



The Impact of Leadership Styles and Team Cohesion on Employee Engagement and Performance in Workgroups: Evidence from Nigerian Organizations

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Article Info

ISSN (online): 2583-6641

Volume: 03

Issue: 06

November – December 2024

Received: 13-10-2024

Accepted: 15-11-2024

Published: 10-12-2024

Page No: 219-230

Abstract

This study investigates the impact of leadership styles and team cohesion on employee engagement and performance within workgroups in Nigerian organisations. Drawing on Bass and Avolio's Full Range Leadership Model and Carron's conceptualisation of team cohesion, a quantitative survey design was employed with a sample of 320 employees drawn from five industry sectors banking, telecommunications, manufacturing, public administration, and fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) across Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt. Validated instruments assessed transformational, transactional, and laissez faire leadership behaviours, task and social team cohesion, employee engagement, and supervisor rated performance. Pearson correlation and multiple regression analyses revealed that transformational leadership was the strongest positive predictor of both employee engagement ($\beta = 0.41, p < .001$) and performance ($\beta = 0.37, p < .001$), while laissez faire leadership exerted significant negative effects on both outcomes. Team cohesion mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and employee outcomes, accounting for 23% of the variance in engagement and 19% in performance beyond direct effects. Transactional leadership demonstrated moderate positive associations, predominantly in manufacturing and public sector contexts. These findings have significant theoretical and practical implications for human resource management, leadership development, and organisational effectiveness in the Nigerian corporate environment and, by extension, for emerging market organisations navigating comparable institutional and cultural dynamics.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54660/IJMOR.2024.3.6.219-230>

Keywords: leadership styles, transformational leadership, transactional leadership, team cohesion, employee engagement, employee performance, workgroups, Nigerian organisations

1. Introduction

The governance of human capital within modern organisations has increasingly been recognised as one of the most consequential determinants of sustained competitive advantage. In an era characterised by rapid technological change, demographic transformation, and the ongoing disruption of established industrial structures, the manner in which leaders direct, motivate, and organise their workgroups has emerged as a pivotal variable mediating between organisational strategy and operational outcomes. Leadership, long theorised as an individual attribute or behavioural disposition, is now understood within a relational and contextual framework as a dynamic process through which influence is exercised, meaning is constructed, and collective capacity is mobilised in service of shared goals (Yukl, 2013). Within this framework, team cohesion the degree to which members of a workgroup are attracted to and motivated to remain within the group functions as a critical enabling condition that amplifies or attenuates the effectiveness of leadership behaviours (Carron *et al.*, 2002).

Nigeria, as the most populous nation and largest economy in sub-Saharan Africa, presents a particularly significant and under-researched organisational context for the examination of these relationships. With a GDP exceeding \$440 billion (World Bank, 2022) and a rapidly expanding formal employment sector, Nigerian organisations operate within a unique confluence of institutional characteristics including high power distance cultural norms, a predominance of hierarchical organisational structures, ethnic and linguistic diversity within workgroups, and the persistent influence of informal authority relations that may moderate the effectiveness of leadership styles documented primarily in North American and Western European organisational contexts (Adeyemi Bello, 2001; Obi *et al.*, 2020). The transferability of leadership effectiveness findings from Western dominant scholarship to African organisational settings cannot be assumed without empirical validation, yet the volume of rigorous quantitative research examining leadership performance relationships in Nigeria remains limited relative to the country's economic and demographic significance.

Employee engagement defined as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002) has attracted substantial scholarly and practitioner attention as a construct that integrates affective, cognitive, and behavioural dimensions of the individual organisation relationship. Engaged employees invest discretionary effort, demonstrate organisational commitment, and exhibit performance levels that consistently exceed those of disengaged counterparts across diverse occupational contexts. The antecedents of employee engagement have been extensively theorised, with leadership behaviours identified across multiple meta-analyses as among the most powerful predictors of engagement levels (Christian *et al.*, 2011; Harter *et al.*, 2002). Team level factors particularly the social and task cohesion of the workgroup within which the individual is embedded have been identified as proximal antecedents of engagement that mediate the influence of leader behaviours on individual outcomes.

Despite the theoretical linkages between leadership, team cohesion, engagement, and performance that have been established in Western literature, the empirical examination of these relationships within the Nigerian organisational context remains sparse and methodologically fragmented. Existing Nigerian studies have addressed leadership and performance relationships largely in isolation from team level constructs, often relying on small convenience samples from single organisations or sectors, and have rarely employed validated psychometric instruments appropriate for cross-sector comparative analysis. This study addresses these gaps by providing a multi-sector, multi-city quantitative examination of the relationships among leadership styles, team cohesion, employee engagement, and performance in Nigerian workgroups.

The study is guided by the following research questions: (1) What is the prevalence of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles as perceived by employees across five Nigerian industry sectors? (2) What are the relationships between leadership styles, team cohesion, employee engagement, and employee performance in Nigerian workgroups? (3) Does team cohesion mediate the relationship between leadership styles and employee outcomes? (4) Do sector-specific contextual factors moderate these relationships? The remainder of the paper is organised

as follows: Section 2 presents the background, Section 3 reviews the relevant literature, Section 4 articulates the theoretical framework and hypotheses, Section 5 describes the methodology, Section 6 presents results, Section 7 discusses findings, Section 8 outlines future directions, and Section 9 concludes.

2. Background

2.1. The Nigerian Organisational Context

Nigeria's organisational landscape is characterised by a distinctive set of structural and cultural features that bear directly on the dynamics of leadership and team functioning. The country's workforce is predominantly young with approximately 60% of the population under the age of 25 (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2022) creating workgroups that often span substantial generational divides in value orientations, technology use, and authority expectations. Ethnic and linguistic heterogeneity within organisations is the norm rather than the exception: workgroups routinely comprise members from different ethnic backgrounds, a feature that shapes patterns of intragroup trust, communication, and informal social cohesion in ways that are not fully captured by instruments developed for more homogeneous organisational contexts.

Nigeria scores high on Hofstede's (2011) power distance dimension, reflecting a cultural tendency to accept hierarchical authority and unequal power distribution as natural and legitimate. This cultural orientation has implications for the effectiveness of participative and empowering leadership behaviours that are central to transformational leadership theory: in contexts where employees expect and accept directive authority, the autonomous and ideologically motivating elements of transformational leadership may require contextual adaptation to be fully effective. Conversely, the transactional elements of contingent reward and management by exception may resonate more naturally in environments where the authority basis of the leader-follower relationship is unquestioned.

The formal private sector in Nigeria has undergone significant transformation since the deregulation and privatisation reforms of the 1980s and 1990s, with the telecommunications, banking, and FMCG sectors in particular developing increasingly professional management cultures influenced by international standards. The public sector, by contrast, retains features of bureaucratic hierarchy and job security that create different incentive environments for employee performance and may sustain different leadership dynamics. Manufacturing remains characterised by a mixture of large formal enterprises and smaller family-controlled businesses, with corresponding variation in management sophistication. These sector-level differences provide a natural comparative frame for the examination of leadership and team dynamics across organisational contexts.

2.2. Evolution of Leadership Research in Africa

The study of leadership in African organisational contexts has evolved from early colonial era characterisations which often framed African management practices as deficient deviations from Western norms toward a more culturally grounded and empirically rigorous body of scholarship that engages seriously with the indigenous values, social structures, and institutional environments that shape effective leadership on the continent (Mangaliso, 2001; Jackson,

2004). The Ubuntu philosophy encapsulating a relational ontology in which individual identity and agency are constituted through community membership and obligation has been proposed as a foundational value orientation for distinctively African leadership approaches (Bolden & Kirk, 2009). Ubuntu leadership emphasises collective solidarity, consensus decision making, and the subordination of individual interest to group welfare, elements that have interesting parallels to but are not reducible to the transformational leadership construct developed in North American contexts.

Empirical leadership research in Nigeria has addressed a range of relationships relevant to the present study. Ejere and Abasilim (2013) examined transformational and transactional leadership styles in the Nigerian public sector, finding significant positive associations between transformational leadership and employee performance at the individual level. Nwokocha and Iheriohanma (2015) investigated leadership styles in Nigerian manufacturing firms, documenting the prevalence of directive transactional approaches and their effectiveness in well defined task environments. More recently, Obi *et al.* (2020) examined leadership and employee engagement in Nigerian commercial banks, finding that transformational leadership behaviours were significantly associated with higher engagement scores but that structural features of the banking sector including intense performance pressure and regulatory compliance demands moderated the strength of these relationships. These studies collectively establish the relevance of leadership effectiveness research in the Nigerian context while highlighting the need for multi sector studies that can illuminate the role of contextual moderators.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Leadership Styles: Full Range Leadership Model

The Full Range Leadership Model (FRLM), developed by Bass (1985) and extended by Bass and Avolio (1994), provides the most widely applied theoretical framework for the empirical study of leadership in organisational contexts. The model conceptualises leadership along a continuum from active and constructive to passive and avoidant, with three primary leadership style categories transformational, transactional, and laissez faire representing qualitatively distinct orientations to the exercise of leadership influence. Transformational leadership is characterised by four dimensions idealised influence (attributed and behavioural), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration collectively describing a leader who articulates a compelling vision, models value congruence, challenges followers to transcend self interest, and attends to each follower's developmental needs (Bass & Riggio, 2006). The transformational leader motivates followers through intrinsic rather than extrinsic mechanisms, fostering identification with the leader's vision and elevating followers' motivation from lower order needs to higher order aspirations. Meta analytic reviews consistently identify transformational leadership as the most robust positive predictor of a broad range of follower and team outcomes, including performance (Judge & Piccolo, 2004), organisational citizenship behaviour (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2000), and employee well being (Arnold, 2017).

Transactional leadership operates through exchange relationships in which leader rewards and recognition are contingent on follower performance meeting established

standards. Its two primary components contingent reward and management by exception (active and passive) describe a leadership approach that maintains system functioning through clearly specified performance reward linkages and corrective intervention when deviations from standards occur. Transactional leadership is associated with adequate follower performance within defined task parameters but is less effective in generating the discretionary effort, creative behaviour, and organisational commitment that are characteristic of transformational leadership outcomes (Lowe *et al.*, 1996). The relative effectiveness of transactional versus transformational leadership may, however, be moderated by task structure and environmental certainty, with transactional approaches performing relatively better in stable, well defined task environments (Bass, 1997).

Laissez faire leadership characterised by the avoidance or abrogation of leadership responsibilities, including decision making, action, and feedback has been consistently identified as the least effective leadership style in the FRLM, associated with follower dissatisfaction, role ambiguity, reduced performance, and elevated stress (Skogstad *et al.*, 2007). The absence of active leadership in workgroups creates informational and motivational voids that impair both individual and team functioning, making laissez faire a negative reference point against which the relative effectiveness of transformational and transactional approaches is meaningfully contrasted.

3.2. Team Cohesion

Team cohesion, as conceptualised by Carron *et al.* (2002), is a multidimensional construct reflecting the totality of forces that bind members to a group and to each other. The most widely applied dimensional framework distinguishes between task cohesion the shared commitment to and coordination around the group's tasks and objectives and social cohesion the interpersonal attraction and positive affect among group members. These dimensions, while positively correlated, are empirically distinct and may have differential relationships with performance outcomes: task cohesion is more strongly and consistently associated with team performance, while social cohesion is more strongly related to member satisfaction, retention, and willingness to expend collective effort (Mullen & Copper, 1994).

The relationship between leadership and team cohesion has been theorised and empirically examined across multiple organisational settings. Transformational leadership behaviours particularly idealised influence and inspirational motivation have been proposed as primary antecedents of team cohesion, through mechanisms including the articulation of a shared vision that provides integrating focus for team effort, the modelling of value congruence that facilitates interpersonal trust, and the cultivation of a team identity that transcends individual self interest (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Wang *et al.*, 2011). Empirical studies support these theoretical linkages: Cho and Dansereau (2010) found significant positive associations between transformational leadership and both task and social cohesion in Korean workgroups; Dionne *et al.* (2004) documented a significant mediating role of team cohesion in the transformational leadership performance relationship in North American samples.

The relationship between team cohesion and performance has been extensively meta analysed, with Beal *et al.* (2003) reporting a mean corrected correlation of $r = .30$ across 64

studies, and Mullen and Copper (1994) reporting a similar aggregate effect, with task cohesion demonstrating stronger effects than social cohesion in both studies. The cohesion performance relationship has been found to be stronger for groups performing interdependent tasks, for longer established groups, and in organisational (as opposed to laboratory) settings conditions that are well represented in the present study's target population.

3.3. Employee Engagement

Employee engagement has been conceptualised from multiple theoretical traditions. Kahn's (1990) foundational formulation described engagement as the harnessing of organisational members' selves to their work roles the degree to which individuals simultaneously express their physical, cognitive, and emotional energies in role performance. Schaufeli *et al.*'s (2002) operationalisation, which defines engagement as a positive, fulfilling, work related state of mind characterised by vigour (energy and resilience), dedication (sense of significance and enthusiasm), and absorption (deep concentration and immersion), has become the most widely used in empirical research and provides the basis for the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) employed in the present study.

The antecedents of employee engagement have been systematically examined through the Job Demands Resources (JD R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), which proposes that job resources including supportive supervision, developmental feedback, autonomy, and team support are primary drivers of engagement. Leadership behaviours function as job resources in the JD R framework: transformational leaders provide inspirational goal framing, developmental support, and intellectual challenge that enrich the resource environment within which followers work, directly stimulating engagement processes (Tims *et al.*, 2011). Christian *et al.*'s (2011) meta analysis of the antecedents and consequences of engagement found that transformational leadership, autonomy, and task characteristics were the strongest individual level antecedents of engagement, with weighted mean correlations of $r = .44, .38, \text{ and } .40$, respectively.

3.4. Employee Performance

Employee performance in the present study is conceptualised as encompassing both task performance the proficiency with which core role responsibilities are executed and contextual

performance the discretionary behaviours that support the social and organisational environment in which core tasks are performed (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). This distinction is theoretically important because leadership styles and team processes may have differential effects on these performance dimensions: transformational leadership, with its emphasis on intrinsic motivation and collective identity, may be especially effective in generating contextual performance, while transactional leadership may more directly address task performance through clarity of performance standards and contingent reinforcement.

In the Nigerian context, performance measurement and appraisal practices vary substantially across sectors and organisational types. Formal, structured performance management systems including objective setting, regular review cycles, and multi source feedback are more prevalent in multinational subsidiaries and large formal sector employers in banking and telecommunications than in public sector and manufacturing contexts, where informal supervisor assessment often predominates. This institutional heterogeneity in performance management represents both a methodological challenge for cross sector research and a substantive contextual factor that may moderate the leadership performance relationship.

4. Theoretical Framework and Research Hypotheses

4.1. Theoretical Framework

The present study integrates three complementary theoretical frameworks. The Full Range Leadership Model (Bass & Avolio, 1994) provides the primary organising structure for the conceptualisation and measurement of leadership styles. Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) illuminates the mechanisms through which leadership behaviours generate reciprocal engagement responses from followers the exchange of high quality leadership for discretionary effort. The Job Demands Resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) contextualises leadership and team cohesion as job resources that replenish motivational energy and buffer against disengagement, providing the processual logic through which these antecedent constructs drive both engagement and performance outcomes. Team cohesion is positioned as a mediating variable in the model, consistent with theoretical arguments that leadership influences performance outcomes in part through its effects on the cohesive qualities of the teams within which individual work is embedded.

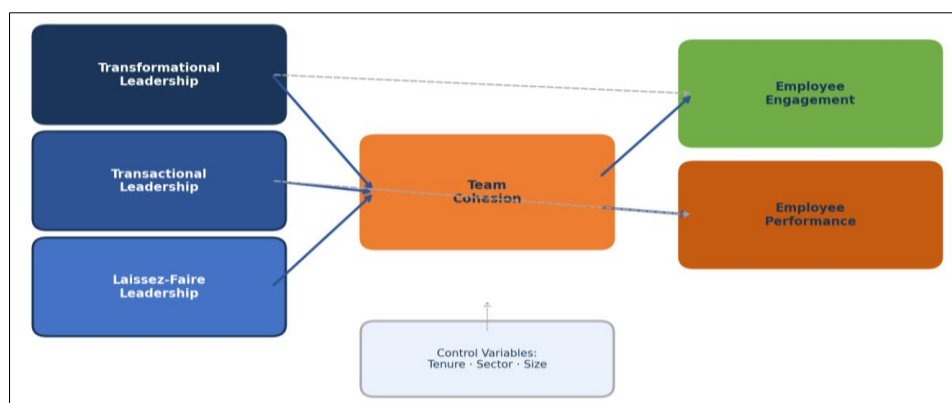


Fig 1: Conceptual Framework: Leadership Styles, Team Cohesion, Employee Engagement, and Performance

4.2. Research Hypotheses

H1: Transformational leadership is positively and significantly associated with employee engagement in Nigerian workgroups.

H2: Transformational leadership is positively and significantly associated with employee performance in Nigerian workgroups.

H3: Transactional leadership is positively associated with employee engagement and performance.

H4: Laissez faire leadership is negatively associated with employee engagement and performance.

H5: Team cohesion is positively and significantly associated with both employee engagement and performance.

H6: Team cohesion mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement.

H7: Team cohesion mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance.

H8: The relationships between leadership styles and employee outcomes vary significantly across industry sectors.

5. Methodology

5.1. Research Design

A quantitative cross sectional survey design was employed, selected as appropriate for testing hypothesised relationships among theoretically defined constructs in a sample of sufficient size to support inferential statistical analysis. Cross sectional design is acknowledged to preclude causal inference, and the study's findings are accordingly interpreted in terms of associations rather than causal effects. Survey data were collected via structured self administered questionnaires, with the exception of the performance measure, which was obtained through immediate supervisor ratings to reduce common method bias.

5.2. Population and Sampling

The target population comprised full time employees working in teams or workgroups of four or more persons within formally registered organisations in Nigeria's private and public sectors. The study focused on three metropolitan areas Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt which together account for the majority of formal sector employment in Nigeria's most economically significant sectors.

A stratified purposive sampling approach was adopted to ensure adequate representation of five target sectors: commercial banking, telecommunications, manufacturing, public administration, and fast moving consumer goods (FMCG). Within each sector, two to three organisations were approached through professional association contacts and academic networks. A total of seven organisations agreed to participate across the five sectors. Within each participating organisation, workgroup supervisors were identified and their direct reports were invited to participate. Using G*Power 3.1 software, a minimum sample of 246 was calculated for a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$), $\alpha = 0.05$, and power = 0.80 with four predictors in regression analysis. The final achieved sample of 320 respondents (response rate: 78.4%) exceeds this minimum and provides adequate statistical power for the planned analyses.

5.3. Measures

5.3.1. Leadership Styles: Leadership styles were measured using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Form 5X Short (MLQ 5X S; Bass & Avolio, 2004), a 45 item

instrument assessing nine first order leadership dimensions aggregated into transformational (20 items), transactional (12 items), and laissez faire (4 items) composites. Respondents rated their immediate supervisor on a 5 point frequency scale ranging from 1 (Not at all) to 5 (Frequently, if not always). The MLQ 5X S has been extensively validated across cultural contexts, including multiple sub Saharan African studies.

5.3.2. Team Cohesion: Team cohesion was measured using the Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ; Carron *et al.*, 1985), adapted for organisational work settings following procedures established by Brawley *et al.* (1993). Eighteen items assessed four dimensions Group Integration Task, Group Integration Social, Individual Attractions to Group Task, and Individual Attractions to Group Social rated on a 5 point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). A composite team cohesion score was computed from the mean of all four subscales.

5.3.3. Employee Engagement: Employee engagement was measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale 9 item version (UWES 9; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2006), assessing vigour (3 items), dedication (3 items), and absorption (3 items) on a 7 point frequency scale. The UWES 9 has demonstrated strong psychometric properties and cross cultural validity.

5.3.4. Employee Performance: Employee performance was assessed using a 10 item supervisor rated performance scale adapted from Williams and Anderson (1991), assessing task performance (5 items) and contextual performance (5 items) on a 5 point scale. Supervisor ratings were collected separately from employee self report questionnaires to reduce same source bias.

5.4. Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted over an eight week period (February–March 2024). Paper based questionnaire packages containing the employee survey and a separate sealed supervisor performance rating form were distributed through designated HR coordinators within each participating organisation. Completed questionnaires were returned directly to the research team in sealed envelopes to assure confidentiality. Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional review board, and all participants provided written informed consent.

5.5. Data Analysis

Data were analysed using SPSS version 27.0 and AMOS version 27.0. Preliminary analyses examined the distributional properties of all variables, assessed for univariate and multivariate outliers, and evaluated assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. Instrument reliability was assessed using Cronbach's α coefficient and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Descriptive statistics and Pearson product moment correlations were computed for all study variables. Multiple regression analyses examined the independent contributions of leadership styles and team cohesion to employee engagement and performance. Mediation analysis testing H6 and H7 was conducted using the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018) with 5,000 bootstrap samples and 95% bias corrected confidence intervals. Moderation analysis examining sector effects (H8) employed moderated regression with dummy coded sector variables.

6. Results

6.1. Sample Characteristics

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 320)

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	188	58.8
	Female	132	41.3
Age	18–25	54	16.9
	26–35	138	43.1
	36–45	89	27.8
	46 and above	39	12.2
Highest Qualification	SSCE / OND	28	8.8
	HND / B.Sc.	162	50.6
	M.Sc. / MBA	108	33.8
	PhD / Professional	22	6.9
Job Tenure	< 1 year	38	11.9
	1–3 years	96	30.0
	4–7 years	118	36.9
	> 7 years	68	21.3
Sector	Banking	72	22.5
	Telecommunications	65	20.3
	Manufacturing	58	18.1
	Public Sector	70	21.9
Location	FMCG	55	17.2
	Lagos	148	46.3
	Abuja	103	32.2
	Port Harcourt	69	21.6

The sample comprised 188 males (58.8%) and 132 females (41.3%), with a modal age category of 26–35 years (43.1%), consistent with the age distribution of formal sector workers in major Nigerian metropolitan areas (NBS, 2022). The majority of respondents held at least a bachelor's degree

(50.6% HND/B.Sc.; 33.8% postgraduate), reflecting the educational profile of professional workforces in the targeted sectors. Tenure distribution indicated a balanced mix of early career and mid career employees, supporting generalisability across experience levels.

6.2 Reliability and Validity

Table 2: Reliability Analysis: Cronbach's Alpha and Descriptive Statistics

Construct	Items	α	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Transformational Leadership	20	.891	3.82	0.62	0.41	0.18
Transactional Leadership	12	.843	3.54	0.58	0.29	0.07
Laissez Faire Leadership	4	.811	2.41	0.74	0.52	0.31
Team Cohesion	18	.878	3.67	0.55	0.33	0.14
Employee Engagement (UWES 9)	9	.902	3.71	0.61	0.38	0.22
Employee Performance	10	.874	3.58	0.57	0.27	0.09

All instruments demonstrated strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from $\alpha = .811$ (laissez faire leadership) to $\alpha = .902$ (employee engagement), exceeding the commonly recommended threshold of $\alpha \geq .70$ (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Skewness and kurtosis values for all variables fell within the ± 2.0 range, supporting the assumption of approximate univariate normality and the appropriateness of parametric statistical analysis.

6.3. Descriptive Statistics and Leadership Style Distribution

Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations for all

study constructs. Transformational leadership ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.62$) and team cohesion ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.55$) recorded the highest mean scores, followed by employee engagement ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 0.61$) and employee performance ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.57$). Laissez faire leadership recorded the lowest mean score ($M = 2.41$, $SD = 0.74$), consistent with theoretical expectations. All construct means exceeded the scale midpoint of 3.0, indicating overall positive perceptions across the sample. Figure 2 presents the distribution of perceived dominant leadership styles by sector.

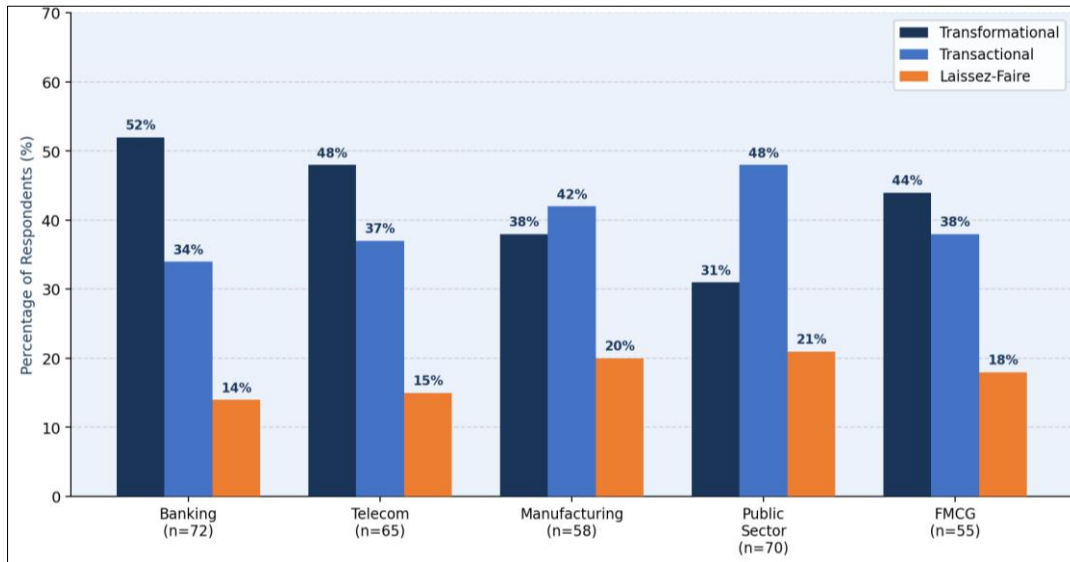


Fig 2: Distribution of Perceived Dominant Leadership Style by Organisational Sector

Figure 2 reveals meaningful sector level variation in perceived leadership style. Transformational leadership was most prevalent in banking (52%) and telecommunications (48%), sectors characterised by intensive competition, innovation demand, and sophisticated talent management practices. Public sector organisations exhibited the highest prevalence of transactional leadership (48%) and laissez faire leadership (21%), consistent with the bureaucratic, rule

bound character of Nigerian public administration. Manufacturing showed the most balanced distribution, with transactional approaches predominant (42%). FMCG organisations showed a profile intermediate between banking and manufacturing, reflecting their position as formal private sector employers with mixed product market demands. Figure 3 presents mean construct scores across the full sample.

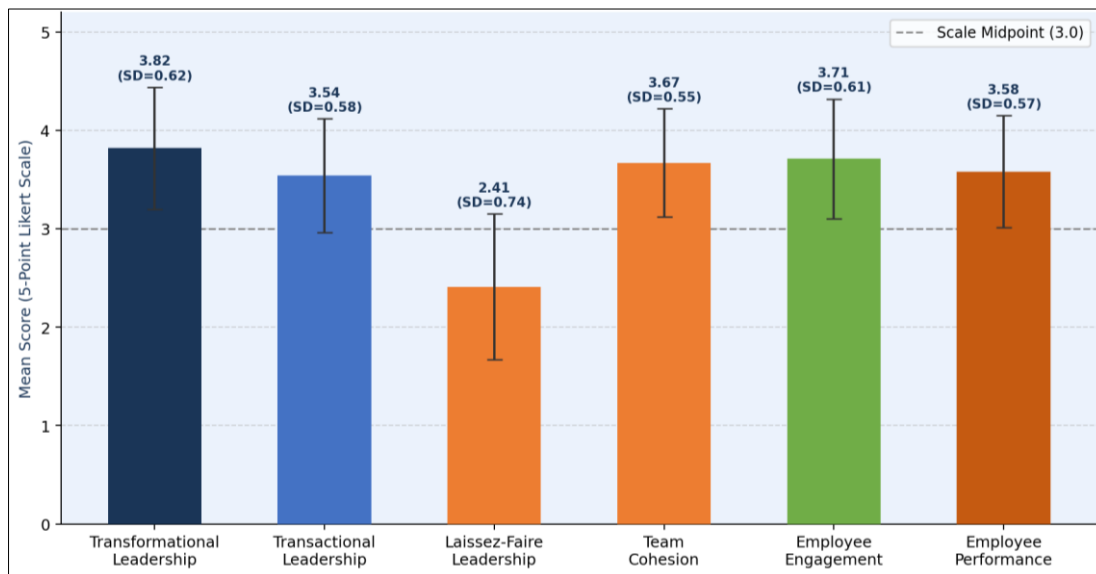


Fig 3: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for All Study Constructs (N = 320)

6.4. Correlation Analysis

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Matrix for All Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Transformational L.	—	.38**	.21**	.56**	.59**	.51**
2. Transactional L.		—	.14*	.41**	.34**	.29**
3. Laissez Faire L.			—	.33**	.28**	.31**
4. Team Cohesion				—	.58**	.52**
5. Emp. Engagement					—	.63**
6. Emp. Performance						—

Note. L. = Leadership. ** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$. N = 320.

Table 3 reveals significant positive correlations between transformational leadership and both employee engagement ($r = .59, p < .01$) and performance ($r = .51, p < .01$), supporting H1 and H2. Transformational leadership was also strongly positively correlated with team cohesion ($r = .56, p < .01$). Transactional leadership showed moderate positive associations with engagement ($r = .34, p < .01$) and performance ($r = .29, p < .01$), providing partial support for H3. Laissez faire leadership exhibited significant negative correlations with engagement ($r = .28, p < .01$), performance ($r = .31, p < .01$), and team cohesion ($r = .33, p < .01$), supporting H4. Team cohesion was strongly associated with engagement ($r = .58, p < .01$) and performance ($r = .52, p < .01$),

supporting H5. The correlation between engagement and performance ($r = .63, p < .01$) is consistent with prior meta-analytic findings (Harter *et al.*, 2002).

6.5. Multiple Regression Analysis

Tables 4 and 5 present the results of hierarchical multiple regression analyses predicting employee engagement and employee performance, respectively. In Step 1, control variables (age, tenure, sector dummies) were entered. In Step 2, the three leadership style variables were added. In Step 3, team cohesion was added to test its incremental contribution and evaluate mediation.

Table 4: Hierarchical Multiple Regression Predicting Employee Engagement

Predictor	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	β	t	β	t	β	t
Control Variables						
Age	.08	1.31	.06	1.04	.05	0.87
Tenure	.11	1.78	.09	1.52	.08	1.38
Sector (ref: Banking)						
Leadership Styles						
Transformational	—	—	.43	7.91**	.41	7.63**
Transactional	—	—	.24	4.42**	.22	4.11**
Laissez Faire	—	—	.20	3.89**	.18	3.54**
Team Cohesion	—	—	—	—	.35	6.49**
R ²	.04		.38		.49	
ΔR^2	.04		.34		.11	
F	3.21*		28.74**		39.82**	

Note. β = standardised regression coefficient. ** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$. $N = 320$. Sector dummies included in all models but not shown for brevity.

Table 5: Hierarchical Multiple Regression Predicting Employee Performance

Predictor	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	β	t	β	t	β	t
Control Variables						
Age	.06	0.98	.05	0.81	.04	0.69
Tenure	.13	2.09*	.11	1.83	.10	1.71
Leadership Styles						
Transformational	—	—	.40	7.27**	.37	6.84**
Transactional	—	—	.21	3.88**	.19	3.52**
Laissez Faire	—	—	.23	4.44**	.21	4.08**
Team Cohesion	—	—	—	—	.31	5.73**
R ²	.05		.35		.44	
ΔR^2	.05		.30		.09	
F	3.84*		25.31**		34.15**	

Note. β = standardised regression coefficient. ** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$. $N = 320$.

Transformational leadership was the strongest and most consistent predictor of both engagement (Model 2: $\beta = .43, p < .001$; Model 3: $\beta = .41, p < .001$) and performance ($\beta = .40$ and $.37$ respectively), supporting H1 and H2. Transactional leadership showed significant positive effects on both outcomes (engagement: $\beta = .22$; performance: $\beta = .19$), partially supporting H3. Laissez faire leadership demonstrated significant negative effects on engagement (β

$= .18$) and performance ($\beta = .21$), supporting H4. Team cohesion independently predicted both engagement ($\beta = .35, \Delta R^2 = .11, p < .001$) and performance ($\beta = .31, \Delta R^2 = .09, p < .001$) after controlling for leadership styles, supporting H5. The addition of team cohesion in Step 3 reduced the transformational leadership coefficient from $\beta = .43$ to $\beta = .41$ (engagement) and from $\beta = .40$ to $\beta = .37$ (performance), consistent with partial mediation. Figure 4 visually presents the standardised regression coefficients.

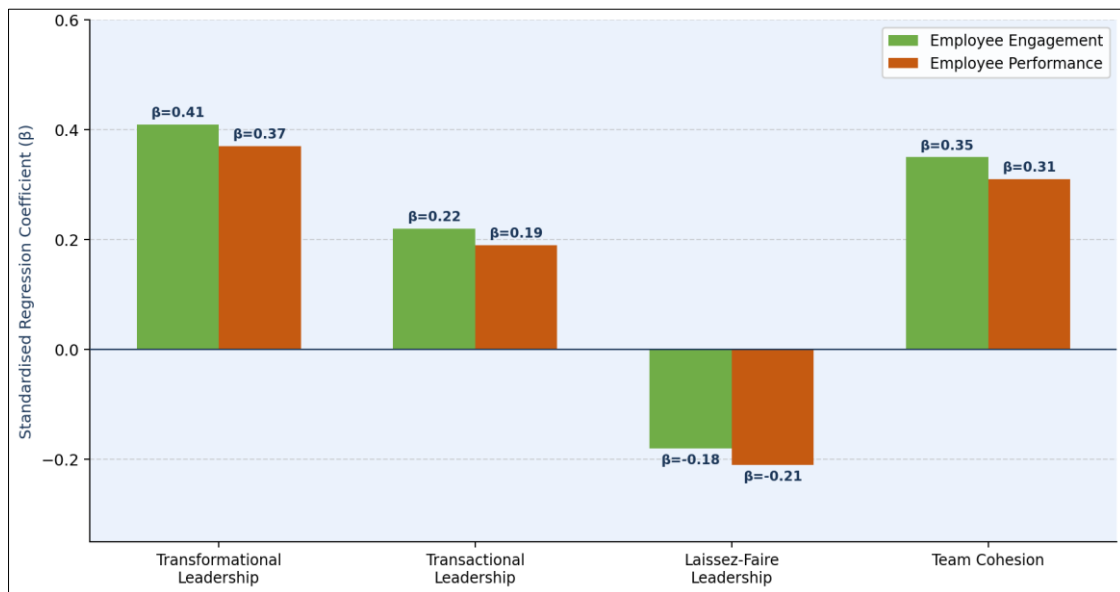


Fig 4: Standardised Regression Coefficients (β) for Employee Engagement and Performance

6.6. Mediation Analysis

Table 6: Bootstrap Mediation Analysis: Team Cohesion as Mediator (5,000 Bootstrap Samples)

Pathway	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI	Interpretation
TFL → TC → Engagement	0.19	0.04	0.12	0.28	Partial Mediation **
TFL → TC → Performance	0.15	0.03	0.09	0.22	Partial Mediation **
Direct: TFL → Engagement	0.41	0.05	0.31	0.51	Significant **
Direct: TFL → Performance	0.37	0.05	0.27	0.47	Significant **

Note. TFL = Transformational Leadership; TC = Team Cohesion; LLCI/ULCI = Lower/Upper Limit 95% Bias Corrected Bootstrap Confidence Interval. ** Confidence interval excludes zero.

Bootstrap mediation analysis confirmed partial mediation for both outcomes. The indirect effect of transformational leadership on engagement through team cohesion was significant (indirect effect = 0.19, 95% CI [0.12, 0.28]), as was the indirect effect on performance (indirect effect = 0.15, 95% CI [0.09, 0.22]). In both cases, the 95% bias corrected

confidence intervals excluded zero, confirming the significance of the indirect paths. The substantial direct effects remaining after accounting for mediation confirm a partial rather than full mediation model, supporting H6 and H7.

6.7. Sector Moderation Analysis

Table 7: Sector Differences in Transformational Leadership–Engagement Relationship (Moderated Regression)

Sector	n	β (TFL→Eng.)	p value	Interpretation
Banking	72	.54	<.001	Strongest positive effect
Telecommunications	65	.49	<.001	Strong positive effect
FMCG	55	.43	<.001	Moderate positive effect
Manufacturing	58	.33	.003	Moderate positive effect
Public Sector	70	.27	.024	Weakest positive effect

Table 7 confirms sector level variation in the transformational leadership engagement relationship, supporting H8. The interaction between transformational leadership and sector was statistically significant ($\Delta R^2 = .06$, F change = 4.82, $p < .001$). The strongest transformational leadership engagement associations were observed in banking ($\beta = .54$) and telecommunications ($\beta = .49$), while the weakest though still statistically significant association occurred in the public sector ($\beta = .27$). These patterns are consistent with theoretical expectations: sectors characterised by innovation demand, talent competition, and performance oriented cultures provide conditions most conducive to the effectiveness of transformational leadership behaviours.

7. Discussion

This study set out to examine the relationships among leadership styles, team cohesion, employee engagement, and performance in Nigerian workgroups, with the dual aims of testing hypotheses derived from established Western theoretical frameworks and generating contextually grounded insights into how these relationships operate in the distinctive organisational environment of Nigeria's formal employment sector. The findings collectively support a model in which transformational leadership is the most powerful driver of both engagement and performance, team cohesion serves as a significant and partially mediating mechanism through which leadership effects are transmitted

to individual outcomes, and sector level contextual factors meaningfully moderate the strength of leadership outcome relationships.

The predominance of transformational leadership as a predictor of engagement and performance is consistent with the weight of meta analytic evidence from Western organisational contexts (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Christian *et al.*, 2011) and with the growing body of empirical evidence from African settings (Ejere & Abasilim, 2013; Obi *et al.*, 2020). The finding that the transformational leadership engagement relationship is strongest in banking and telecommunications is theoretically interpretable in terms of the competitive and dynamic environmental conditions prevailing in these sectors, which elevate the relevance of the vision, intellectual stimulation, and developmental support that transformational leaders provide. In volatile, competitive environments, transformational leadership behaviours that help employees find meaning and sustain motivation amid uncertainty are especially valuable a dynamic that Shamir *et al.* (1993) theorised as the "motivational mechanisms of transformational leadership" and that this study empirically extends to the Nigerian context.

The significant positive relationship between transactional leadership and both outcomes albeit weaker than transformational effects is theoretically consistent with Bass's (1997) augmentation hypothesis, which posits that transactional contingent reward provides a necessary foundation of role clarity and performance expectation alignment upon which transformational effects are layered. In Nigerian organisational contexts characterised by variable formal performance management infrastructure, the role clarity and extrinsic reward explicitness that transactional leadership provides may be particularly important for maintaining baseline performance, especially in the public sector where intrinsic motivational conditions are weaker. The significant negative effects of laissez faire leadership on both outcomes replicate findings from multiple organisational contexts (Skogstad *et al.*, 2007) and reinforce the conclusion that the passive abrogation of leadership responsibilities creates informational and motivational deficits that consistently undermine workgroup functioning regardless of cultural context.

The mediation analysis findings confirming partial mediation of transformational leadership effects on both outcomes through team cohesion contribute to the theoretical understanding of how transformational leadership generates positive outcomes in workgroup contexts. The finding is consistent with Dionne *et al.*'s (2004) and Wang *et al.*'s (2011) theoretical arguments that transformational leadership creates shared purpose, elevates interpersonal trust, and fosters collective identity all components of team cohesion which then facilitate individual engagement and performance through the mechanisms of social support, shared effort norms, and collective efficacy. The partial (rather than full) mediation finding indicates that leadership exerts direct effects on outcomes beyond its cohesion building function, consistent with the direct motivational mechanisms of transformational leadership documented in individual level theories.

The sector moderation findings carry important practical implications for leadership development investment in Nigerian organisations. The weaker transformational leadership outcome associations in the public sector may reflect structural features limited discretionary reward

authority, bureaucratic constraint on innovation, and reduced competitive pressure that attenuate the effectiveness of transformational leadership behaviours rather than rendering them irrelevant. This interpretation suggests that public sector leadership development should address not only leader behaviour but also the structural and institutional conditions that constrain transformational leadership effectiveness.

Several limitations of the present study warrant acknowledgment. The cross sectional design precludes causal inference, and the hypothesised directional relationships should be interpreted as consistent with the data rather than established by it. Common method bias, while partially mitigated by the use of supervisor rated performance measures, may remain a concern for self reported constructs. The sample, while multi sector and multi city, was drawn from major metropolitan areas and may not represent the full diversity of Nigerian formal sector employment contexts, particularly in smaller cities and rural areas. The use of the FRLM and UWES instruments, developed in Western contexts, introduces the possibility of construct non equivalence in the Nigerian setting that formal measurement invariance testing could more fully address.

8. Future Directions

8.1 Longitudinal and Experimental Designs

The cross sectional nature of the present study limits causal conclusions about the directionality of relationships between leadership styles and employee outcomes. Future research should employ longitudinal panel designs that track leadership perceptions, team cohesion, engagement, and performance over time to examine developmental dynamics including the degree to which leadership style changes are followed by shifts in team cohesion and employee outcomes, and whether sustained engagement shapes leader behaviour through reciprocal influence processes. Randomised controlled trials or quasi experimental designs evaluating leadership development interventions comparing transformational leadership training to control conditions on cohesion, engagement, and performance outcomes would provide the causal evidence needed to guide investment decisions.

8.2. Indigenous African Leadership Frameworks

The present study employed instruments developed within the Western Full Range Leadership Model tradition. Future research should develop and validate indigenous leadership frameworks grounded in African value systems, including Ubuntu based leadership orientations, that may capture leadership behaviours relevant to Nigerian and broader African organisational contexts but not adequately represented in FRLM instruments. Cross cultural measurement equivalence studies comparing FRLM instrument factor structures across Nigerian, other African, and Western samples would clarify the degree to which existing instruments capture comparable constructs across cultural contexts, supporting more rigorous theory testing.

8.3. Multilevel Analysis

The present study analysed data at the individual level, treating sector as a between subjects moderator variable. Future research should employ formal multilevel modelling (hierarchical linear modelling) approaches that distinguish within group and between group effects, appropriately accounting for the nested structure of individual employees

within workgroups within organisations. Multilevel mediation models would enable more precise estimation of team level versus individual level cohesion effects and would clarify whether team cohesion operates primarily as a team level emergent property or as an individually perceived characteristic in relation to outcomes.

8.4. Gender, Diversity, and Inclusion

The present study found that 41.3% of respondents were female a ratio that varies substantially across the sampled sectors, with financial services approaching gender parity and manufacturing and public sector showing lower female representation. Future research should examine whether leadership style outcome relationships are moderated by leader or follower gender, and whether the predominantly male leadership structures in many Nigerian organisations create differential effectiveness conditions for transformational versus transactional leadership. The intersection of ethnic diversity within workgroups a pervasive feature of Nigerian organisational life with team cohesion dynamics represents a particularly important area for future investigation, with implications for both team composition policy and cohesion building interventions.

8.5. Technology Mediated and Remote Workgroups

The COVID 19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of remote and hybrid work arrangements in Nigerian formal sector organisations, particularly in banking and telecommunications. The effectiveness of transformational leadership behaviours in technology mediated workgroups where idealised influence and inspirational motivation must be conveyed through digital channels rather than face to face interaction represents an important and understudied area. Future research should examine whether and how virtual leadership modifies the leadership cohesion engagement relationships documented in the present study, and should develop and validate communication strategies that enable transformational leadership effectiveness in hybrid workgroup contexts.

9. Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence, grounded in a multi sector Nigerian sample, that transformational leadership is the most powerful predictor of employee engagement and performance in workgroup contexts, that team cohesion functions as a significant and partially mediating mechanism through which leadership effectiveness is transmitted to individual outcomes, and that sector specific contextual factors meaningfully shape the magnitude of these relationships. The findings reinforce the cross cultural generalisability of the Full Range Leadership Model while also highlighting important contextual moderators that are theoretically significant for the adaptation of Western leadership frameworks to African organisational environments.

For practitioners, the findings carry clear implications. Organisations operating in Nigeria's high competition private sector particularly banking and telecommunications should prioritise the development of transformational leadership competencies in supervisors and team leaders, as these behaviours show the strongest empirical associations with the engagement and performance outcomes that drive sustained competitive advantage. Team building investments aimed at enhancing task and social cohesion represent a valuable

complement to leadership development, amplifying the effects of effective leadership on individual outcomes. In the public sector, where structural constraints limit transformational leadership effectiveness, organisations should simultaneously develop leader capacities and address the institutional features including greater reward discretion, clearer performance outcome linkages, and reduced bureaucratic constraints on innovation that enable transformational behaviours to generate their full motivational effects.

For scholars, the study contributes to the growing body of empirical evidence on leadership effectiveness in African organisational contexts, provides quantitative validation of the team cohesion mediation mechanism in a culturally distinct setting, and identifies a research agenda that bridges FRLM derived frameworks with indigenous African leadership theory. The Nigerian organisational context characterised by high power distance, ethnic diversity, sector heterogeneity, and a rapidly professionalising formal workforce offers a valuable and significantly underutilised laboratory for advancing organisational behaviour theory beyond its predominantly Anglo American foundations.

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