

Transformational Leadership Style in Higher Education: Scoping Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Transformational leadership in higher education plays a crucial role in shaping institutional culture and driving positive change by inspiring faculty and students to achieve shared goals and embrace continuous improvement. The scoping review investigates the application and impact of transformational leadership in higher education institutions. By employing a systematic methodology, the study synthesizes literature published between 2019 and 2024, utilizing databases such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Europe PMC, ScienceDirect, CORE, and Scopus. The findings reveal that transformational leadership positively influences vital organizational outcomes, including job satisfaction, employee performance, and innovation within higher education institutions. However, challenges such as shared governance and academic autonomy hinder its implementation. This review highlights the fragmented literature and identifies essential themes, gaps, and future research directions, emphasizing the urgent need for a more comprehensive understanding of transformational leadership tailored to the unique dynamics of higher education. Future studies should explore adaptive strategies for implementing transformational leadership in diverse HEI contexts and investigate its long-term effects on institutional change and performance, highlighting the importance of continued research in this field.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Effective leadership is a critical factor in the success and performance of higher education institutions (HEIs) [1] - [108]. In recent decades, transformational leadership has emerged as a prominent approach in higher education, emphasizing inspiring and empowering followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes [2]. In addition, transformational leaders motivate their followers by articulating a compelling vision, fostering intellectual

stimulation, providing individualized consideration, and serving as role models of desired behaviors [3].

In recent decades, transformational leadership has garnered considerable attention in organizational behavior and management studies, with numerous studies exploring its implications and effectiveness in various contexts. For instance, research published in the *Future Business Journal* highlighted how transformational leadership positively affects employee outcomes, such as job satisfaction and burnout, indicating that transformational leaders enhance intrinsic motivation, which leads to improved job performance and reduced burnout levels [4]. Additionally, a study investigating project manager-team member relationships found that transformational leadership significantly influences project success by enhancing trust and job satisfaction among team members [1]. Furthermore, a literature review conducted by Regent University revealed that transformational leaders promote organizational citizenship behaviors, enhance job satisfaction, and increase employee commitment, all of which contribute to improved organizational performance [5]. Despite these positive findings, there remains a gap in longitudinal studies assessing the long-term impacts of transformational leadership on organizational change and employee development, underscoring the need for further research to understand how transformational leadership can sustain motivation and performance over time [6]. Collectively, these studies affirm the vital role of transformational leadership in enhancing organizational effectiveness and employee satisfaction, making it a critical area of focus in contemporary management research. Transformational leaders can inspire, encourage, and empower followers to surpass expectations and collaborate toward a shared vision [7]. These leaders exhibit distinct behaviors, such as idealized influence, inspirational enthusiasm, knowledgeable stimulation, and individualized reflection. These behaviors have been associated with various positive outcomes, including enhanced employee performance, increased job satisfaction, outstanding organizational commitment, and improved innovative capabilities [8], [9].

The transformational leadership approach has been widely studied in various organizational contexts, including business, healthcare, and the military [10], [11]. However, the application and effectiveness of this leadership style within the unique environment of higher education institutions warrant further exploration [12], [13]. HEIs face distinct challenges, such as complex decision-making processes, diverse stakeholder groups, and balancing teaching, research, and service responsibilities [1], [12].

Research suggests that transformational leadership can positively affect organizational outcomes in higher education, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee performance [14], [15]. Transformational leaders can inspire faculty and staff to go above and beyond their formal job requirements, foster a culture of innovation and continuous improvement, and facilitate the successful implementation of strategic changes within HEIs [12], [16].

However, applying transformational leadership in the context of higher education has its challenges. The shared governance structure, academic autonomy, and diverse stakeholder interests that characterize HEIs may pose unique obstacles to the effective

implementation of transformational leadership practices [1], [12]. Furthermore, the literature on transformational leadership in higher education needs to be more cohesive, requiring a comprehensive synthesis of the current research to identify key themes, gaps, and future research directions.

1.1 Theory of Transformational Leadership Styles

Transformational leadership involves leaders acting as role models, inspiring innovative work behavior, motivating [17], and supporting followers to achieve the organization's vision and goals; perceiving the follower's extra effort and satisfaction are positively related to a rational style and negatively associated with an avoidant style [18], and fostering an intimate relationship that enhances inspiration and ethics for both the leader and the follower [19].

Furthermore, transformational leadership enables the reinvention of a group's mission and vision, rejuvenating its dedication and reorganizing its system to achieve goals [20]. According to Díaz-Sáenz [21], politicians often lead their followers through reciprocal exchange, which satisfies both the leader's and the follower's self-interest. This approach is employed by politicians who engage their followers to achieve significant goals and uplift them morally.

James MacGregor Burns introduced the idea of "transforming leadership" as a contrast to the more transactional approach [22]. He argued that transforming leaders can increase the consciousness of followers by appealing to their higher-order needs, values, and morals rather than simply exchanging rewards for desired behaviors, as in the transactional model. Building on Burns' Work, Bass [23] further developed the theory of transformational leadership, identifying four key components that distinguish it from other leadership styles:

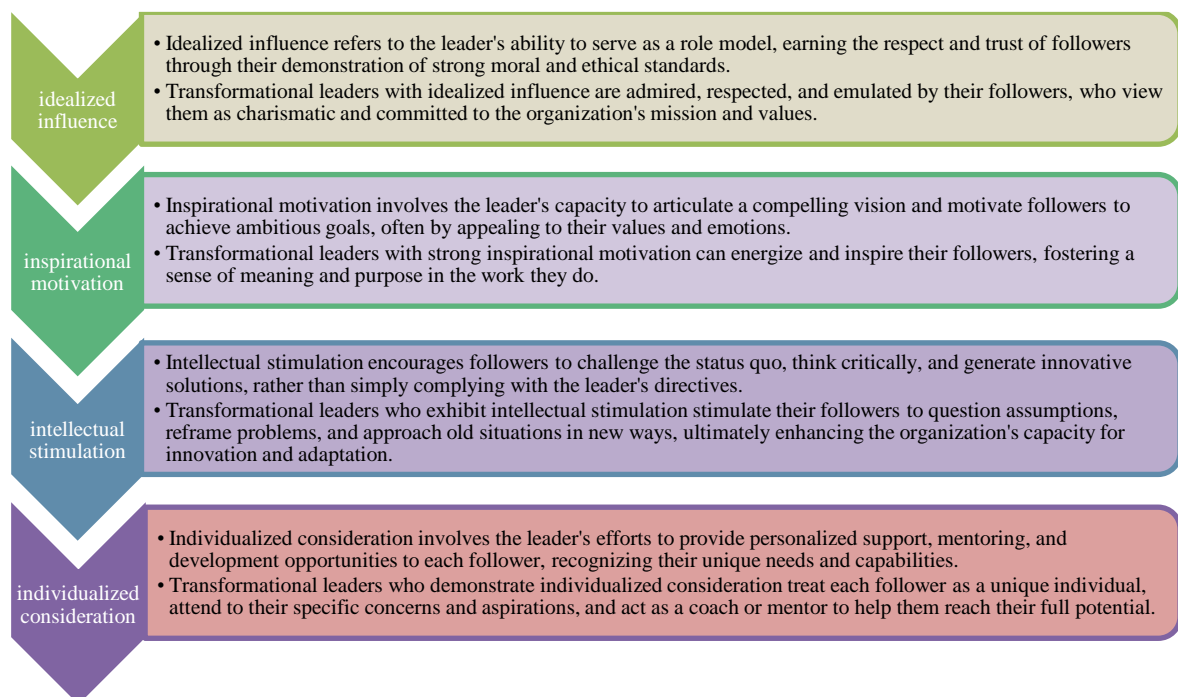


Figure 1. Key components of transformational leadership styles

Figure 1 shows the four components of transformational leadership that work in tandem to inspire and empower followers, fostering a shared sense of purpose, commitment, and ownership [24], [25]. Transformational leaders can motivate followers to transcend their self-interest for the organization's greater good, leading to higher performance, innovation, and organizational effectiveness [26], [27].

The theoretical foundations of transformational leadership have been further expanded and refined over the years, with researchers exploring its antecedents, outcomes, and boundary conditions [28], [29]. For example, studies have examined the role of leader characteristics, such as personality traits and emotional intelligence, in shaping transformational leadership behaviors [30], [31]. Additionally, researchers have investigated the impact of transformational leadership on various individual and organizational outcomes, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and innovative work behavior [32], [33].

Despite the growing body of research on transformational leadership, there remains a need for a more comprehensive understanding of its application and effectiveness in specific organizational contexts, such as higher education [34], [35], [36]. Higher education institutions' unique challenges and dynamics, shared governance structures, academic autonomy, and diverse stakeholder interests may require adaptations or extensions to the transformational leadership model. Exploring the theoretical foundations and practical implications of transformational leadership in the context of higher education will be a crucial focus of this scoping review.

1.2 Empirical Evidence of Transformational Leadership Styles

Previous studies have demonstrated the positive impact of transformative leadership on various organizational outcomes. A meta-analysis by Wang et al. [37] provides strong evidence that transformational leadership is positively correlated with individual, team, and organizational performance. The findings suggest that transformational leaders can effectively motivate and inspire their followers, improving work outcomes at multiple levels.

The studies by Podsakoff et al. [38] and Braun et al. [39] further highlight the benefits of transformational leadership for employee well-being and job satisfaction. Transformational leaders create a supportive work environment that fosters employee growth and development, reducing burnout and increasing job satisfaction. This is a critical finding, as employee satisfaction and engagement are key drivers of organizational success. In addition, Podsakoff et al. [40] explained that transformational leaders can create a nurturing work environment and support their subordinates' career growth, leading to increased job contentment and decreased emotional exhaustion.

Research also indicates that transformational leadership promotes innovation and adaptation within organizations. As Jansen et al. [41] noted, Transformational leaders can stimulate creativity and inspire their followers to explore new opportunities, leading to exploitative and exploratory innovation. This adaptive capacity is crucial for organizations to remain competitive in dynamic environments, and it reflects the relationship between transformative leadership and organizational innovation [42].

Additionally, the studies by Podsakoff et al. [40], Schaubroeck et al. [43], and Yohana et al. [44] demonstrate the positive impact of transformational leadership on organizational citizenship behaviors, team cohesion, and team performance. Transformational leaders can cultivate a collaborative and productive work environment by fostering trust, job satisfaction, and a sense of collective efficacy. Moreover, Srivastava et al. [45], Shang [46], and Insani et al. [47], the correlation between transformational leadership and knowledge sharing among team members creates a climate that encourages open information exchange and the collective pursuit of team goals.

Furthermore, research has shown that transformative leadership can facilitate organizational change and adaptation [23], [48], [49], foster corporate social responsibility [100], and promote organizational learning [50]. Studies have also claimed that transformative leadership positively impacts teacher outcomes, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior [51], student engagement, and achievement [52].

Transformational leadership in higher education presents several critical research problems and gaps that necessitate further exploration. Despite well-established theoretical foundations, there needs to be more empirical evidence quantitatively measuring its impact on student outcomes and faculty performance [53]. Additionally, the variability in how transformational leadership is implemented across different institutions must be clarified regarding its principles and practices, highlighting the need for context-specific studies examining its effectiveness in diverse educational environments [10]. Furthermore, existing literature often prioritizes the perspectives of upper management and faculty while neglecting the voices of students and support staff, limiting our understanding of transformational leadership's holistic impact on the academic community [54]. Another significant gap is the need for more focus on how transformational leaders navigate resistance to change, particularly in the context of institutional transformations [55]. Most studies are cross-sectional, providing only a snapshot of transformational leadership's effects; thus, longitudinal research is necessary to assess its long-term impacts on institutional performance and culture [6]. Finally, the rapid technological shifts driven by the COVID-19 pandemic have created an urgent need to explore how transformational leaders adapt their leadership styles to guide institutions through the challenges of remote learning [56], [57]. Addressing these gaps is essential for developing effective leadership strategies to enhance the educational landscape.

This scoping literature review aims to synthesize the literature on the application and impact of transformational leadership in the context of higher education. By mapping the current state of research, this review will identify key themes, gaps, and future research directions to enhance our understanding of how transformational leadership can be effectively implemented and leveraged within HEIs

2. METHOD

This study employs a scoping review methodology to synthesize the literature on the application and impact of transformational leadership approaches within higher education institutions. A scoping review is an appropriate approach, as it allows for a broad

exploration of the available research on this topic without needing a narrowly defined research question or a systematic review's rigid quality appraisal requirements [56], [57]. The study explored the significance of the existing published articles that could be used as meta-synthesis data. This study examines articles on the trend of transformational leadership in higher education.

The search strategy involves a comprehensive and systematic search of the following electronic databases: Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Europe PMC, ScienceDirect, CORE, and Scopus. The search terms included only combinations of keywords such as "transformational leadership," "higher education," "university," "college," "academy," and related terms. The search will be limited to peer-reviewed journal articles published in English between 2019 and 2024, as this timeframe reflects the recent growing interest and research on transformational leadership in the context of higher education. In addition to the database searches, the reference lists of the included studies were manually scanned to identify any additional relevant articles. The study selection process will follow the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines [58].

The research questions are addressed only by papers that meet the predefined criteria. The following criteria are used in this selection process. First, the open-access publication system can be found in international journals. Second, the articles, mainly those published within the last five years, have focused on identifying and describing the key themes and patterns in the literature related to the application and impact of transformational leadership in higher education. The relevant bibliographic details, study characteristics, transformational leadership context, application, outcomes, and impacts of transformational leadership, and key findings and implications are included in the studies:

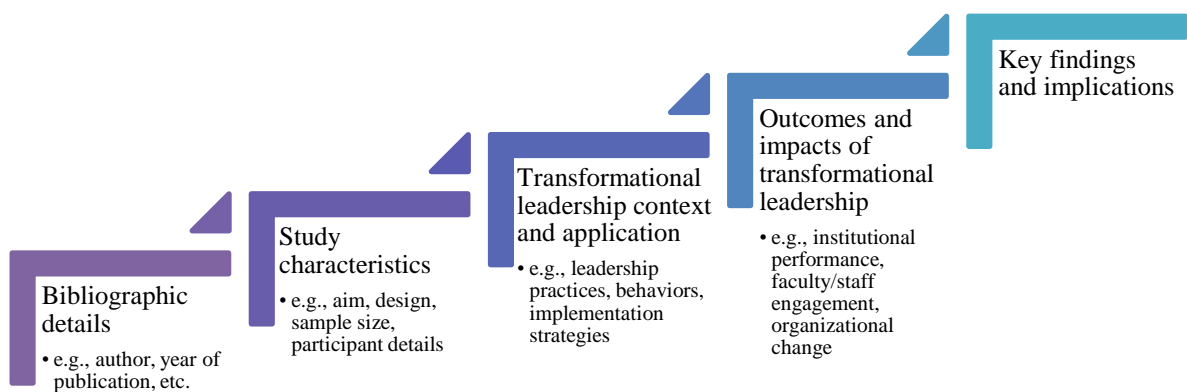


Figure 2. Relevant aspects of the scoping review

The thematic analysis employed the significant concepts extracted from the data into a comprehensive list of themes. The findings were reported following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses Extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) guidelines [59]. This ensures a clear and transparent presentation of the study's methodology, results, and implications. Visualizations, such as tables and

figures, complement the narrative synthesis and enhance the clarity and accessibility of the findings. This scoping review provides a comprehensive overview of the current research on transformational leadership in higher education, identifying critical gaps and areas for future investigations. These findings have important implications for higher education leaders, policymakers, and researchers interested in understanding and leveraging transformational leadership approaches to drive institutional change and performance.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

The findings are analyzed to align with the research objectives. The data gathered underwent initial screening via Publish or Perish software. The research paper selection process followed four stages outlined in the PRISMA flow diagram: identification, eligibility, screening, and inclusion. The first step of the article screening process involved a database search, which identified 138 articles from Google Scholar (n = 47), ResearchGate (n = 50), ERIC (n = 30), Europe PMC (n = 4), ScienceDirect (n = 4), CORE (n = 2), and Scopus (n = 1).

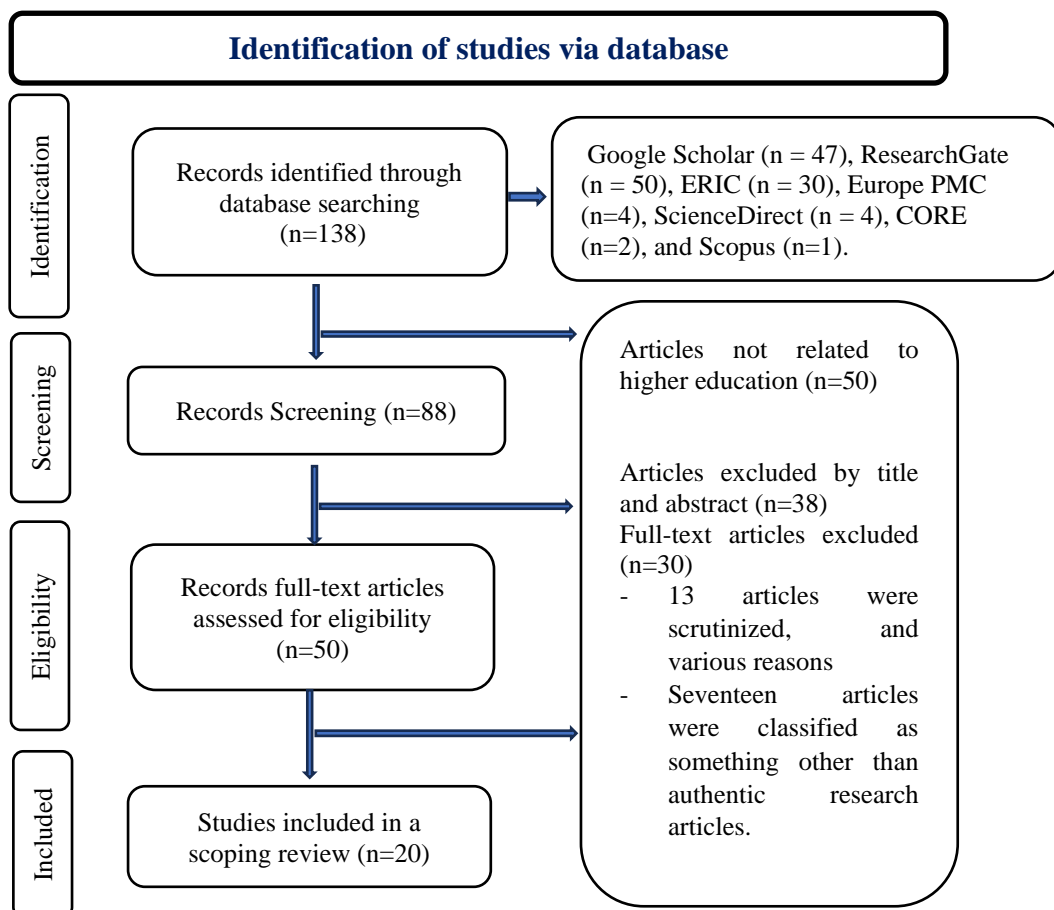


Figure 3. Flow chart of the study

Figure 3 illustrates the systematic process undertaken to identify, screen, and include studies for a scoping literature review focusing on higher education. This process

begins with the identification phase, during which 138 records were identified through a comprehensive search across various databases, including Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and ERIC. The search strategy involved the use of critical terms related to higher education and literature review methodologies, and each source contributed to the overall pool of literature, with the most significant number of records coming from ResearchGate (n=50) and Google Scholar (n = 47).

The screening phase involved a detailed assessment of the identified records, reducing the initial pool to 88 documents. This refinement process excluded 50 articles deemed irrelevant to higher education, focusing the review on pertinent literature. The eligibility phase thoroughly evaluated the remaining 50 full-text articles. During this stage, 30 articles were excluded based on specific criteria—38 documents were eliminated because of title and abstract review—while 30 full-text articles faced additional scrutiny. Among these, 13 were reviewed but excluded for various reasons, such as lack of relevance to the research topic or insufficient methodological rigor, and 17 were not classified as authentic research articles.

Ultimately, the results culminated in the inclusion phase, a pivotal stage in which 20 studies were deemed suitable for inclusion in the scoping review. This precise and methodical approach ensures the integrity of the research process and enhances the reliability of the findings by adhering to rigorous inclusion and exclusion criteria. The flowchart effectively encapsulates the comprehensive journey from initial identification to final inclusion, exemplifying a thorough literature review methodology. The screening process is briefly described in Figure 3, and twenty articles are described in Table 1.

Table 1. The study highlights the synthesis of the literature on the application and impact of transformational leadership in the higher education context

No	Year	Author(s)	Topic article	Types of tests	Types of material	Key finding	Implication
1	2024	Carolina Sánchez-García et al. [60]	The study examines how teachers' transformational leadership affects teenage self-esteem, motor self-efficacy, physical education enjoyment, and future physical activity.	The study employed correlation, multiple regression, and cluster analyses.	Questionnaires, Motor Self-efficacy Scale, intrinsic satisfaction in sport instrument, intention of being physically active scale	Transformational leadership, including motivational inspiration and intellectual stimulation, positively impacts students' self-esteem, motor self-efficacy, enjoyment, and intention for physical activity, promoting healthy lifestyles.	The study's implications are for designing physical education curricula and teacher training to enhance student engagement and healthy lifestyle development.
2	2024	Osiás Kit T. Kilag, et al. [61]	Impact of Transformational Leadership on Teacher Job Satisfaction and Commitment	Systematic review	The study used literature and correlated leadership practice with teacher outcomes.	The study demonstrates the vital importance of transformational leadership in driving teacher satisfaction, commitment, and overall motivation - critical elements for sustaining a high-performing educational system.	The study's practical implications and call for cross-cultural research underscore its value in informing effective leadership practices in the education sector.
3	2024	Abu Muna Almaududi Ausat et al. [62]	The role of transformational leadership in improving employee psychological well-being.	A qualitative study explores previous studies on transformational leadership and employee psychological well-being.	Literature review	Transformational leadership improves employee' psychological well-being and inspires and motivates their people, making them feel valued and invested in the company's objective. It boosts workplace motivation, self-esteem, and growth.	Understanding the role of transformational leadership in enhancing employee psychological well-being is crucial for organizational success in the ever-changing business environment.
4	2024	Fery Enita & Nur Wening [63]	Analysis of the Influence of Transformational Leadership Style and Work Motivation on Teacher Performance	A qualitative study explores the influence of teachers' performance and motivation.	Systematic Literature Review (SLR)	The study underscores the crucial interplay between transformational school leadership, teacher motivation, and enhanced teacher performance as critical factors	The study highlighted that transformational leadership fosters high work motivation among teachers to improve overall performance and enhance educational

No	Year	Author(s)	Topic article	Types of tests	Types of material	Key finding	Implication
						driving educational advancement.	
5	2022	Joshua L. at al [64]	The study investigates transformational leadership qualities in higher education doctoral programs in Virginia.	Qualitative and quantitative are used to collect the data from public university	Interviews with graduate program directors and Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5x™) for student self-ratings and peer ratings.	The study highlights that transformational leadership skills are essential for future university presidents and evaluates how well doctoral programs prepare candidates for these leadership roles.	The findings suggest that doctoral programs need to instill transformational leadership qualities better to prepare individuals for leadership positions in higher education, addressing the anticipated leadership crisis.
6	2022	Firmansyah et al. [65]	Transformational leadership effect on teacher performance in Asia: A meta-analysis	A quantitative study was used.	Meta-analysis as secondary was conducted to verify the result of the study.	The meta-analysis revealed that transformational school leadership positively influenced teacher job satisfaction, commitment, and self-efficacy.	The important implications for leadership development and teacher performance improvement in schools, especially in Asia.
7	2024	Hardianto et al [66]	Revitalizing Educational Leadership: A Comprehensive Literature Review of Transformational Leadership in Indonesia Academic Settings	Literature review	Sinta 1 and Sinta 2 journals, using the keywords "transformational leadership" and "kepemimpinan transformational."	The study demonstrates the potent role of transformational leadership in education, where principals who exhibit these qualities can drive positive change and improvement across numerous organizational and individual outcomes.	The study underscores the importance of cultivating transformational leadership capabilities among school administrators to drive continuous improvement in education.
8	2023	Wei Ke & Jianhao Huang [67]	The study investigates the correlation between Chinese college students' perceived transformational leadership by physical education teachers and their exercise adherence, with physical self-efficacy mediating.	A questionnaire survey was conducted of 448 students from 5 universities in Hebei Province, China.	A survey questionnaire collected a convenience sample of 448 students from five universities.	The result found that college students' perception of transformational leadership by PE teachers significantly and positively influenced and relation their exercise adherence.	The findings suggest that university administrators could encourage PE teachers to use more transformational leadership approaches and improve education/guidance on physical self-efficacy to promote exercise adherence among college students.

No	Year	Author(s)	Topic article	Types of tests	Types of material	Key finding	Implication
9	2023	Chang Liu & Jian-Hao Huang [68]	The Impact of College Students' Perceived Transformational Leadership on Learning Outcomes	Quantitative was conducted in this study	A questionnaire survey conducted among 916 Chinese college students	The study found that college students perceived transformational leadership significantly and positively influenced their learning outcomes.	The study provides theoretical and empirical evidence for enhancing college students' learning outcomes by focusing on the role of transformational leadership, academic self-efficacy, and achievement goal orientation.
10	2023	Falguni P. Desai & P.S. Desai [69]	Implementation of New Education Policy in India and the Prospects of Transformational Female Leadership in Indian Higher Education	Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used	Multifactor leadership questionnaires were used to collect data from 51 stakeholders of higher education	The study found that female transformational leadership was trailblazed in organizational management in higher education institutions while implementing the New Education Policy.	The study's implications were novel to explore, as the education policy was recently implemented in 2020, and gender equity is a significant concern in achieving the SDGs.
11	2024	Amândio de Araújo Sarmiento et al. [70]	Lecturer Performance in Higher Education: Transformational Leadership, Knowledge Sharing, Change Adaptability and Its Relationship	A quantitative technique was used to verify the result.	The data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics in the study.	The key finding has a significant effect on knowledge sharing and lecturer performance.	Communication issues between lecturers impede change. Culture, especially language, is the most significant barrier to change adaptability when communicating practical institutional development ideas.
12	2023	Li-bin Chen & Yuan-Cheng Chang [71]	The Influence of Teachers' Perceived Transformational Leadership on Knowledge sharing behavior in colleges and universities in Anhui, China.	A quantitative technique was used to verify the result.	The study uses a questionnaire survey and SPSS software to analyze the relationship between teachers' perceptions and transformational leadership.	The finding showed that teachers' perception of transformational leadership significantly positively impacts knowledge-sharing behavior and that there are significant differences in teachers' knowledge-sharing behavior based on their age, teaching experience, and professional titles.	The findings provide practical insights for university leaders and administrators to strengthen knowledge management and sharing practices within higher education institutions.
13	2021	Fareez	The Relationship	The study used	A survey study was	There was a significant	The director can increase job

No	Year	Author(s)	Topic article	Types of tests	Types of material	Key finding	Implication
		Ashraf Mahzan & Norazah Mohd. Nordin [72]	between Transformational Leadership Practiced and the Level of Job Satisfaction among Lecturers in MARA Professional College, Malaysia	descriptive and inferential quantitative methods.	conducted on 64 participants by using simple random sampling.	relationship between the director's transformational leadership practice and job satisfaction among lecturers at MARA Professional College.	satisfaction among the staff by practicing the transformational leadership style in managing the college.
14	2020	Mehdi Duyan & Suleyman M. Yildiz [73]	The effect of transformational leadership on job satisfaction of academic staff at faculties of sports sciences in Turkey	Descriptive statistics, correlation and regression analyses	The multifactor leadership questionnaire was used to measure transformational leadership and job satisfaction scale by Change and Chang 2007.	The analysis showed that transformational leadership significantly and positively affected job satisfaction ($\beta=.375$; $p<0.001$).	The study provided valuable information for university administrators and leaders who want to improve employee satisfaction and performance in these academic settings.
15	2022	Shihua Brazill & Bill Ruff [74]	Using Transformational Leadership to Create Brave Space in Teaching Multicultural Education	The qualitative study was used to demonstrate the research findings.	The semi-structured interviews were utilized to collect the data.	Transformational leadership practices, including modeling, challenging processes, and encouraging the heart, enhance students' understanding of identity, trust, and values and foster critical conversations about multicultural education.	The study indicated that transformational leadership in the classroom may foster daring space and deepen learning about diversity, equity, and social justice.
16	2021	Rachel DeDeyn [75]	Teacher leadership and student outcome in a US university intensive English program	The correlation and regression analyses were used to explore the associations between teacher leadership style, student course satisfaction, and student grades.	The study used an empirical study.	The key finding demonstrated that transformational leadership had the most vital positive relationships with student course satisfaction, was most strongly associated with inspirational motivation, and was a significant predictor of student course grades.	The study highlights the importance of teacher leadership skills beyond good teaching practices in positively impacting student outcomes in the TESOL context.
17	2024	Mingyu Hou et al. [76]	Transformational Leadership in Chinese K12 Private	Literature review approach, using search engines and	Compared and discussed well-known theories of	The findings suggest that transformational leadership significantly impacts private	These efforts can help optimize the application of transformational leadership in

No	Year	Author(s)	Topic article	Types of tests	Types of material	Key finding	Implication
			Schools: A Literature Review	consulting relevant books/websites to gather data.	transformational leadership, combined with the current status of private K-12 schools in China.	K12 schools despite challenges, helping them adapt to educational reforms and contributing to overall school development.	Chinese private K12 schools and provide theoretical and practical support for continuous improvement in education.
18	2024	Maria Eliophotou Menon [77]	The article provides a literature review on the effects of transformational leadership on educational outcomes.	Systematic literature review	The article reviews and summarizes existing research on transformational leadership and its effects on educational outcomes.	The article critically evaluates transformational leadership's contribution to educational improvement and discusses the limitations and weaknesses of relevant theory and research.	The study highlights the need for more comprehensive research on the impact of leadership on educational outcomes, highlighting the need for more effective leadership strategies.
19	2024	Lin Chunhui et al. [78]	The Impact of Transformational Leadership on the Work Performance of University Teachers through the Mediation of Organization Culture	The authors are conducting a literature review, focusing on existing research on this topic without involving specific empirical tests.	The authors review relevant academic literature from sources like Google Scholar, ERIC, and ProQuest.	The finding was that transformational leadership positively correlates with the job performance of university teachers and plays a crucial mediating role in this relationship.	University leaders should recognize the significance of cultivating a positive school culture and work environment to support transformational leadership approaches.
20	2020	Berna YÜNER [79]	The relationship between the transformational teaching of academic staff and students' self-efficacy for learning.	Quantitative research study	Structural equation modeling	Transformational teaching, intellectual stimulation, and charisma positively impact self-efficacy for learning, finding, and info processing and significantly predict students' learning self-efficacy.	The study highlights the importance of transformational teaching approaches in higher education to promote students' self-efficacy and lifelong learning skills.

3.2 Discussion

Transformational leadership (TL) has been widely recognized for its positive influence on educational outcomes, yet several studies suggest that its effectiveness can vary significantly based on contextual factors. For example, while Sánchez-García et al. [60] and Dvir et al. [80] emphasize the impact of TL on students' emotional and physical well-being in physical education, other studies point to limitations in TL when applied in rigid institutional frameworks. These limitations could include difficulties implementing long-term vision due to immediate operational needs or challenges in maintaining the balance between inspiring change and ensuring stability. Hater and Bass [81] and Williams [82] argue that in highly structured environments, more transactional leadership may be more effective, providing the clarity and direction that TL might lack. This discrepancy highlights that while TL can inspire, it may not always align with specific operational needs in certain academic contexts.

Additionally, T Kilag et al. [83] illustrate the relationship between TL and job satisfaction among faculty. However, Johnson [84] revealed that an overemphasis on transformational behaviors could lead to stress and burnout among educators if adequate institutional frameworks do not support these behaviors. This underscores the need for balanced leadership styles that integrate transformational and transactional elements, providing reassurance and confidence in their effectiveness. Moreover, Ke and Huang [85] studies have shown that TL positively correlates with student physical activity adherence. However, research by Ntoumanis et al. [86] indicates that intrinsic motivation is crucial in student engagement. This underscores the need for a holistic approach to educational leadership that fosters intrinsic motivation alongside transformational strategies, inspiring and motivating the audience.

Despite these critiques, TL's potential to cultivate a supportive and innovative educational environment remains significant. Chunhui et al. [87] and Kuknor et al. [88] showcase TL's role in promoting adaptive organizational cultures and advancing gender equity in education, offering a hopeful outlook for its application.

In summary, while transformational leadership is beneficial in higher education, its effectiveness can be context-dependent, and its unregulated application may lead to challenges such as educator burnout. A nuanced understanding of the interplay between TL and other leadership styles is essential for maximizing its benefits. Moreover, intrinsic student motivation must be considered to create engaging and supportive learning environments.

The significance of transformational leadership (TL) findings in higher education can be critically understood through the lens of established leadership theories and frameworks. TL, characterized by its emphasis on inspiring and motivating followers to achieve more than they initially thought possible, finds theoretical solid support [89], [90], which posits that transformational leaders enhance followers' intrinsic motivation, promote innovative thinking, and improve overall organizational performance. Recent studies highlight the multidimensional impact of TL on both educator and student outcomes,

substantiating these theoretical assertions while revealing complexities that warrant a more nuanced interpretation.

For example, research by Sánchez-García et al. [60] has demonstrated that TL positively affects students' emotional well-being and engagement in physical education settings. This finding aligns with Bertills et al. [13], [91], [92] asserting that transformational leaders increase followers' needs by creating supportive environments conducive to personal and academic growth. However, the beneficial effects of TL are complicated by the context in which it is applied. Anchors et al. [3] highlighted that while TL can increase motivation, it may lead to educator burnout without adequate institutional support. This observation raises critical questions about the sustainability of TL, namely, whether the inspirational appeal of transformational leadership can be maintained in environments lacking structural reinforcement. Such insights necessitate a re-evaluation of Bass's original model, suggesting that while transformational leaders may initiate change, their ability to sustain it hinges on institutional frameworks that promote well-being for both educators and students.

Moreover, T Kilag et al. [83] explore the relationship between TL and faculty job satisfaction, adding another layer to the discourse. Their findings reveal a strong correlation between transformational practices and higher satisfaction levels among educators, reinforcing Leithwood et al. [93] assertion that effective leadership directly influences organizational climate and teacher retention. However, this correlation invites further scrutiny regarding causality; it is crucial to determine whether TL genuinely contributes to job satisfaction or if high job satisfaction predisposes educators to engage more fully with transformational practices [94], [95], [96]. This ambiguity suggests a need for more rigorous research designs—such as longitudinal studies—to unpack these dynamics and establish more apparent causal relationships.

In examining student engagement, Wei and Jianhao [97] emphasized the Influence of TL on physical activity adherence. Their findings underscore TL's role as a motivational strategy; however, they also resonate with Ryan and Deci's [98] self-determination theory, which posits that intrinsic motivation is critical for sustained engagement. This tension between TL and intrinsic motivation highlights a potential shortcoming of the transformational approach when fostering deeply rooted engagement. While TL can inspire and motivate externally, it must concurrently nurture students' internal drive. This dual focus on extrinsic and intrinsic motivators suggests that a purely transformational approach may be insufficient for maximizing student engagement [99], [100], [101].

Furthermore, the need for hybrid leadership models emerges as a crucial area of exploration [102]. Integrating transformational and transactional leadership styles may provide a more holistic approach that addresses the varied needs of educators and students alike [103], [104], [105]. Graeff [106] and Zhang [107] support this hybrid model by advocating for situational leadership that adapts to the context and needs of followers. Such flexibility could mitigate the risk of burnout identified by Yang [108] and Santosa and Wahyuningsih [109], as leaders who can also employ transactional strategies—such as clear performance expectations and rewards—may better support their teams while maintaining an inspiring vision.

Finally, the call for ongoing research into the long-term effects of TL, as posited by Alzoraiki et al. [110], is essential for understanding its sustainability and impact over time. Longitudinal studies can illuminate how TL influences job performance, student outcomes, and the climate of educational institutions [111], [112]. Insights derived from such research could significantly contribute to leadership training and development programs [113], ensuring that leaders are equipped with the skills necessary to manage the complexities of contemporary educational environments [114].

4. CONCLUSION

The scoping literature review seeks to consolidate existing research on the use and effects of transformational leadership within higher education. Findings regarding transformational leadership (TL) in higher education have significant implications for both leadership practices and institutional policies. Research indicates a positive correlation between TL and enhanced educator job satisfaction and student engagement, so educational institutions must prioritize developing and implementing TL frameworks within their leadership training programs. This focus can foster environments that motivate and retain talented educators and promote higher student achievement. However, the emerging complexities surrounding the balance between transformational and extrinsic motivation highlight the need for further exploration. Future research should investigate the impact of hybrid leadership models that integrate transformational and transactional elements and assess how these approaches can be effectively utilized in various educational contexts. Additionally, longitudinal studies examining TL's long-term effects on educator and student outcomes will be essential for understanding its sustainability and efficacy over time, ultimately informing best practices in educational leadership.

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