

## Leading for Impact: Exploration of Leadership Styles and Organizational Performance

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### Abstract

Numerous studies have shown that leadership style is a crucial factor in the success and growth of an organization in an environment as volatile as the current one. This study tests how leadership styles affect organizational effectiveness in Albanian agricultural enterprises. To determine this effect in a different context, the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), a previously validated instrument, was used. Furthermore, managers and staff members from three different businesses participated in qualitative interviews to gain a deeper understanding and contextualize the results. According to these interviews, transformational leadership fosters an atmosphere that values creativity, strategic clarity, and employee empowerment. Individualized attention, inspired motivation, and idealized influence are among its key traits. On the other hand, stagnation, sometimes accompanied by a lack of creativity and a reduced sense of corporate responsibility, was commonly associated with passive leadership styles. In line with earlier work, this study, using both quantitative and qualitative evidence, supports the notion that transformational leadership has a positive impact on organizational effectiveness. In developing nations like Albania, where inclusive and flexible leadership is essential for sustained success, this study has ramifications for performance evaluations and leadership development.

**Keywords:** Transformational Leadership, Organizational Effectiveness, Leadership Styles, Innovation, Organizational Culture.

**JEL classification:** L26, M12.

### Introduction

Nowadays, many organizations face challenges such as unethical business practices, high staff turnover, and slow economic growth, among others (Varma *et al.*, 2024). This could be because there aren't enough strong leaders. There are several leadership styles available, including transactional leadership, autocratic leadership, democratic leadership, participative management, and transformational management (Piwowar-Sulej and Iqbal, 2023). A leader is a person who inspires, directs, and persuades people to perform specific responsibilities in order to fulfill the organization's objectives (Varma *et al.*, 2024).

Transformational leadership is considered one of the leadership theories that has attracted the attention of numerous leadership scholars for more than two decades, even though the concepts of the transformational leadership model are not particularly new and can be found in the writings of previous management theorists (Muenjohn and Armstrong, 2008).

Employee engagement, performance, innovation, and organizational adaptability are just a few of the outcomes that are influenced by leadership, which is widely acknowledged as a critical predictor of organizational effectiveness (Yukl, 1989).

In industries like agribusiness, where businesses must deal with structural informality, scarce resources, and a heavy reliance on seasonal labor, leadership becomes more important.

Effective leadership is crucial in these situations; however, there remains a dearth of empirical research on the subject, particularly in emerging nations where institutional and organizational dynamics often diverge from those in developed markets.

Much research has provided light on the causes of employee engagement. Different leadership styles, including transformational leadership have been recognized as strong predictors of engagement (Breevaart and Bakker, 2018). Empowering leadership has also been found to influence work engagement through psychological empowerment and person-job-group fit (Mehmood and Saeed, 2021).

Transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire (or passive) leadership have become the most prevalent frameworks among the various types of leadership identified by leadership theories (Bass and Avolio, 1994). Transformational leadership encourages followers to prioritize the greater good over their interests by expressing a clear vision, stimulating intellectual curiosity, and offering targeted assistance (Bass, 1999; Podsakoff *et al.*, 1990). It has often been related to increased employee happiness, innovation, and organizational effectiveness (Judge and Piccolo, 2004).

On the other hand, transactional leadership is based on explicit interactions between the leader and followers, as well as the provision of dependent benefits. It frequently works well for completing tasks and achieving short-term objectives, but it has less impact on long-term organizational change and intrinsic motivation (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt and Van Engen, 2003). Conversely, laissez-faire leadership has been linked to poor performance and job dissatisfaction, characterized by a reluctance to take on responsibility or make decisions (Skogstad *et al.*, 2007).

Although recent research has focused on entrepreneurial leadership style, progress has been hampered by a lack of conceptual development and appropriate instruments for measuring leaders' entrepreneurial attributes and activities (Renko *et al.*, 2015).

Furthermore, little is known about how leadership works in Albania's agricultural firms, which operate in a highly transitory and informal institutional environment. Albanian agribusinesses encounter distinct structural constraints, such as fragmented land ownership, restricted access to finance, seasonal employment, and a lack of structured leadership development programs, making leadership an important but underappreciated component in performance. Unlike organizations in developed countries, Albanian managers frequently rely on experience-based and relational leadership rather than established procedures or leadership training. As a result, there is a significant research gap in understanding how transformational, transactional, and passive leadership styles emerge and impact success in today's changing economic and cultural climate. By focusing on an understudied environment and merging several organizational views, the study aims to reveal insights that are both practical and academically useful for building leadership and enhancing performance in agriculture. This concept has both practical and academic implications for establishing leadership and improving performance in agriculture.

## 1. Literature review

The existing literature has extensively acknowledged the influence of leadership styles on organizational success, particularly in terms of how various approaches affect employee behavior and outcomes.

Transformational or charismatic leadership occupies a central place in leadership research as a style that places greater emphasis on elements such as charisma and emotions, while also emphasizing follower motivation and development (Strukan, Nikolić and Sefić, 2017).

Transformational leadership is defined by four dimensions: idealized influence,

intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and individualized consideration (Bass and Avolio, 1994). Leaders who display this approach choose to encourage followers to put their own interests aside for the good of the organization, and this, in many cases, increases commitment, innovation, and discretionary effort. (Judge and Piccolo, 2004; Podsakoff et al., 1990).

On the other hand, transactional leadership tends to produce results that are frequently limited to the accomplishment of short-term goals, even while it helps manage daily operations, focus on reward-punishment systems, and schedule activities restricts its ability to promote long-term innovation or staff development (Azzahra, Savandha and Syarif, 2024). Leaders who employ transactional methods, such as articulating clear expectations, offering established standards, and avoiding ambiguity, are more likely to gain the trust and obedience of their followers in uncertain or rapidly changing conditions (Vasilic and Brkovic, 2017).

While, laissez-faire or passive/avoidant leadership is distinguished by a lack of involvement and support from leaders, which is frequently regarded as inefficient or damaging (Choque et al., 2014; Tosunoglu, 2016). These leaders step in only when situations become urgent, avoid proactive decision-making, and fail to anticipate challenges (Bass and Avolio, 2004; Judge and Piccolo, 2004b).

Numerous studies have found that relationship-oriented leadership styles are associated with higher performance and satisfaction (Chen and Silverthorne, 2005). Laissez-faire leadership, characterized by its avoidance of decision-making and infrequent feedback, is likely to be associated with low organizational performance and employee dissatisfaction (Skogstad et al., 2007). For this reason, this style often signals disengagement and a leadership vacuum or absence, which can lead to poor coordination, demotivation, and unclear accountability (Bass and Avolio, 2011).

Researchers believe that leadership activities influence subordinates' behaviors, as well as their own and the organization's results, which affect outcomes such as goal achievement and group performance. Employee engagement evaluations are one of the most used approaches for measuring an organization's effectiveness. Surveys and structured questionnaires are frequently used to assess elements like as emotional involvement, dedication, and alignment with the organization's fundamental beliefs (Sundaray, 2011). Higher levels of engagement, a necessary component for attaining long-term strategic success, are typically fostered by leadership philosophies that prioritize employee support, acknowledgment, and involvement (Alhmoud and Al-Kasasbeh, 2024; Sokolic et al., 2024). Research indicates a direct correlation between higher motivation and employee-oriented leadership, suggesting that leaders who engage with their workforce experience improvements in performance and organizational resilience (Sokolic et al., 2024).

Another critical factor that is impacted by leadership style is the function of organizational culture. An organization's internal culture is largely shaped and maintained by its leaders, with a direct impact on performance results (Hariyati, 2024). Leaders who prioritize communication, inclusivity, and creativity are more likely to foster a supportive and cooperative culture that aligns with corporate objectives. Performance is further enhanced by this kind of setting, which promotes strategic alignment and shared values (Hariyati, 2024).

Numerous studies have shown that transformational leadership and organizational success are significantly positively correlated in a variety of industries, including food production and agriculture (Antonakis, 2012; Bacha, 2014).

On the other hand, transactions or agreements between the leader and the follower are the foundation of transactional leadership. It places a strong emphasis on performance monitoring, reward and punishment schemes, and explicit work assignments (Bass and Avolio, 1994). While often effective in stable environments where routines dominate, transactional

leadership has been found to produce only short-term compliance rather than long-term engagement (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt and Van Engen, 2003). However, in some resource-constrained environments, such as agriculture in poor economies, transactional leadership can provide structure and clarity, increasing efficiency (Nyamota, Kiambi and Mburugu, 2024)

These results emphasize the necessity of establishing practical leadership competencies and investing in leadership development programs to improve organizational effectiveness and adapt to today's fast-paced business environment (Irianti, Syarifuddin and Haerani, 2024).

According to Azahra et al. (2024) and Alhmoud & Al-Kasa (2024) findings a strong factor in higher employee motivation and engagement, which in turn improves organizational performance, is transformational leadership. This kind of leadership fosters a feeling of purpose, encourages innovation, and motivates teams with an inspiring vision, all of which improve overall business success.

According to studies, transformational leadership is more effective than transactional leadership, even though both strategies enhance performance (Danso et al., 2019). While transformational leadership is critical for increasing organizational efficiency, other styles, like as transactional and servant leadership, can be beneficial in some situations (Irianti et al., 2024).

## 2. Methodology

If style measurement is plagued with uncertainty and criticism, yet this research community understands the value of psychometric rigor, what style tests do they recommend (Peterson, Rayner, and Armstrong, 2009)? To examine the correlation between leadership styles and perceived organizational effectiveness in Albania's agricultural sector, this study employed a quantitative research design.

The study was conducted at three significant Albanian agricultural firms that represent various aspects of the national food value chain.

Company 1, founded in 1993, is a joint-stock company (SHA) that leads a diverse conglomerate involved in the import and export of food and industrial items. It has a nationwide distribution network that serves both urban and rural markets, and it is regarded as one of the top firms for staff training and development.

Company 2, established in 2003 as a limited liability company, is Albania's largest domestic supermarket chain, managing a wide retail network in major cities and smaller towns with a hierarchical and operationally structured management style.

Company 3, created in 2007, is a limited liability business (SH.P.K) that produces meat and food byproducts. It has grown into a rapidly expanding meat processing company situated in Korça, combining process optimization and strategic modernization with goals to export to regional markets.

The online questionnaire was distributed to 500 employees and managers from the three companies. Of these, 325 genuine responses were collected: 110 from Company 1, 105 from Company 2, and 105 from Company 3, for a 65% total response rate. Among respondents, 56% were male and 44% female, with an average work experience of 5 years. To ensure balanced representation across departments and organizational levels, the responses came from all organizational levels, including supervisors, mid-level managers, and operational workers, ensuring a diverse perspective on leadership and performance.

Participants were told about the study's objectives and confidentiality guidelines, and their participation was fully voluntary and anonymous. Data collection adhered to the principles of informed consent, confidentiality, and transparency as outlined by institutional and international research ethical guidelines.

The study utilized the use of the officially licensed version of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ Form 5X-Short), which was obtained from Mind Garden, Inc., and allows

for the approved use of the instrument designed by Bass and Avolio (1994). The instrument has been widely verified in many cultural contexts and is still one of the most dependable measures for evaluating transformational, transactional, and passive-avoidant leadership styles (Bass and Avolio, 2011).

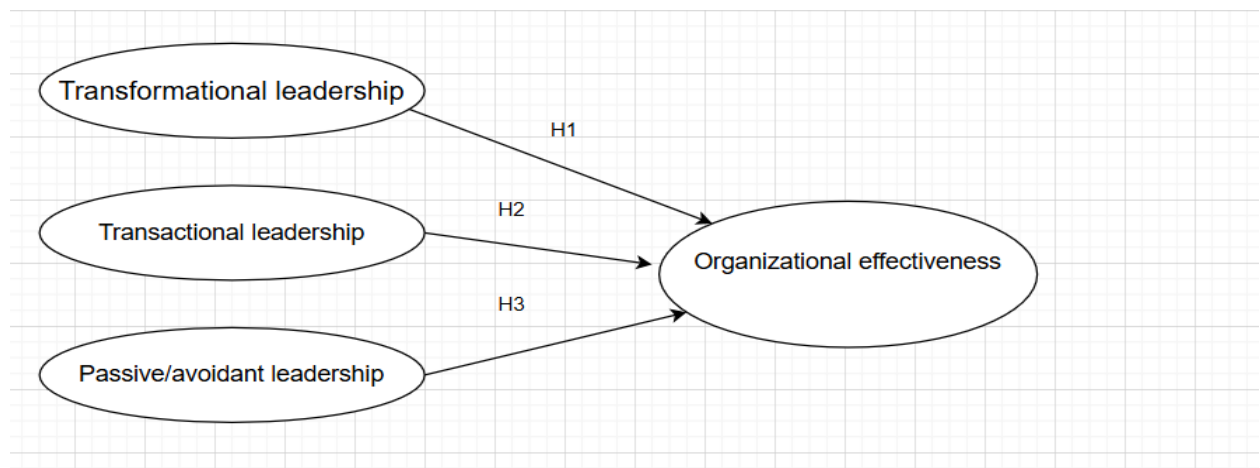
Based on Bass and Avolio's (1994) Full Range Leadership theory, the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) serves as a tool to assess various leadership styles and is used in this study to evaluate leadership styles. Through several sub-dimensions, the MLQ assesses three primary leadership philosophies: transactional, transformational, and passive avoidant. Additionally, elements related to organizational outcomes, including effectiveness, satisfaction, and additional effort, were included in the instrument. The MLQ was adapted into an online questionnaire format using Google Forms, maintaining the original structure and Likert-type response scales to ensure validity and comparability with existing literature. Based on the previous literature and on the content of the MLQ questionnaire, we continue with three hypotheses:

H1: Transformational leadership style positively affects organizational effectiveness.

H2: Transactional leadership style negatively affects organizational effectiveness.

H3: Passive avoidant leadership style negatively affects organizational effectiveness.

Figure 1 below shows the hypothesis and relations that the study aims to test.



**Figure 1:** The Impact of Leadership Styles on Organizational Effectiveness

Source: Authors

The organizational effectiveness construct is measured by items as in Table 1.

**Table 1:** The composition of the organizational effectiveness construct

Construct	Sample Items
Leadership	<i>Leaders demonstrate integrity and ethical behavior. Management communicates a clear vision and direction.</i>
Strategy	<i>The organization has a well-defined strategic plan. Employees understand how their roles align with organizational goals.</i>
Culture	<i>Organizational culture promotes collaboration and innovation. Diversity and inclusion are valued and practiced.</i>
Innovation	<i>Employees are encouraged to propose new ideas. The organization invests in research and development.</i>
Structures, Systems, and Processes	<i>Processes are streamlined and efficient. Organizational structure supports effective communication.</i>



Skills and Competencies	<i>Employees have access to necessary training and development. Skill gaps are identified and addressed promptly.</i>
Performance Measures and Reward Systems	<i>Performance metrics are clearly defined and communicated. Reward systems are aligned with performance outcomes.</i>
Environmental, Sustainability, and Responsibility	<i>The organization actively engages in sustainable practices. Corporate social responsibility initiatives are in place.</i>

### 3. Results and discussion

The statistical analysis attempted to investigate the relationship between three Albanian agricultural firms perceived organizational success and their respective transformational, transactional, and passive-avoidant leadership styles. The data were examined in SPSS using multiple linear regression to assess how well each leadership style predicted differences in perceived effectiveness. Before analysis, the MLQ dimensions' reliability was checked, as well as the normality and multicollinearity assumptions.

Descriptive data showed that all three organizations had moderate to high levels of transformational leadership behaviors, whereas transactional and passive-avoidant tendencies were relatively low. The regression models provided in Table 2 below summarize the predicted impacts of each leadership dimension on organizational success for the three participating companies.

**Table 2:** Results from regression analyses for three companies

#### Company 1

Factors	Coefficient (B)	Standard Error	t-value	p-value
const	0.1529	0.3317	0.4608	0.6459
transformational	1.0509	0.0959	10.9628	0
transactional	-0.016	0.084	-0.1909	0.849
passive_avoidant	-0.1046	0.0747	-1.4005	0.1643

#### Company 2

Factors	Coefficient (B)	Standard Error	t-value	p-value
const	0.9557	0.2968	3.2203	0.0017
transformational	0.7286	0.0888	8.2041	0
transactional	0.1812	0.0821	2.2075	0.0295
passive avoidant	-0.1847	0.0562	-3.2837	0.0014

#### Company 3

Factors	Coefficient (B)	Standard Error	t-value	p-value
const	-0.0203	0.2474	-0.0821	0.9348
transformational	1.0095	0.0806	12.5243	0
transactional	0.0621	0.09	0.6909	0.4912
passive avoidant	-0.1008	0.0416	-2.421	0.0172

**Source:** Authors, processed in SPSS

Regression analysis results from three Albanian agriculture enterprises provide essential information about the impact of transformative, transactional, and passive/avoidant leadership styles on perceived organizational effectiveness. A substantial and statistically significant predictor of organizational performance in Company 1 is transformational leadership ( $B = 1.051$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This finding suggests that workers are more likely to assess their company as effective if they believe its executives are motivating, forward-thinking, and encouraging. It appears that typical exchange-based leadership or a lack of leadership is not linked to perceived effectiveness in this situation, as neither transactional leadership ( $B = -0.016$ ,  $p = 0.849$ ) nor

passive/avoidant leadership ( $B = -0.105$ ,  $p = 0.164$ ) has a significant impact.

Although they differ in strength and direction, Company 2's three leadership ideologies all show statistically significant relationships. Again, transformational leadership displays a substantial and favorable impact ( $B = 0.729$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), confirming its position as a crucial factor in effectiveness. It's interesting to note that there is a positive and substantial correlation between transactional leadership and transformational behaviors in this business ( $B = 0.181$ ,  $p = 0.030$ ). This suggests that transformational behaviors may be enhanced by a more structured, reward-based leadership style. However, effectiveness and avoidant or passive leadership are negatively correlated ( $B = -0.185$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ), suggesting that disengaged or absentee leadership seriously impairs perceptions of organizational performance.

Consistent with results from the other two firms, transformational leadership remains a strong and significant predictor of effectiveness in Company 3 ( $B = 1.010$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). However, passive/avoidant leadership has a substantial adverse effect ( $B = -0.101$ ,  $p = 0.017$ ) and transactional leadership has no meaningful influence ( $B = 0.062$ ,  $p = 0.491$ ), indicating once more that ineffective or absent leadership behaviors negatively impact organizational outcomes.

Transformational leadership consistently demonstrates the most significant impact on organizational effectiveness across all three businesses, underscoring the importance of inspiration, vision, and tailored support in enhancing performance in the agricultural industry. Only Company 2 has demonstrated a notable beneficial impact, suggesting that the function of transactional leadership is context-dependent.

In the meantime, organizational effectiveness is continuously harmed by inactive or avoidant leadership, particularly in Companies 2 and 3. These results underscore the importance for firms to develop leaders who are emotionally intelligent, engaged, and goal-oriented.

## Conclusions

This study examines how leadership styles affect organizational effectiveness in the Albanian agricultural sector. This study combines quantitative data from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) and qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews to emphasize the importance of transformational leadership in fostering innovation and increasing employee engagement. Transformational leadership was consistently connected with increased perceived organizational success, particularly through its sub-dimensions of Inspirational Motivation, Idealized Influence, and Individualized Consideration. Passive leadership styles, on the other hand, were seen as contributing to organizational stagnation and disengagement, whereas transactional leadership had no impact on long-term strategic objectives.

These findings underscore the importance of agriculture enterprises in emerging economies investing in leadership development programs that foster transformative competencies. Furthermore, the study reveals that contextual characteristics such as organizational culture and structural informality influence leadership effectiveness, emphasizing the significance of adaptable and inclusive leadership approaches. This study makes a significant contribution to the ongoing discussion on leadership effectiveness, filling a gap in the literature on leadership in transitional economies. Future research could build on these findings by using longitudinal designs and investigating the mediating influence of corporate atmosphere or employee perceptions.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study expands the application of Full Range Leadership Theory (Bass and Avolio, 2011) to the setting of transitional and emerging economies, notably the Albanian agriculture sector, where empirical evidence has been scarce. By combining quantitative MLQ results with qualitative insights, the study validates

transformational, transactional, and passive-avoidant leadership aspects in an underexplored environment. The findings show that transformational leadership consistently predicts organizational effectiveness, even in the presence of institutional informality and little administrative structure, demonstrating the theory's universal validity.

The study also has practical implications for leaders, managers, and policymakers in Albania's agriculture sector. First, it emphasizes the importance of structured leadership development programs that improve transformational qualities, including individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation. Second, it implies that organizations in emerging markets can improve organizational performance not simply through technological modernization, but also by cultivating a culture of empowerment and trust. Finally, the findings might help HR departments and training institutes develop evidence-based leadership programs that address the unique difficulties of agricultural firms in transitional economies.

### Limitations and Future Research

Despite its contribution, this study has several limitations. First, the study included only three agricultural enterprises in Albania, which may limit the applicability of the findings to other sectors or countries. Second, the data's cross-sectional character limits its capacity to draw causal inferences regarding the relationship between leadership styles and organizational performance. Third, primary data collected through surveys and interviews, which are based on participants' perceptions, may be subject to bias.

Future study could examine broadening the sample to include a broader range of businesses from various industries and areas. Longitudinal research would also provide a more complete picture of how leadership styles affect organizational outcomes over time. Furthermore, investigating moderating or mediating variables, such as organizational culture, psychological empowerment, or employee well-being, may enhance the theoretical foundation and practical applicability of future studies.

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