use of job performance as an outcome measure in empirical research, little effort has been expended on clarifying the concept, and no universally accepted definition exists. Campbell (1990) described performance as *a virtual desert* while Lebas and Euske (2002) stated that performance is one of the *suitcase words* in which everyone places their concepts that suit them, letting the context take care of the baggage. This study describes performance as a *wander concept* in the world of work with no boundary description, conceptualization and measurement, prompting scholars and practitioners to find operational definition and measurement. However, Mensah (2015) provide an in-depth examination of the dimensions of employee performance involving task performance, contextual performance, adaptive performance and counterproductive performance, which are generic measures that does not contextualize performance of academic staff due to uniqueness of the task they execute to discharge their professional responsibilities in the universities. For instance Akintayo (2008); Ojokuku (2013); Osaikhiuwu (2014); Sanda (1991) note that the context of academic environment requires the university academicians to be dynamic learners and coordinators of knowledge, that makes them liable for knowledge generation through conducting research and having the research published in scholarly journals alongside teaching (Nwamadi & Ogbonna, 2021). Ramayah, Yeap, and Ignatius (2013) assert that academicians must be pertinent about community service in society. Hence, the composition of academic performance include teaching, research, publication and community service (Hussaini, Noma, & Rugga, 2020; Yusuf & Ogbudinkpa, 2017).

Talent Management

Talent management is a very important factor in achieving organizational performance (Collings & Mellahi, 2009) that has received a great deal of academic and practitioner interest in the field of human resource management (Cascio & Aguinis, 2008; Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Cooke, Saini, & Wang, 2014) at the beginning of the year 2000; following a research on the talent wars conducted by the American Consulting Firm, Mckinsey in 1997 (Aytaç, 2015). Since then, many large organizations in business and academic sectors introduced talent management as a remedy

for labour market competition (Collings, 2014, 2015). According to Lewis and Heckman (2006) despite the popularity of talent management, there is lack of clarity on definition, scope and overall goals of why talent is managed. Ashton and Morton (2005) concluded that there is no universally accepted definition of talent management, which eventually made Cappelli and Keller (2014) to envisage that talent management has escaped a standard definition due to the different perspectives held among the practitioners and researchers. Silzer and Dowell (2010) define talent management as an integrated set of processes, programs, and cultural norms designed and implemented by organizations to attract, develop, deploy, and retain talented employees to achieve strategic objectives in pursuit of current and future business priorities (Radda, Majidadi, & Akanno, 2015). The talent management mechanisms ensure that each employee at all levels of work is performing to their full potential and that there is an adequate flow of employees into the jobs throughout the organization to make a significant contribution to the organization's competitiveness (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Lewis & Heckman, 2006; Widodo & Mawarto, 2020). Implying that talent management is a strategic activity aligned to the firm's business strategy that aim at attracting, developing, and retaining talented employees at each level of the organization (Hatun, 2010) facilitated by talent resourcing strategy, attraction, and retention policies and programs, talent audit, role development, talent relationship management, performance management, total reward, career management, and favourable work environment (Smilansky, 2006).

Transformational Leadership

Simola, Barling, and Turner (2012) define transformational leadership as a form of leadership where interactions between the leader and followers are organized around a collective purpose with the view of transforming, motivating, and enhancing actions and ethical aspirations of the followers. Transformational leadership is developed around the common belief and value that inspires unity among the followers to achieve a common goal. Studies have shown that transformational leaders give a sense of confidence, offer advice, recognize, and support followers by encouraging self-development (Bass, 1985). Transformational leaders show an intimate relationship with the followers leading to achievement of sustainable performance in organizations (Howladar, Rahman, & Uddin, 2018). Leadership research attest that transformational leadership inspire motivation and awareness among the followers through developing high level of trust by being accessible and listening to the issues surrounding the followers, which rest on transformational leadership style facets of: intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence (Bass, 1985).

Bass, Avolio, and Atwater (1996) assert that transformational leaders that practice *intellectual stimulation* encourages creativity and solve followers' problems by listening and helping followers to fulfil their goals, increase the relationship with the followers for increased efficiency and productivity. *Inspirational motivation* inspire or elevate the emotions of followers (Bass, 1985) by articulating an appealing vision that inspires the followers through setting high standards, communicating future goals, and providing opportunity to participate in a meaningful tasks (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Leaders with *individualized consideration* take interest in evaluating the potential of the followers on their current and future position in the organization by assigning tasks that act as motivators to engage the follower towards fulfilling organizational needs (Bass, 1985). Leaders practicing individualized consideration provide followers with coaching, mentorship, and growth opportunities to ensure followers develop and realize their

potentials (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999). *Idealized influence* characterizes the leader envisioning the future, being confident, and setting high standards to be emulated by the followers to gain a higher degree of control and autonomy as opposed to achieving personal agenda, which offers the leader vision, instills pride, and gains respect and trust among the followers.

Theoretical Underpinning

The study was anchored on human capital theory and social exchange theory. The human capital theory states that the composition of the employee in form of skills, knowledge, and abilities is key to employee performance, which resonates with Sweetland's (1996) assertion that investment in employees is advantageous to the employees and organization. Ideally, talent management and its association with the outcomes of a business has close linkage to the resource-based theory that explains how organizations create value through supervising available resources to achieve competitive advantage (Karimi, 2014). The theory views employees as a competitive resource that increase productivity, performance, and firm value (Kessler & Lülfsmann, 2006; Lepak & Snell, 1999; Nafukho, Hairston, & Brooks, 2004; Strober, 1990). The theory can be applied in the field of human resource management in adding value to a firm (Fisher, 2009; Lepak & Snell, 1999; Strober, 1990) especially management of public universities in Uganda can apply the theory to develop employees' knowledge, skills and abilities with trickle down effect on employee performance. The relevance of the theory is that public university can use the theory to pursue university's goal congruence, and focus on retaining top performers since investment in human capital has a consequential effect in terms of long-term benefits to the university. Investment in human capital (academicians) results in academic staff creativity and innovation with the ardent benefit to the university since the academic staff have the skills, knowledge, and abilities to do the right academic job and goal achievements in terms of performance become conspicuous and palpable.

Social exchange theory is a sociological and psychological theory that studies the social behavior in the interaction between two parties (Homans, 1961; Homans, 1950, 1958). The theory was developed by Homans (1958), a sociologist who studied small groups and believed that society, community, or group is seen as a social system from which a framework of social behavior were developed: interaction, sentiments, and activities that are considered when dealing with groups' internal and external systems, reflecting Skinner's behavioral psychology theories of human behavior. Social exchange theory has been advanced to explain social behavior like power, conformity, status, leadership, and justice in the workplace, organizational management, business decisions, social power, leadership, politics, and consumer purchasing decisions (Cook & Emerson, 1978; Lawler, Thye, & Yoon, 2000). Homans (1958) suggested several propositions that theorize social behavior: material and non-material goods, like time, money, effort, approval, prestige, and power. According to social exchange theory, a person weighs the cost of social interaction against the reward of social interaction (Homans, 1961). These costs and rewards can be tangible: money, time, or service, or intangible: effort, social approval, love, pride, shame, respect, opportunity, and power. A person wants to gain from an interaction or relationship than they give. When a relationship costs a person more than it rewards them, the relationship is terminated. According to social exchange theory, people expect the equity in exchange and expect to be rewarded equally for the cost incurred, when they aren't, the individual is displeased (Homans, 1961). The application of social exchange theory in the context of leadership and performance imply that the theory act as a social lubricant within which a leader creates a social interaction with the view that employees will get rewards (i.e.

material and non-material rewards such as money, social approval, prestige, respect, opportunity for growth, pride) from the leader after confirming to groups' norms in the internal and external social systems for the leader's exercise of social power and approval within the group in accordance with equity principle to make employees reciprocate the leader's actions with high performance.

Talent Management (TM) and Employee Performance (EP)

Talent management provide an organizational operative within which organization can compete successfully by creating a talent pool needed to achieve organizational goal. Talented employee plays a critical role in sustaining organizations' competitive edge in difficult conditions (Mkamburi & Kamaara, 2017). Taha, Gajdzik and Zaid (2015) claimed that implementing talent management practices like identifying, attracting, selecting, training and retaining individuals to enable an organization use employees' capabilities to achieve organizational performance. According to Kehinde (2012), Auranzeb and Bhutto (2016), Ndolo, Kingi, and Idua (2017), Agbaeze, Monyei, and Agu (2017); Bibi (2019); Son, Park, Bae, and Ok (2020); Supraptiningsih, Brasit, and Mardiana (2018) indicate that talent management influences employee performance. Wurim (2012) also confirm that implementation of proper talent management policies, processes and programs impact on employee productivity in organization. Sakineh, Mehrdad, and Hasan (2012) further examined the relationship between talent management and organizational success. The result show that TM has a significant relationship with organizational success. Generally, it is observed that talent management influences employee performance, talent managed in a transparent way is expected to result into EP. However, there is lack of empirical studies on the relationship between talent management and employee performance in public universities; notwithstanding the scarcity of information in a university settings, there is a general belief that talent management and employee performance have theoretical connection, which need to be substantiated by the current study in term of the strengths and directions. Therefore, the study hypothesizes that:

H₁ Talent Management has a positive relationship with Employee Performance.

Transformational Leadership (TL) and Employee Performance (EP)

Transformational leadership is a leadership approach that contributes to a clear and justified organizational vision and mission by motivating employees to work towards positive organizational outcomes (Fitzgerald & Schutte, 2010). Transformational leadership is a motivational leadership style with a clear organizational vision that is accomplished through developing rapport with the followers, sensing the follower's needs, and helping the followers uncover their potentials (Fitzgerald & Schutte, 2010). The employees whose work competencies are encouraged by the leader are more likely to have higher intrinsic motivation resulting into better performance at work. The employees become more focused and try to accomplish organizational goals by taking their own interests (Widodo & Mawarto, 2020). Bass and Avolio (1993) found that transformational leaders increase the followers' level of motivation and self-efficacy through inspirational appeals (inspirational motivation) and communicate high performance expectations (idealized influence). These behaviors foster the follower's initiative, creativity, achievement-orientation, and goal-attainment (Masi & Cooke, 2000). The employees feel satisfied and respected as their novel ideas are appreciated. Such practices make the employees feel secure, become loyal, self-motivated go beyond normal accomplishment of performance target (Biswas, 2012; Biswas & Bhatnagar, 2013; Biswas & Varma, 2012). Detert and Burris (2007); Gerstner and Day (1997); Tyler (2010) and Vondey (2008) confirm that the

employee's behaviour, perception and performance are influenced by transformational leadership behaviour. Past research show that TL is positively correlated with the followers' task performance (Liang & Chi, 2013), which bring us to a generalization that talent management is related to employee performance. Thus, we hypothesize that:

H₂ Transformational Leadership has a positive influence on Employee Performance.

Moderating effect of Transformational Leadership (TL)

The studies on leadership posit that leadership behaviours and traits provides the basic mechanisms through which transformational leaders influence employee performance. Transformational leaders uses inspirational motivation to inspire the employees to perform their task more efficiently, which increases employee performance (Widodo & Mawarto, 2020). For the employees to perform their duties effectively in today's dynamic work environment, the employees need to have an elastic and highly flexible work arrangement. Transformational leadership is the most influential factor that improves the employees' ability to deal with a variety of situations by providing supportive work environments for the employees to the maintain the optimum level of mental health through inspirational motivation to enhance the employees' confidence level (Diebig, Bormann, & Rowold, 2017; Zwingmann *et al.*, 2014). Transformational leadership maximise the level of professional work performance coupled with previous research, which state that organizations with diverse structures depend on the performance of its employees. Past studies have empirically established the positive linkage between employee performance and transformational leadership. The employees whose work competencies are encouraged by the leaders are likely to have higher internal drive to move performance of employees to a higher level compared to the employees with low internal drive.

Transformational leadership pattern of behaviours of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration encourage high performance manifested in the employee's persistence with enthusiasm and exerting extra effort to complete one's tasks; volunteering to carry out tasks that are not formally part of the job; helping and cooperating with others; following organizational rules and procedures; and endorsing, supporting, and defending organizational objectives (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014). The interaction effect of TL with emotional exhaustion buffer the influence of service providers' emotional exhaustion on the intention to leave (Green, Miller, & Aarons, 2013). TL provide emotional and constructive support and feedback on real time that lead to facilitating less stressful work environment. Transformational leader's inspiration, motivation, and personalized consideration neutralize the negative emotion of subordinates by solving their problems and further motivate the employees to perform according to the job expectations (Sun & Wang, 2017; Tuckey, Li, & Chen, 2017). Sun and Wang (2017) revealed that TL creates a working environment with seamless supports, individualized feedbacks, and intellectual stimulation that prevents the employees' intention to leave and involves them indirectly to build a collaborative work culture. Thus, it is perceived that TL broaden talent management practices, which, in turn, improve the employee performance (Bureau, Gagné, Morin, & Mageau, In Press; Kark *et al.*, 2018; Uddin (Howladar *et al.*, 2018), Rahman, *et al.*, 2017). The above finding demonstrates that TL is construed to have a conditional effect on TM and EP. Thus, we hypothesize that:

H₃ Transformational Leadership has a moderating effect on the relationship between Talent Management and Employee Performance.

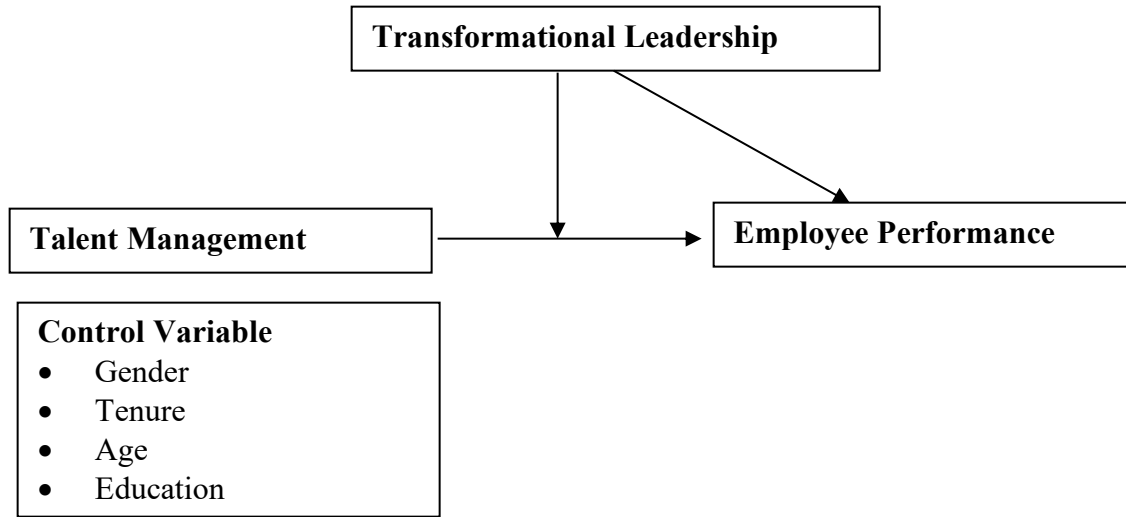


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Methodology

The study used cross sectional research design since data was collected at one point in time on the study variables. The study population consisted of 3,335 academic staff from the nine public universities in Uganda. Random sampling technique was used to select 536 academic staff who were proportionately allocated based on the population size in the respective public universities to enable respondents have equal chance of inclusion in the sample guided by Yamane (1967) sample formula to maximize gain in precision, while taking into consideration the level of precision (5%), confidence interval (95%) and degree of variability in the attributes being measured to approximate the population size (Miaoulis & Michener, 1976), minimize biasness and sampling error (Saunders, 2011). Data was collected using structured questionnaire developed from existing research instruments consistent with research objective. Data was analyzed for common method bias using procedural method (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). The validity of the research instrument was assessed using factor analysis to determine the factor structure of the study variables (Ringle, Sarstedt, & Straub, 2012; Soleimani, Danaei, Jowkar, & Parhizgar, 2017) and construct validity (Kushwaha & Kumar Sharma, 2017). The bootstrapping (5,000 resamples) method was applied to draw accurate conclusions on the conditional effect of transformational leadership on talent management and employee performance using Hayes (2017) Process Macros Version 3.2.

Measurement model analysis

Employee Performance (EP)

EP was measured using Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) Version 0.1 (Koopmans *et al.*, 2013; Widyastuti & Hidayat, 2018) on four dimensions of teaching, research, publication and community engagement with 40 items that were linked to seven point Likert scale. The factor analysis results reveal that the four dimensions were significant. The factors retained in order of importance are; publication (Eigen values = 6.164, Variance = 20.548%), community engagement (Eigen Values = 4.623, Variance = 15.410%), teaching (Eigen Values = 3.682, Variance = 12.273%) and research (Eigen values = 1.757, Variance = 5.857%). Ten items were dropped from the factor structure for either low factor loading or cross loading. The four factors explain 54.088% variance with a Kaiser-Meyer Olkin (KMO) for

sample adequacy of .912 above 0.5; representing the adequacy of the sample for factor analysis (Field, Miles, & Field, 2012). The Bartlett’s test of sphericity of approximate chi-square = 6827.260, DF = 435, P < .001, signifying that the factors had significant relationships with each other and adequate to measure EP.

Talent Management (TM)

TM was measured using the four dimensions of talent attraction, deployment, development, and talent retention with 31 items that were linked to seven point Likert scale (Farooq, Othman, Nordin, & Ibrahim, 2017). The factors extracted in order importance included; talent retention (Eigen Values = 4.938, Variance = 23.512%), talent attraction (Eigen Values = 2.995, Variance = 14.262%), talent deployment (Eigen Values = 2.463, Variance = 11.729%) and talent development (Eigen Values = 2.359, variance = 11.231%). Ten (10) items in the measurement scale were dropped from the factor structure for either cross loading or their factor load < 0.5. The four factors explain 60.734% variance in talent management with a Kaiser-Meyer Olkin (KMO) for sample adequacy of .940, which is above 0.5; indicating the adequacy of the sample for factor analysis (Field, 2009). The Bartlett’s test of sphericity of approximate chi-square = 4653.011, DF = 210, P < .001, implying that the factors had significant relationships with each other and appropriate to measure TM.

Transformational Leadership (TL)

TL was measured on four dimension scales of idealized influence, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation with 20 items (Bass & Avolio, 1997) that were ranked on 7-point Likert scale on how frequently academic staff supervisor’s display the leadership behaviours on the given scale. TL had four dimensions 20 items in the factor structure. The factors extracted in order importance include; individualized consideration (Eigen Values = 3.131, Variance = 18.420%), idealized influence (Eigen values = 3.078, Variance = 18.106%), intellectual stimulation (Eigen values = 2.449, Variance = 14.408%) and inspirational motivation (Eigen Values = 2.136, Variance = 12.567%). Three (3) items were dropped from the factor structure for either low factor loading or cross loading. The four factors taken together explains 63.500% variance with a Kaiser-Meyer Olkin (KMO) for sample adequacy of .932, which is above 0.5; illustrating the adequacy of the sample for factor analysis (Field *et al.*, 2012). The Bartlett’s test of sphericity of approximate chi-square = 3667.750, DF = 136, P < .001, showing that the factors had significant relationships with each other and satisfactory to measure TL.

Table 1: Summary of the measurement model for the study variables

Study Variables	Dimensions	Initial items	Extracted Items	Variance (%)	Cum. (%)	Dimension Cronbach	KMO	Total Cronbach
Employee Performance	Publication	9	9	20.548	20.548	0.928	0.912	0.900
	Community Engagement	13	11	15.410	35.958	0.866		
	Teaching	9	8	12.273	48.231	0.821		
	Research	9	2	5.857	54.088	0.599		
	Total	40	30					
Talent Management	Talent Retention	8	8	23.512	23.512	0.911		
	Talent	7	6	14.262	37.774	0.815		

		Attraction						
Transformational Leadership	Talent	7	4	11.729	49.503	0.772		
	Deployment							
	Talent	9	4	11.231	60.734	0.738		
	Development							
	Total	31	21				0.940	0.925
	Individualized	4	4	18.420	18.420	0.867		
	Consideration							
	Idealized	8	6	18.106	36.526	0.839		
	Influence							
	Intellectual	4	3	14.408	50.933	0.796		
Stimulation								
Inspirational	4	4	12.567	63.500	0.714			
Motivation								
Total	20	17				0.932	0.914	

Source: Survey Data (2021)

Results

Demographic characteristics

Five hundred thirty-six (536) questionnaires were distributed to the academic staff of public universities in Uganda. Four hundred seventy-six 476 (88.81%) responses were generated. However, due to missing data and outliers, 8 (0.015%) responses were deleted to improve on the data quality. The usable responses were 468 (87.31%) that were used to draw statistical inferences. The demographic characteristics used in the study as control variables included; gender, age, education level, and tenure that are analyzed and interpreted as follows: The result for gender depict that 304 (65%) of the respondents were male while 164 (35%) were female. The result for tenure show that the academic staff who served the universities between 6 – 10 years were 193 (41.2%), followed by 1 – 5 years representing 126 (26.9%), 11-15 years were 114 (24.4%), while those in the range of 16 – 20 years were 29 (6.2%), those who served for over 20 years were 06 (1.3%). The findings on the age group demonstrates that majority of the respondents were between 31– 40 years representing 218 (46.6%), followed by 41–50 years who were 152 (32.5%), 51– 60 years were represented by 52 (11.5%), below 30 years 36 (7.7%) and above 60 years were represented by 08 (1.7%). The results for the education level indicated that 285 (60.9%) of the respondents had master degree, followed by 142 (30.3%) with PhD and lastly, those with bachelor degree were 41 (8.8%).

Correlation Analysis

Table 2 shows the correlation among the variables. There was a significant positive correlation between TM and EP ($r = .607, p \leq .01; \text{Mean} = 5.98, \text{SD} = .990$) while a significant positive correlation was observed between TM and TL ($r = .436, p \leq .01; \text{Mean} = 5.64, \text{SD} = .808$). A significant positive correlation was found between TL and EP ($r = .533, p \leq .01; \text{Mean} = 5.75, \text{SD} = .630$). The cronbach alpha coefficient for all the study variables were above ($\alpha > 0.700$) the threshold limit established by Heale and Twycross (2015), implying that the research instrument and can be relied upon to draw statistical inferences (Amin, 2005). The estimates suggest that the constructs are valid and reliable (F. Hair Jr, Sarstedt, Hopkins, & G. Kuppelwieser, 2014).

Table 2: Correlation results

N = 468		Mean	SD	Reliability	1	2	3
Talent Management	1	5.64	.808	.925	1.000		
Transformational Leadership	2	5.98	.990	.914	.436**	1.000	
Employee Performance	3	5.75	.630	.900	.607**	.533**	1.000

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

Hypotheses testing

Multiple regression analysis was run in SPSS using Process Macro version 3.2 applying the 5,000 bootstrap sampling with 95% confidence intervals to test for the research hypotheses using Hayes (2013) Model 1 where TL was specified as a moderator causally interacting with TM and EP. Preceding direct and moderation test, the study tested the effect of gender ($\beta = -.048, p > .05$), tenure ($\beta = .060, p > .05$), age ($\beta = .041, p > .05$), and education ($\beta = .101, p > .05$) as control variables. The results indicate that the control variables have no influence on EP. The study proceeded to test for the effect of TM on EP. The result revealed that there was a significant effect of TM on EP ($\beta = .430, p < .001$), thus supporting **H₁**. The study tested the effect of TL on EP. The result indicated that there was a significant effect of TL on EP ($\beta = .297, p < .001$), Henceforth, **H₂** was supported. The study proceeded to ascertain the conditional effect of TL on TM and EP. The results show that TL moderates the relationship between TM and EP ($\beta = -.105, p < .001, CI = -.166, -.042$), implying that TL exerts a significant moderating effect on TM and EP. The model explains 1.2% variance in EP ($\beta = -.105, p \leq .001, \Delta R^2 = .012, F(7,460) = 10.834, p \leq .001$). Hence, **H₃** was supported. The results for the direct and moderation effects are shown in **Table 3**.

Table 3: Direct and Moderation Effects

Variables	β	SE	T	p-v	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	-.346	.170	-2.031	.043	-.681	-.011
Gender	-.048	.071	-.673	.501	-.188	.092
Tenure	.060	.046	1.306	.192	-.030	.149
Age	.041	.052	.800	.424	-.060	.143
Education	.101	.075	1.352	.177	-.046	.249
TM	.430	.040	10.818	.000	.352	.508
TL	.297	.038	7.785	.000	.222	.372
TM × TL	-.105	.032	-3.292	.001	-.166	-.042
R ²				.489		
ΔR^2				.012 (10.834, p = .001)		
F				62.831***		

Note: *** $p < .001$, **TM** = Talent management, **TL** = Transformational Leadership, **SE** = Standard Error of the Estimate, **LLCI** = Lower Limit Confidence Intervals, **ULCI** = Upper Limit Confidence Intervals.

The conditional effect of TL on TM and EP was further explained by the mode of interactions that occurred between the TM and EP at three levels of TL. The moderating effect was significant at three levels with varying degree of strengths. For example, TL had a stronger moderating effect at lower level ($\beta = .535, p < .001, CI = .452, .619$), modest at the mean level ($\beta = .430, p < .001, CI = .352, .508$) and lower at high level ($\beta = .325, p < .001, CI = .211, .439$) as shown in **Table 4**.

Table 4: Conditional effects of TL on TM and EP

Interaction levels	Effect	SE	T	p-v	BootLLC1	BootULC1
Lower level	.535	.043	12.562	.000	.452	.619
Mean level	.430	.040	10.818	.000	.352	.508
Higher Level	.325	.058	5.588	.000	.211	.439

The **Figure 2** below supports the explanation of the conditional effect of TL on TM and EP, which reveals that at low-level of TM, EP is low with low-level of TL. Consequently, at low-level of TM, EP is high with high-level of TL. This implies that TL acts as a remedy for low-level of TM in enhancing EP. However, as TM increases, EP increases, but the rate of increase is high with low level of TL. This result demonstrates that the existence of TL enhances performance of academic staff. The leader uses personal characteristics such as individualized consideration, idealized influence, intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation to increase the followers’ work outcomes.

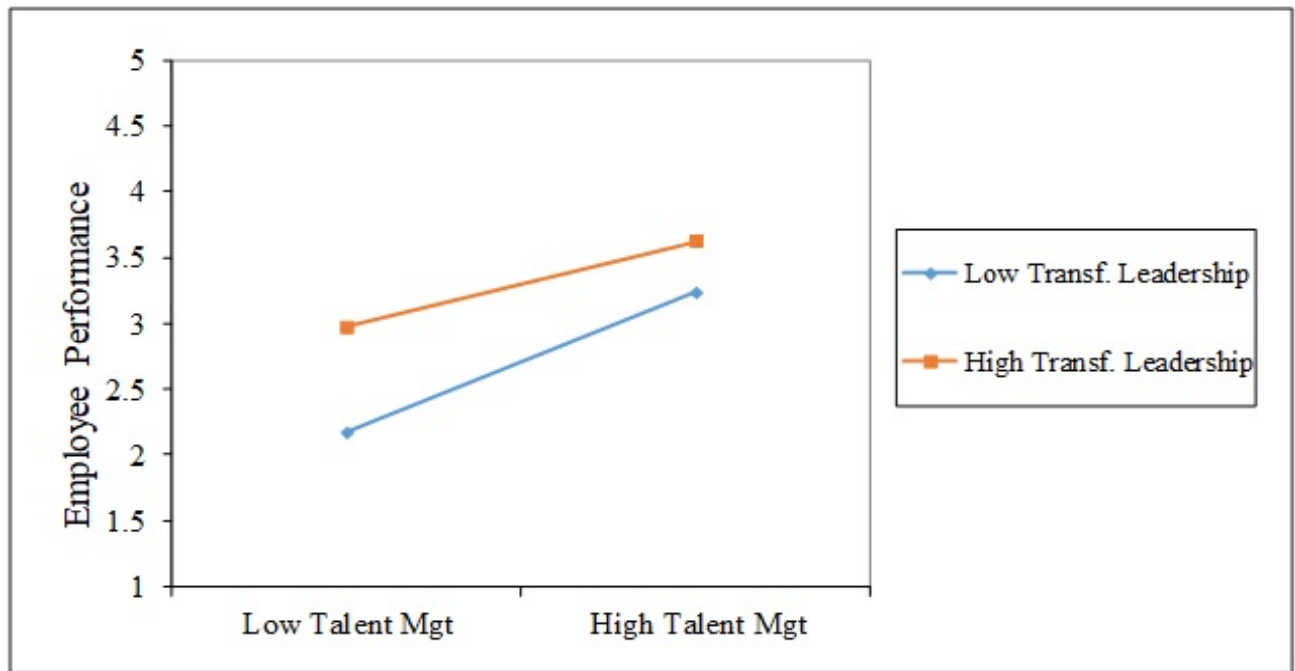


Figure II: The Modgraph showing the moderating effect of TL on TM and EP

Discussion of Findings

The study examines the moderating effect of transformational leadership on talent management and employee performance among academic staff of public universities in Uganda. To achieve this objective; the study began by examining the direct effect of TM on EP, and TL on EP. The result revealed that TM has a positive significant effect on EP. Saks (2006) argued that TM and EP has theoretical linkage in Social Exchange Theory (SET), which describe the contractual relationships between the employees and employers with mutual concerns (Karatepe, Karadas, Azar, & Naderiadib, 2013) as a way to understanding employee performance in organizations (Chuang, Tzeng, Chen, Wu, & Chen, 2006; Karatepe, 2013). Van De Voorde and Beijer (2015)

claimed that if the employees obtain economic or socio-economic benefits through TM due to the mutual relationships with the employer, they feel obliged to reciprocate their action to the benefit of the organization. Kim and Kim (2014) claimed that the way the employees can repay their organization is through exhibiting higher performance levels. The research considers talent attraction, deployment, development and retention as components of talent management to improve employee performance that is closely linked to human capital theory, which states that human capital composition (e.g. skills, knowledge and abilities) translate into employee performance with a mutual benefit to the employees and employers as supported by Iqbal, Qureshi, Khan, and Hijazi (2013) who assert that TM practices is related to employees' ability in pursuing assigned tasks that impact on employee's productivity (Wurim, 2012). This create a rational process through which performance expectations can be set within the range of the employee's competencies to achieve performance targets (Sakineh *et al.*, 2012).

The study found a significant positive effect of TL on EP. It has always been found that organizational performance improves through enhanced effects of TL (Maaitah, 2018; Sun & Henderson, 2017). During the past decade, there has been extensive research on TL and its relationship to multiple outcomes (Tian *et al.*, 2020). TL inspires followers using personal appeals to advance moral values and ideas in organizations (Bass, 1985). TL enhances employee performance within individual, group or team (Kraatz & Block, 2008). The employees always exceed their assigned duties when a TL style is used (Tian *et al.*, 2020). Additionally, transformational leadership theory assert that leaders modify the behavior of subordinates (Bass & Avolio, 1994), resulting in a higher employee retention behaviours, thus reducing withdrawal behaviours within organization that impact negatively on performance (Sow, Ntamon, & Osuoha, 2016). Furthermore, TL increases the intellectual ability of the employees that stimulate them to perform at a higher level (Fletcher, Friedman, & Piedimonte, 2019). Past research shows that the world's most successful companies have achieved their goals by implementing TL practices and behaviors (Dedaj, 2017; Jiang, Zhao, & Ni, 2017; Maaitah, 2018; Sow *et al.*, 2016). This finding lend support to Bass (1997) who claim that transformational leaders boost the followers' sense of selfworth through treating the follower as an individuals, create meaning in the follower's work through intellectual stimulation, which create a sense of self-worth and act as a motivator to make the followers commit to performance goal when the leader communicates clear performance expectations (Shamir, 1991). Sparks and Schenk (2001) showed that TL inspires the followers through idealized influence and intellectual stimulation by creating meaning and purpose in work. McColl-Kennedy and Anderson (2002) and Sun and Wang (2017) intimated that TL change the negative attitudes and behaviors among the employees to improve performance.

The result show that TL moderate the relationship between TM and EP to the extent TL play an enhancing role in the relationship. Therefore, the conditional effect of TL on TM and EP point to the fact that TL contributes to the reduction of negative behaviours among employees, which has a theoretical insight in Social Exchange Theory (SET). SET contends that organization is a social entity where the behavior one party in social relationship is influenced by another through social interaction (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1958). The behavior one party creates reciprocates obligation from another party through the exchange process. TL inspires and energizes the followers to act beyond expectation to achieve goals and objectives that drives the followers to challenge the truths and redefine the organizational problems for a novel ideas (Uddin & Arif, 2016). Individualized consideration shed lights on individual cases, problem contexts, and thoughts.

Hence, TL elevate the followers to imagine, create, and apply a new approach to unfreeze and create solution to problems. However, the practice of TL in developing countries is scanty and explains why the follower's performance are dismal, yet it has the potential to raise EP.

Theoretical implications

The findings of this study extends the body of knowledge on the moderating role of TL in the relationship between TM and EP. The study established that TL plays an enhancing role in the relationship between TM and EP to the extent that TL can act as a substitute in the event that TM is low in explaining EP, which affirms that transformational leaders have the ability to articulate a compelling vision, inspire confidence among the employees to achieve organizational goal, solve problems in an innovative way, coach and train the employees that enhance the theoretical linkage between TM and EP whose findings contribute significantly to the moderation literature as compared to previous studies that focused on the direct linkage between TM, TL and EP.

Practical implications

This study provides practical implications on how TL expedites the increase in employee performance. It is important to note that the TL behaviors develop among the managers of public universities to retain academic staff. Public universities should train the academic leaders on how to develop TL behaviours (i.e. idealized influence, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation), which should be implemented when developing vision, goals, problem solving, sense of purpose, and assigning time to train and develop the academic staff to enhance their performance.

The study implies that the academic leaders of public universities should check on the negative behaviors of the academic staff to improve academic staff performance. The academic leaders should limit punitive measures to correct the performance deviations, instead use transformation leadership behaviours of idealized influence, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation to spur performance following the rational ideal that transformational leaders deal with the employees individually; understand their problems, support, engage and motivate the followers through inspiration, which influence their performance. Furthermore, the leaders need to implement talent management practices supported by transformational leadership style. When public universities have clear frameworks for talent management supported by transformational leadership style, the university is guaranteed to compete favorably in the education sectors as the employees gain the needed competencies that are transferable to the workplace in achieving planned goals, practice problem solving methods and train the employees to enhance their performance. Transformational leader's behavior enhances talent management in public universities. Thus, management of public universities should put in place mechanisms to promote transformational leadership for the recognition of academic staff talents as an impetus for achieving university's goals.

Conclusion

The research has proven that TM had a significant direct effect on EP. Similarly, TL has significant effect on EP. TL moderates the indirect relationship between TM and EP. A fit model was established that provide a theoretical linkage between TM, TL and EP in theory and practice. The moderating effect of transformational leadership on the relationship between TM and EP has been validated in public universities in Uganda that provide the utility of the

theoretical model of EP to practitioners and researchers in other context for the development of a more complex, holistic, and comprehensive model by adding other predictors of employee performance that were not integrated in the model. The model further indicates that EP can be improved through TM and TL, which support the notion of human capital theory and social exchange theory.

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