

# Transformational Leadership and Accountability Performance of the Employees in the Public Sector

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## ABSTRACT

**Context & Research Problem:** This study explores the impact of transformational leadership on teachers' accountability performance in a public college in Bangladesh. The research addresses the problem of how principals' leadership styles, characterized by motivation, inspiration, and a shared vision, affect teachers' responsibilities and accountability, both positively and negatively. **Methodology & Instrument:** A qualitative case study approach was used, involving interviews with eight teachers with varying levels of experience to gather insights into their perceptions of transformational leadership. **Thematic analysis** was conducted on the interview data to identify key patterns and trends. **Results:** Findings reveal that transformational leadership positively influences the accountability of motivated, engaged teachers. These teachers reported feeling more responsible, proactive, and committed to their duties under principals who practiced transformational leadership. However, the study also identified a drawback: less motivated teachers sometimes took advantage of the autonomy and trust associated with this leadership style, neglecting some responsibilities. **Significance:** The significance of this study will lie in its contribution to understanding the complexities of applying transformational leadership in public educational institutions in Bangladesh. It will highlight both the potential positive outcomes, and the challenges associated with transformational leadership. The findings are expected to suggest that while transformational leadership will enhance accountability among dedicated teachers, additional oversight mechanisms may be needed to address performance gaps among less motivated staff.

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Context & Research Problem**

Employees and organizations perform within different accountability relationships (Frink & Klimoski, 1998; Lerner & Tetlock, 1999). Holding the employees accountable for their performances is essential for achieving organizational goals. The public sector organizations have been using accountability-provoking practices: rewards and penalties, systems of measurement and evaluation, reporting and job descriptions (Kettl & Kelman, 2007; Romzek, 2014). Leadership is associated to the purposeful process of emphasizing one's influence on the others to structure, guide, and facilitate actions and relationships in a team or organization. An appropriate leadership style is essential in this regard for creating different opportunities and for letting the employees take part in the process of decision-making (Torlak et al., 2021) and thus motivating them to fulfil accountability performance. This study tries to explore the impact of transformational leadership on teachers' accountability performance in a public college in Bangladesh.

### **1.2 Academic Research Gap**

Although the existing literature extensively studies the features of TL, however the mechanism of the transformational leaders applied to influence the behaviours of the followers is not well researched (Henker et al., 2015). In the context of Bangladesh Chowdhary.

et al. (2023) studied the teachers' and principals' perceptions about different leadership styles of the principals including transformational leadership style. However, there study did not reveal the impacts of transformational leadership styles on the accountability performance of the teachers. Therefore, a detailed study is urgent to understand the influence of TL on the accountability performance of the teachers. Avolio et al. (2004) also seeks detailed research to understand how TL influences the outcomes of the employees. Moreover, the existing literatures did not study the impact of TL on the employee accountability performance in public organizations. In this background, this study aims to find out how TL influences employee accountability performance in the public sector organizations through a case study of a public college in Bangladesh.

### **1.3 Rationales**

Transformational Leadership (TL) approaches have been found to be effective in increasing organizational performance through democratization and creating a participatory and motivating environment (Budur & Poturak, 2021). TL appears to be appropriate for securing employees' support and involvement in the achievement of organizational goals for its clarification of goals and the commitment towards the achievement of those goals (Jong & Faerman, 2020; Moynihan et al., 2011). Transformational leaders are those who effectively operate an organization by helping subordinates face endless challenges. They inspire and energize their followers to take more responsibilities by providing them with higher identities, ambitions, and enhanced emotional empowerment (Bartram & Casimir, 2007; Aryee et al., 2012). They possess the charisma to elevate the performance level of their followers by motivating and stimulating them to perform beyond their own expectations (Khanin, 2007). Transformational leadership, having charisma, creative inspiration, and care for the followers (Bass & Avolio, 1994), is positively related to employee commitments and outcomes, satisfaction, customer orientation, and overall organizational effectiveness (Budur & Poturak, 2021).

Organizational innovation is believed to be essential for the sustainable performance of organizations in the current competitive and challenging environment (Jia et al., 2018). The performance of the organizations is greatly influenced by the innovative behavior of the employees (Pieterse et al., 2010), as the employees of any organization initiate and implement all innovations (Amabile, 1996). Therefore, stimulating innovative behavior among followers is a crucial characteristic of leaders in an organizational atmosphere (Pieterse et al., 2010). The theories of transformational leadership portray that stimulating innovation from the followers is the core function of TL (Bass, 1995). Jiang (2017) depicts that the Transformational Leadership style influences employees' behavioral outcomes to a great extent. The research aims to address the problem of how principals' leadership styles, characterized by motivation, inspiration, and a shared vision, affect teachers' responsibilities and accountability, both positively and negatively.

#### 1.4 Research Objectives

- (i) **To examine the presence and extent of transformational leadership (TL) practices** within public sector organizations in Bangladesh, with a particular focus on government colleges. This objective aims to explore how TL manifests in day-to-day leadership behaviours, policies, and interactions, and whether its core components, such as shared vision, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation, are actively demonstrated by institutional leaders.
- (ii) **To assess the influence of transformational leadership on the accountability performance of employees, particularly teachers**, in public sector educational institutions. This objective aims to determine whether and how TL contributes to shaping teachers' professional behaviors, motivation, sense of responsibility, and performance outcomes, thereby offering insights into leadership's role in fostering a culture of accountability.
- (iii) **To identify the key challenges and institutional barriers that hinder the effective practice of transformational leadership**, and to analyze how these barriers influence the accountability structures within the organization. This includes exploring factors such as tenure insecurity, political interference, bureaucratic rigidity, and cultural resistance, and their implications on how leadership is exercised and perceived.

#### 1.5 Research Questions

- Is TL practiced in Bangladeshi public sector organizations?
- Does TL influence the accountability performance of the teachers of the public colleges?
- Are there any obstacles that hinder the practice of TL in public sector organizations in Bangladesh?

#### 1.6 Significance

The significance of this study will lie in its contribution to understanding the complexities of applying transformational leadership in public educational institutions in Bangladesh and other public organizations to realize the impacts of TL in increasing organizational performance through augmented employee accountability performances. It will highlight both the potential positive outcomes, and the challenges associated with transformational leadership. The findings are expected to suggest that while transformational leadership will enhance

accountability among dedicated teachers, additional oversight mechanisms may be needed to address performance gaps among less motivated staff.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Transformational Leadership

Transformational Leaders make the employees aware of their true potential and thus inspire them to perform beyond the mentioned responsibilities in their job description (Jung & Yoon, 2012), creating a supportive atmosphere and psychological empowerment (Dust et al., 2013; Kim & Shin, 2019; Pradhan et al., 2017; Krishnan, 2012). These motivate the employees to perform beyond their assigned duties because they feel respected and trustworthy (Zhang & Zhang, 2016). Involvement of employees in the process of decision-making under transformational leaders empowers the employees psychologically (Kim & Fernandez, 2017). Consequently, the employees become more loyal to the organization and perform better than before (Singh & Singh, 2018). Moreover, TL aligns persons with visions, inspires and motivates them through effective communication (Plecas et al., 2018). TL also offers different support to employees of the organization and persuades them to help the organization attain its goals (Korejan & Shahbazi, 2016). Under the TL model, the leaders motivate their followers to sacrifice their own interests and possess a significant impact on their followers (Robbins & Judge, 2017). Besides impacting the effectiveness of the employees (Bogar, 2019), transformational leaders take care of the needs of the followers, help them face and solve problems in new ways, and inspire them to invest more efforts in achieving organizational goals. They also respond to their followers with a higher degree of commitment (Robbins & Judge, 2017).

The fundamental precept of the TL model is that the leaders have the capacity to shape their organizations, and they can ensure expected employee performance outcomes by clearly sharing the organizational vision with the employees and inspiring them (Bass, 1999; Hostrup & Andersen, 2020). Robbins & Judge (2017) mentioned that Transformational Leadership has four features:

**Idealized Influence** - TL conveys the organizational mission and vision to the employees implants a feeling of pride in them and earns trust and respect. Transformational leaders are found as be role models among their employees;

**Inspirational Motivation** - Transformational leaders invest more time and effort to develop a team spirit among their followers. They help employees engage themselves in the organization's goal achievement by implanting enthusiasm in them, conveying high expectations, and explaining the organizational mission and vision clearly;

**Intellectual Stimulation** - Transformational leaders provide intellectual stimulation to their followers to improve rationality, intelligence, and problem-solving capacity. They do it through encouraging innovation, creativity, and independent decision-making; and

**Individualized Consideration** - Transformational leaders pay one-to-one attention to the unique requirements of the employees. They try to develop employee potential by providing support, arranging necessary training, and instructing them to attain their potential. Under this style, the leaders motivate and inspire by developing compelling visions, spreading the visions, and developing close relations with the followers. The impact of TL on Employee Performance can be presented as the Figure 1:

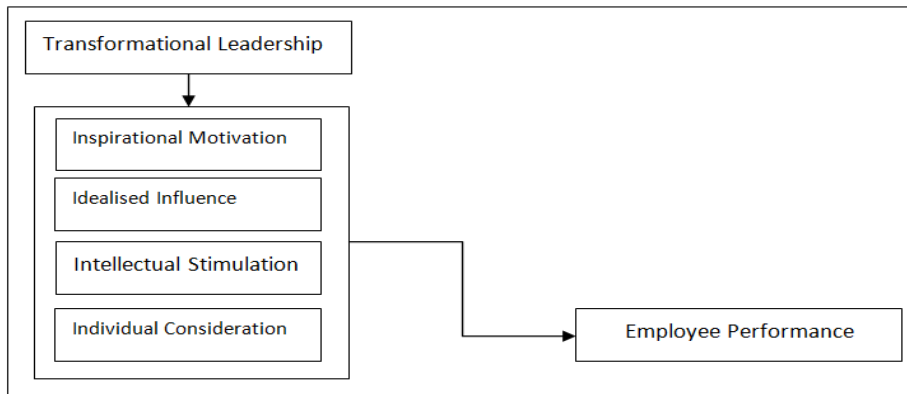


Figure 1: TL's Influence on Employee Performance

## 2.2 Accountability and Accountability Performance

### 2.2.1 Accountability

Social policy researchers consider accountability as one of the major concepts. This accountability lies in the centre of activities of both private and public sector from which different groups of stakeholders receives services. For the last few decades, accountability has been considered the panacea for resolving the intricacies regarding ethical governance, the establishment of democracy and justice, and delivery of services in the private and public sectors (Ebrahim & Weisband, 2007). However, defining this accountability comprises a high degree of debate and complexity (Patton, 1992) as various languages, motifs, and ideologies influence the definition of accountability (Sinclair, 1995). Existing accounting literature depicts a continuous debate on accountability concepts. Some researchers interpreted accountability as a method of legitimizing that reports activities of organizations in objective and passive manners (Schweiker, 1993; Shearer, 2002). On this basis, accountability may be termed as the act of providing accounts to some authority (Roberts & Scapens, 1985; Mulgan, 2000). Occasionally, accountability is explained as a formal official procedure of administrative practices (Sinclair, 1995; Walker, 2016). It is also defined as the process through which a party accepts responsibility for its actions and justifies its approaches (Emanuel & Emanuel, 1996; Day & Klein, 1987).

Teacher accountability is believed to be one of the most important elements in the teaching-learning process (Sacks, 1998; Knight, 2008). Dixon & McGregor (2011) defined teacher accountability as a system of professional development and evaluation that confirms continuous professional capacity development to satisfy the changing demands of the students. Teacher accountability endeavors to trace the instructional performance of the teachers, their responsibility, and their students' performance (Knight, 2008). Accountable teachers pay attention to the learning outcomes, enthusiasm, and academic achievements of their students (Lauermann & Karabenick, 2013; Buese, 2005). Kanika (2016) classified teachers' accountability as accountability to students, accountability to the community, accountability to humanity and values, accountability to the profession, and accountability to the country. Barton et al. (1986) mentioned four features of teachers' accountability: (1) moral accountability – the feeling that the teachers are responsible to the stakeholders, including students and their parents; (2) professional accountability – the feeling of responsibility to self and colleagues; (3) legal accountability – the accountability towards the employer; (4) intellectual accountability – represents the awareness of the teachers about being within a special discipline.

### 2.2.2 Accountability Performance

Employee accountability has become an important focal point in academic research, primarily in applied psychology and business (Lerner & Tetlock, 1999; Hall et al., 2017). A significant number of research have found that the employee accountability has positive impacts on outcomes of the employees: engagement (Cullinane et al., 2014), job satisfaction (Thoms et al., 2002; Breaux et al., 2009), organizational citizenship behaviour (Hall et al., 2009), job performance (Frink and Ferris, 1998; Chen et al., 2016) and ethical behaviour (Mackey et al., 2016). Besides, employee accountability studies have also obtained mounting attention in the public sector to predict employees' individual outcomes (Dubnick, 2011; Yang, 2012; Velotti & Justice, 2016). Employee accountability represents the expectation that an employee may be asked to provide an account for the performance or non-performance of any duties assigned with the belief that there will be consequences on the basis of the evaluation (Han & Perry, 2019). Employee accountability performance is represented by the tasks accurately performed by someone employed by any organization. The actions of the employees are subject to measurement, evaluation and appraisal. Employees' performance may be measured by comparing their performance with that of the effectively performing coworkers (Buil et al., 2019). Dinc and Aydemir (2014) defined employee accountability in two ways: in-role and extra-role performance. According to them, fulfilling the requirements mentioned in the job descriptions is called in-role performance, and performing beyond the requirements of the job description is termed as extra-role performance. Romzek and Dubnick (1987) related public accountability with public sector employee accountability stating public accountability as the approaches by which the public organizations and their employees discharge their accountability to the stakeholders.

### 2.3 Transformational Leadership and Employee Performance in Public Sector

Formal leaders have the ability to influence the process of establishing a structure of shared leadership (Carson et al., 2007). However, some researchers argue that effective team leadership may arise regardless of the presence of formal leadership authority (Pearce, 2004; Gronn, 2002). For instance, the leaders who are appointed may have team members with enough experience and developed capacity of team leadership (Day et al., 2004). Especially in the case of public organizations, the elected or appointed leaders for a fixed tenure cannot build up teams to assemble or recruit employees of their own choice because of the legislative protection provided to the tenured public servants (Miller, 2012).

It is applicable for bureaucracies in the street-level (Lipsky, 2010), where employees enjoy more independence and the opportunity to engage themselves in informal roles (Vinzant & Crothers, 1996). Shared leadership style in public sector organizations encounters a few difficulties in coordination and motivation. For instance, the presence of multiple leaders of similar status creates role ambiguity, organizational conflicts, and complexity (Grissom, 2011; Murphy et al., 2016; Harris, 2004). Moreover, where employees in public sector have multiple persons in leadership position, they experience goal ambiguity and goals conflict hampering organization target achievement (Chun, 2005). In this circumstance, TL is effective as the missions and visions are clarified to the employees by the transformational leader (Wright et al., 2011; Moynihan et al., 2011). Under TL the leaders clarify the steps to be taken by the employees to contribute to organizational target achievement (Taylor, 2013).

One of the key reasons behind the effectiveness of TL is that the leaders can develop compelling visions (Wright & Pandey, 2010). Instead of requesting the followers, the transformational leaders influence them to emphasize on the organizational target achievement by aligning individual goals of the public servants and the organization's vision (Bro & Jensen,

2020; Paarlberg and Lvigna, 2010). Moreover, Transformational Leaders promote teamwork through applying charisma and improving communication among team members (Ramadass et al., 2018; Hostrup & Andersen, 2020) which strengthen the team members.

#### **2.4 Transformational Leadership and Employee Performance in Educational Institute**

Leadership is similar for public sector, private sector and educational institutes (Bryman, 2007). A right model of leadership allows the employees to take part in the decision-making process and ensures great opportunities for the organization (Torlak et al., 2021). Democratic and Transformational styles of leadership are considered to be the two best models of leadership for ensuring performance (Budur, 2020; Budur & Poturak, 2021). An efficient leadership is strongly and directly connected to efficient communication (Budur, 2018; Agnew, 2019) and the communication skill of the leaders influence their team performance. Different prior studies found significant positive impacts of Transformational Leadership on the performance of the teachers (Wallenius et al., 2020). Transformational leadership style of the leaders of schools can ameliorate the performance of the teachers (Madjid & Samsudin, 2021). This was depicted through the Bass Theory (Robbins & Judge, 2017), which described TL as the style of leadership in which the leader can influence followers in different ways. Moreover, the styles of leadership of the principals of educational institutions have impacts on the attitudes of staffs and teachers, and students' academic achievement (Waters et al., 2003; Bogler, 2005; Shava & Heystek, 2015).

Transformational Leadership is a well-accepted form of ideal practice in educational institutes (Hallinger, 2003). Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) state that TL is an ideal style of leadership for the principals of schools striving for significant reformation as it helps change management and promotes positive results such as an improved environment of schools and enhanced relationships between teachers and staff. They also showed TL as the capacity to reform, develop a collective vision, and distribute leadership in a time of developing a cultured environment for promoting positive academic change in schools. Transformational leaders develop an organizational atmosphere (Hallinger, 2003) in which teachers engage themselves in a continuous learning process where they share learning with their peers. The teachers under transformational leadership work in teams in schools, identify their own goals, and correlate that with the organizational goals.

This method is considered to raise the commitment of the employees who relate their own goals with an organizational mission (Lambert, 2002). Through the study of the process of school restructuring many studies found that TL significantly contributes in the improvement of schools' overall performance (Leithwood, 1994). However, a combination of Instructional Leadership and transformational Leadership is the ideal leadership style in educational institutes, considering the advantages and disadvantages related to the two styles (Marks & Printy, 2003; Hallinger, 2003).

In summary, there are a significant number of studies showing the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance in both the private and public sectors. However, this literature review found a scarcity of research showing the relationship between transformational leadership and employee accountability performance specifically in public education sector organizations. Case studies of educational institutions in the public sector may contribute in filling the gap.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Overview of Research Methodology

The purpose of study was to find out how the transformational leadership influences the accountability performance of the teachers in government colleges of Bangladesh. A qualitative research design is the most effective way to examine and comprehend the employee perception of a specific style of leadership (Cozby & Bates, 2012). Because this allows the participants to talk and explain independently. Qualitative research is appropriate for reaching the base concepts of a central phenomenon (Yates & Leggett, 2016). Moreover, a case study helps the researchers find out the best answers of how and why questions (Yin, 2009). Therefore, to concentrate on the perceptions of the interview participants, the central phenomenon, a qualitative case study approach, was applied to explore and explain the findings (Yates & Leggett, 2016).

#### 3.2 Research Design

To collect qualitative data, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews of the teachers of different levels with different experience levels. The teachers answered 12 open-ended questions. A purposive stratified sampling method was used for conducting the study. To ensure data saturation, the research questions were supplemented with additional questions beyond the pre-designed questions. All of the interviewees signed their answer scripts after reading the answers written by the researcher. A copy of the signed interview script was given to the participants to ensure the accuracy through member checking.

#### 3.3 Population, Sample & Instrument

The target population of the case study was the teachers of a government college of Bangladesh. To be considered for this research, the participants must have been teachers of the college. Since the study aimed to find out the impact of transformational leadership on the performance of the employees of the public sector of Bangladesh, the study interviewed the teachers of a government college.

Six Teachers: Lecturers, Assistant Professors, Associate Professors and Professors were recruited by the researchers as interview participants. In selecting the participants, the researcher used the purposive stratified sampling method because, in the case of information-rich qualitative research, the purposive sampling method gives a set of suggestions to use with the study of the case (Palinkas et al., 2015). Furthermore, purposive sampling helps the researchers define the characteristics to reach the core of the research (Yin, 2013). To avoid the negative selection bias the researcher classified the whole population into four stratas depending on experience level.

*Table-1: Sampling design of the research*

Strata	Total Number	Participants	Average experience
Lecturer	39	2	5 years
Assistant Professor	42	2	10 year
Associate Professor	30	1	18 years
Professor	6	1	27 years

As instruments, face-to-face semi-structured interviews of the participants were conducted to collect data. A set of 12 open-ended questions were set for the interview (Table 2). A suitable interview protocol is necessary for establishing the credibility of qualitative research (Amankwna, 2016). Therefore, the researcher formulated a research protocol including an information sheet describing the details of the research to the participants, and 12 open-ended questions aligned with the objectives of the research and the research problem. Barnham (2015)



depicts that the open-ended questions encourage the participants to express their opinions and judgments about the problem. Hence, the participants fearlessly expressed their opinions.

Table-2: Interview Questions

No	Interview Questions
1.	Please tell me about your job.
<i>Theme-1: Transformational leadership</i>	
2.	What do you understand by 'Leadership'?
3.	What do you understand by 'Transformational Leadership'?
<i>Theme-2: Transformational Leadership in Ashek Mahmud College, Jamalpur</i>	
4.	Have you experienced Transformational Leadership in your work?
5.	How does the principal demonstrate transformational leadership in his regular works? Please give some examples.
6.	How are the teachers influenced by transformational leadership in your college?
7.	Are there any obstacles that hinder the practice of transformational leadership in your college? Please explain.
<i>Theme-3: Accountability performance</i>	
8.	What do you understand by accountability?
9.	What do you understand by accountability performance by the teachers?
10.	How do you define the accountability structure in your college?
<i>Theme-4: Transformational Leadership and Employee Accountability Performance</i>	
11.	Do you think that the accountability performance of the teachers is influenced by the leadership style? If so, please illustrate your opinions.
12.	Do you feel motivated under Transformational Leadership? Please explain your perceptions.

### 3.4 Study Procedures

Data sources consisted of in-depth semi-structured interviews and literature on leadership theories. To ensure the validity and reliability of the case study, data was triangulated to cross-verify the data collected from different sources. Moreover, to ensure the validity of the data collected from the interviews, the interviewees could member check (Amankwna, 2016). The participant recruitment process started with giving them the information sheet for giving detail about the research. Afterward, a consent form was given to each participant for taking their informed consent. Upon having the signed consent paper, the semi-structured interviews proceeded. To ensure the anonymity of the interviewees, their names were replaced with unique identifiers (P1-P6). Study materials will be kept in a locked file cabinet, and the electronic files will be protected through passwords.

### 3.5 Data Collection

For collecting data, semi-structured interviews of six participants took place face-to-face, and each interview lasted between 50 – 60 minutes, depending on the responses of different participants. A complete data collection protocol was maintained every time. Before starting each interview, the participants were informed about the type of research and the probable length of the interview. Afterward, the participants were requested to sign a consent form. The researcher then assured the participants that they should disclose as much as they wanted to share. The participants were also given the opportunity to withdraw themselves from the research at any time. The researcher started each of the semi-structured interviews by asking for details about their job. Following the first question, the participants were asked 11 more questions under four different themes: Transformational Leadership, Transformational Leadership in Government Ashek Mahmud College, Accountability Performance, Transformational Leadership, and Employee Accountability Performance. Upon completing the interviews, the interviewer member checked the interview transcripts.

The researcher's data collection procedure took 2 weeks. Interested participants provided their consent formally before starting their interviews. The researcher collected the data through face-to-face semi-structured interviews containing 12 open-ended questions. The interviewer wrote the answers of the participants during the interview. After members checked, the interview transcripts were taken for analysis.

### 3.6 Data Analysis

The researcher analysed the data under different themes following Braun & Clarke's (2006) six steps process. The data analysis employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework to explore rigorous findings are shown in Figure 2. By systematically identifying and interpreting themes within the qualitative data, this analysis aims to provide deeper insights into the topics by making a final valid report of findings.



Figure 2: The Six Steps Framework for Thematic Analysis  
Uddin et al. (2024)

## 4. Findings

All the data from respondents were analysed according to the four themes. All answers under different themes were compiled under the specific themes and then were analysed. The division of the questions under different themes helped the researcher make a clear sense of the large qualitative data provided by the participants.

### 4.1 Findings for Research Question 1: Is TL Practiced in Bangladeshi Public Sector Organizations?

Four questions were asked to find out the answer of the research question. First two questions were asked to have ideas about the knowledge of the participants about leadership and transformational leadership. These two questions initially helped the respondents prepare for the following two questions on the existence of TL in public college.

The aim of the first question was to have idea about the participants' primary understanding of leadership. Multiple themes came out of the definitions provided by the participants: (1) Oversee and lead a team to achieve organizational goals, (2) motivate followers to work, (3) influence the followers for target achievement by creating examples.

With respect to theme-1: leading and overseeing the task achievement, participants P1 and P5 shared:

"Leadership represents the task of overseeing and leading the tasks of the employees or subordinates to ensure the organizational goal achievement. It also means training the employees for achieving expected performance level."

With respect to theme-2: motivating the followers, participants P4 and P6 shared:

"Leadership involves inspiring the followers to work to achieve the organizational goals."

With respect to theme-3: Influencing followers by creating examples, participant P2 shared:

"Leadership is creating examples to influence and motivate the followers to become successful in contributing to the organization as mentioned in their job descriptions. That is, a leader is required to be expert in the subject matter for making examples."

The second question aimed to find out the participants' basic ideas about Transformational Leadership. Different themes came out from the responses: (1) shares mission and vision with the followers, (2) motivates working beyond the job description, (3) inspires to be innovative, (4) sets example, and (5) fosters leadership qualities of the followers.

With respect to theme-1: Sharing mission and vision, P3 and P4 shared:

"TL is the leadership model under which the leaders communicate their mission and vision with the followers to prepare them about what to do and what not to do."

With respect to theme-2: motivating to work beyond job description, P2, P3 and P4 shared:

"To achieve the set organizational goals, TL inspires the followers to strive for exceeding their existing level of expertise. This brings positive change in the followers and gives them confidence about their own capacities."

With respect to theme-3: inspiring innovation, P4 and P6 shared:

"TL fosters innovation through providing the employees the independence to try their new ways for solving a problem. This promotes innovation by the followers."

With respect to theme-4: setting example, P2 and P3 shared:

"A transformational leader sets examples through performing a job themselves. The followers take them as role models and follow the examples set by the transformational leader. This increases organizational performance."

With respect to theme-5: fostering leadership qualities, P1 and P3 shared:

"The target of the TL is to create future leaders. For this TL arranges all necessities for the followers to practice leadership in their regular duties by providing them independence to work their own ways."

The aim of the third question was to have idea about the existence of the practice of TL in the case study college. Participants P1, P2, P3 and P6 stated "Yes, partially", participant P5 stated "No, most of the time" and P4 stated "No".

Participant P1 shared

“Yes, most of the time the principals of the college practice TL by allowing autonomy to most of the teachers in applying innovative ways in their day to day academic and non-academic duties. However, they do not allow complete freedom to the less efficient teachers, comparatively new teachers, and the teachers with duty avoidance tendency. In these cases the principals usually instruct them to strictly follow the best practices existing in the college.”

Participant P2 shared

“As the leaders in the government colleges are appointed by the ministry of education for a fixed period time, sometimes they do not practice TL considering regulations and ministry’s views as barriers and sometimes they themselves do not practice TL considering the fixed tenure as safeguard for practicing autocratic leadership. In other cases the leaders practice TL: consults with the followers, inspires innovation and provides freedom.”

Participants P3 and P6 shared

“Principals do not consider all employees as equal. They do not provide similar treatments to all employees. In case of a group they practice transformational leadership by providing all facilities required: motivation and independence. On the contrary, to some employees the leaders are autocratic. The application of leadership style depends on the closeness of the teachers with the principals.”

Participant P5 shared

“I rarely see the principals to practice transformational leadership style in their daily operations. Rather they are mostly autocratic and sometimes democratic. The principals mostly expect that the teachers of the college will perform in the way instructed by the principals. In some cases, for instance in the academic council meeting, the principals take some decisions in democratic way. In rare cases they empower few teachers to apply innovative ideas.”

Participant P4 shared

“I do not think the leaders of the government colleges are transformational. I have never received any support from the principals when I wanted to try something new in my own way. Rather, I have always been instructed by the principals to act according to the way they prefer.”

The fourth question asked the participants to give some examples of how the principals practice transformational leadership in their regular works. The aim of this question was to have idea about the nature of the practice of TL by the leaders in the case study college. The participants shared different examples.

Participant P1 shared

“When the principals form a committee for performing a specific task like conducting an examination, they provide complete independence to the head and other members of the committee. In some other cases like observing a national day, running a debate competition, the committee gets inspiration from the principal to be innovative and creative. However, in case of any development programmes that involve more financial dealings, the principal do not allow freedom to the committees.”

Participant P2 shared

“The principals provide freedom to the employees working in specific projects: conducting examination, debate competition, arranging study tours, publishing results etc. Government’s rules and regulations act as barriers to the practice of TL by the principals.”

Participant P6 shared

“In different projects the head of the projects get motivation and facilities from the principal for running the project independently applying his/her own creativity. However, the junior members of the projects are not allowed by the head of the projects to practice creativity. The case is also true for the most of the departments where only the head of the departments get the authority to work in independent way. This means that the principal of the college are not fully successful in achieving the target of developing leadership among all employees.

#### 4.2 Findings for Research Question 2: Does TL Influence the Accountability Performance of the Teachers of the Public Colleges?

To examine the impact of transformational leadership on the accountability performance the participants were asked some questions. At first, they were asked some primary questions on accountability, accountability structure of the case study college, accountability performance of the teachers to make them prepared for commenting on the influence of transformational leadership on the accountability performance of the teachers. Afterwards, the respondents were asked for giving deeper insights on the connections between transformational leadership and teachers’ accountability performance.

When they were asked to express their understanding on accountability they answered mostly in the same way. In summary, they termed accountability as the responsibility of performing according to an expressed or unexpressed contract.

Participant P4 shared a detailed view in this regards

“Accountability refers to the obligation of an individual or organization to take responsibility for their actions, decisions, and outcomes, and to transparently report, explain, and justify them to the stakeholders or governing bodies.”

When the participants were asked to express their understanding on accountability performance by teachers, they shared similar views which can be summarised as:

“Accountability performance by the teachers represents the duty of teachers to satisfy the legitimate demands of the stakeholders including students, principal, community and the government.”

The following table represents the summary of the accountability structure of the government colleges described by the respondent teachers.

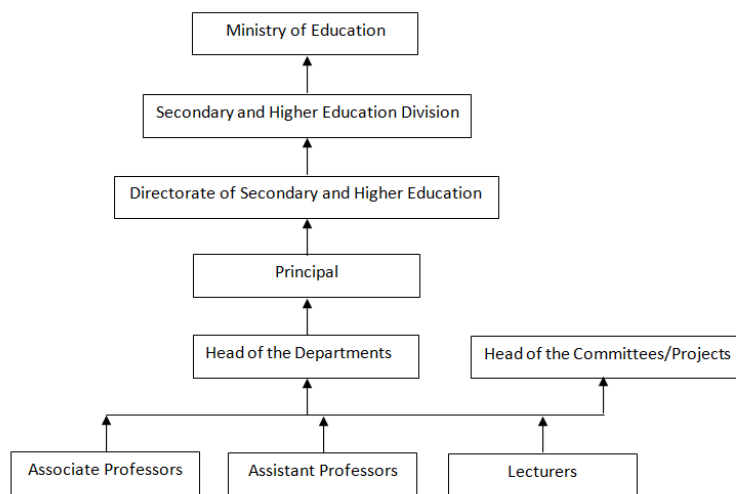


Figure 3: Accountability structure of the government colleges

When the participants were asked about the general impact of transformational leadership on the followers, the participants' answers reflected two major themes: (1) influences both positively and negatively, (2) influences positively.

With respect to theme-1: positive and negative influence, participants P4 and P6 shared:

"When employees with honesty, creativity and efficiency works under transformational leadership, then their performances are positively influenced by that leadership style. The freedom and friendliness offered by the leader motivate them to invest more creativity and efficiency and to dedicate more efforts for the organizational goal achievement. Contrarily, the performance of the employee with dishonesty, lack of creativity and lack of efficiency is negatively influenced. Here, the employee takes advantages of the freedom provided by the leader."

With respect to theme-2: positive influence, participants P2 and P3 shared:

"Since the TL motivates and facilitate, the employees becomes open to take challenges and practice innovativeness. As a result the performance of the employees also improves."

Afterwards, the teachers were asked to express their opinion specifically on the influence of the principals' transformational leadership style on the accountability performance of the teachers. The participants replied that there is a positive relationship between the two. Their answers are presented below:

Participant-P1 shared

"Since the Transformational Leader respects and accepts the opinions of the employees and create appropriate environment for the employees, the employees feel motivated to perform their responsibility better."

Participant P2 shared

"Since the Transformational Leader removes all communication gaps by sharing mission, vision and clarifying every step, the employees can more understand this leader and perform better."

The respondents also expressed their opinions about their motivation level under the supervision of a transformational leader (principal). All participants opined that they feel motivated under the transformational leadership. However, they expressed their views in different ways:

Participant P5 shared

"If I am valued by the leader and if I get adequate freedom in performing my duties, then I feel motivated. I am inspired to invest my full efforts to ensure the outcome. Since a transformational leader does both, I feel motivated under transformational Leadership."

Participant P2 shared

"Since there exist no communication gap under transformational leadership, I can have clear idea about the expectation of the leader. As a result, I feel motivated and I can perform better."

Participant P4 shared

"Since I have the opportunity to give inputs in the decision making of the leaders through giving opinions and since I can see my inputs operating, I feel really motivated under the transformational leadership."

There were both differences and commonalities in the perceptions of the participants. Most of the participants agreed that the transformational leadership positively affect employee

accountability performance. However, some interviewees felt that the transformational leadership has both positive and negative impacts on accountability performance. One participant has suggested supplementing the transformational leadership by the instructional leadership style to avoid the negative impacts of the transformational leadership style.

#### **4.3 Findings for Research Question 3: Are There any Obstacles that Hinder the Practice of TL in Public Sector Organisations in Bangladesh?**

Question-7 of the set of interview question was asked to explore the barriers that hinder the principals' practices of transformational leadership. All of the participants agreed that there exist some barriers that deter the practices of transformational leadership in the context of public colleges in Bangladesh. However, the participants' answers reflected difference in the perceptions about the challenges.

Participant P1 stated

“Non-existence of fixed tenure for the principals make the principals' position vulnerable. The higher authority can take snatch their position at any time for any reason and can send them to the departments as department heads. For this reason the principals are always in fear of losing their positions as principals. This deters them from being transformational leader.”

Participants P2, P3, P5 and P6 stated

“External political pressure, bureaucratic nature of the job of the principals and social traditions are the main barriers that negatively influence the practice of TL in the case study college. Sometimes, principals have to fulfil the desires of the local political leaders sacrificing the organizational betterment. Sometimes, the upper regulators in the administrative hierarchy do not allow the principals to be transformational. They want the principals to perform regular duties in traditional ways.”

Participant P4 stated

“Culture of the government colleges is the main barrier in the way practicing TL in the government colleges. While most of the principals of the government colleges want to follow the common flow and to complete the tenure without any hassle, the principals in our college are usually afraid of breaking the cultural traditions. They show apathy in practicing TL in anticipation of different problems that may arise from practicing TL.”

### **5. Discussion**

This discussion section synthesizes the findings from the thematic analysis of respondents' data, organized around four key themes. By compiling participants' responses under these themes, the researchers clarified the complex landscape of barriers to transformational leadership in public colleges in Bangladesh. This structured approach facilitated a coherent interpretation of qualitative data. Through this examination, the discussion aims to contextualize the identified obstacles within broader theoretical frameworks, highlighting their implications for leadership practices in educational settings and informing potential avenues for reform in the public sector.

#### **5.1 Analytical Discussion on the Findings for Research Question 1**

The findings of this study highlight pragmatic understanding and implementation of Transformational Leadership (TL) within Bangladeshi public sector organizations, particularly in the context of government colleges. The data reveals a mixed perception among participants regarding the practice of TL, indicating both recognition of its principles and significant

barriers to its effective application. Participants demonstrated a foundational understanding of leadership, emphasizing aspects such as oversight, motivation, and influence, which are critical components of TL. However, this understanding seems to vary significantly in practice. The themes emerging from the participants' definitions of TL, sharing a vision, motivating beyond job descriptions, fostering innovation, setting examples, and cultivating leadership qualities, suggest that there is an awareness of what TL entails. Yet, the inconsistent application of these principles indicates that mere awareness does not translate into practice.

The response to the question regarding the existence of TL in the case study college reveals a dichotomy in leadership styles. While some participants acknowledged instances of TL practices, particularly in allowing autonomy and encouraging innovation, others reported a predominance of autocratic leadership. This inconsistency can be attributed to several factors, including the principals' tenure security, regulatory constraints imposed by the Ministry of Education, and individual differences among faculty members. Such disparities underscore the challenge of fostering a transformational culture in an environment where leadership practices are often contingent on personal relationships and hierarchical dynamics. Moreover, the notion that transformational leaders are not uniformly applied among all employees suggests a selective implementation of TL principles. This raises critical questions about equity and inclusivity in leadership practices.

The perception that only certain employees, often those closer to the leadership, receive the benefits of transformational practices points to a systemic issue within the organizational structure. Such selective engagement not only undermines the potential for widespread leadership development but also risks creating divisions within the workforce, potentially leading to disengagement and reduced morale among those who feel excluded from the transformational process. Examples cited by participants regarding specific projects and committee work illustrate the potential for TL to flourish in targeted settings. However, the restrictions imposed on certain employees and projects highlight the limitations of TL within the broader organizational context. The findings suggest that while there are pockets of transformational practices, systemic barriers prevent these from becoming a normative part of the organizational culture.

After all, the study indicates that while there is a foundational understanding and some practice of TL in Bangladeshi public sector organizations, significant barriers hinder its effective and equitable application. For TL to be successfully integrated into these institutions, a shift in leadership approach is essential one that emphasizes inclusivity, supports autonomy across all levels, and addresses the regulatory challenges inherent in the public sector. Future research should explore strategies for overcoming these barriers and fostering a more transformative leadership culture that aligns with the principles identified by participants. This approach not only has the potential to enhance organizational effectiveness but also to develop a more engaged and empowered workforce.

## **5.2 Analytical Discussion on the Findings for Research Question 2**

The findings from the investigation into the relationship between Transformational Leadership (TL) and teachers' accountability performance in Bangladeshi public colleges reveal a complex interplay that underscores both positive outcomes and potential challenges inherent in this leadership style. Participants demonstrated a clear understanding of accountability as a multifaceted obligation that encompasses responsibility towards various stakeholders, indicating an alignment between their perceptions of accountability and their professional roles. The general sentiment among respondents is that TL fosters a positive environment that enhances accountability performance. This aligns with existing literature that posits TL as a



catalyst for motivation and engagement among followers. The themes identified namely, the dual influence of TL and the predominance of positive outcomes suggest that when teachers operate under a transformational leader, they are more likely to feel empowered and motivated to meet stakeholder expectations. This empowerment is attributed to the supportive and communicative nature of transformational leadership, which encourages creativity and initiative.

However, the recognition of potential negative impacts underlines a critical dimension of TL. The acknowledgment that not all employees respond positively to transformational leadership raises important considerations for leadership practice in educational settings. Specifically, individuals lacking intrinsic motivation or creativity may exploit the freedoms associated with TL, leading to decreased accountability. This duality highlights the necessity for leaders to be attuned to the diverse motivations and capabilities of their staff. Furthermore, the participants' suggestions to integrate instructional leadership principles alongside TL to mitigate these negative influences offer valuable insights into developing a more balanced leadership approach. Instructional leadership, with its focus on teaching quality and academic outcomes, could serve as a corrective measure, ensuring that the freedom afforded by TL does not devolve into laxity among less engaged employees. The consistent theme of motivation under transformational leadership indicates a robust link between leadership style and teacher performance. Clear communication, shared goals, and involvement in decision-making emerged as critical factors that enhance teachers' sense of responsibility and commitment to their roles. The study suggests that for TL to be most effective, leaders should cultivate a culture of open communication and actively seek input from teachers, reinforcing their accountability.

In a nutshell, while TL has significant potential to enhance accountability performance among teachers in public colleges, its efficacy is contingent on the leaders' ability to navigate the diverse landscape of employee engagement. A nuanced application that combines the strengths of transformational and instructional leadership could foster an environment where accountability thrives, ultimately benefiting the educational outcomes of the institutions. Future research should further explore this hybrid approach to leadership in educational settings, examining its long-term impacts on both teacher performance and student achievement.

### **5.3 Analytical Discussion on the Findings for Research Question 3**

The findings highlight significant barriers hindering the practice of transformational leadership (TL) among principals in public colleges in Bangladesh. A predominant concern is the precarious nature of principals' tenure, which creates an environment of fear and insecurity. This instability prevents leaders from fully engaging in transformational practices, as they prioritize job security over innovative approaches to leadership. Such conditions underscore the need for structural reforms that establish fixed tenures, enabling leaders to cultivate long-term visions without the threat of arbitrary removal.

Moreover, external political pressures and bureaucratic constraints emerge as substantial impediments. The necessity for principals to appease local political figures often compromises their ability to implement progressive changes that benefit the educational institution. This situation reflects a broader systemic issue, where bureaucratic inertia and adherence to traditional methods stifle innovation. Consequently, principals may resort to maintaining the status quo rather than pursuing transformative initiatives. Additionally, the ingrained cultural norms within government colleges further inhibit TL practices. The apprehension among principals to disrupt established traditions suggests a prevailing culture of risk aversion, where conformity is favoured over innovation. This cultural resistance to change can perpetuate a

cycle of stagnation in leadership practices, ultimately undermining the potential for meaningful educational reform. Overall, these findings indicate that addressing both structural and cultural barriers is essential for fostering an environment conducive to transformational leadership in Bangladesh's public sector educational institutions.

## 6. Implications for Practice

The findings of this study carry important implications for educational practice, especially within public sector institutions in Bangladesh and comparable contexts across the Global South. By identifying both the enablers and constraints of transformational leadership (TL), this research offers a framework for policymakers, administrators, and educators to build more inclusive, accountable, and innovation-driven leadership strategies.

**First**, the study underscores the critical need for leadership stability. Insecure or inconsistent tenure among principals emerged as a significant barrier to practicing TL. Policy reforms that ensure fixed, secure terms for principals are essential. Such reforms would enable leaders to pursue long-term, visionary goals with confidence, reducing reliance on reactive or appeasement-based leadership styles and fostering a culture of sustained innovation.

**Second**, minimizing political interference and easing bureaucratic constraints is vital. Principals constrained by rigid administrative structures or local political agendas are often unable to implement TL effectively. To mitigate this, the Ministry of Education and relevant bodies should clearly define leadership responsibilities, grant greater autonomy in decision-making, and shield academic leadership from undue external influence. Decentralized governance can empower principals to align institutional operations with transformational values like shared vision and collaborative leadership.

**Third**, professional development must be reimaged to better support leadership capacity. Training programs should move beyond theoretical instruction and include experiential components such as mentoring, workshops, and problem-solving simulations. Integrating both transformational and instructional leadership models would help leaders motivate teams while maintaining a strong academic focus.

**Fourth**, shifting organizational culture is equally important. A move away from hierarchical, rule-bound leadership toward inclusive, vision-led models can create more dynamic and responsive institutions. Encouraging risk-taking, rewarding creativity, and supporting professional growth are essential for cultivating such environments.

**Finally**, TL at the faculty level is closely linked with higher motivation, engagement, and accountability. Promoting leadership development across all levels, through teacher-leader roles, peer mentoring, and collaborative teaching models, can embed transformational values into the institution's fabric.

In sum, advancing transformational leadership in public colleges requires systemic, structural, and cultural reforms. By addressing tenure insecurity, reducing external constraints, enhancing leadership training, and fostering inclusive cultures, institutions can become more adaptive, equitable, and effective in improving educational outcomes.

## 7. Conclusion

Teachers' accountability is a crucial factor in ensuring the overall effectiveness of educational institutions and delivering quality education. Highly accountable teachers demonstrate a commitment to fulfilling organizational expectations, which directly impacts institutional success. Therefore, promoting accountability among teachers is essential for achieving quality

in education. Leadership plays a pivotal role in inspiring and guiding individuals toward shared goals (Budur, 2018). In educational settings, leaders, such as department heads, professors, and administrators, hold the authority to influence both educators and students. Effective leadership is a key contributor to the successful attainment of organizational objectives.

These findings indicate that transformational leadership significantly enhances teachers' sense of accountability by fostering an environment of inspiration, support, and development. Transformational leaders provide teachers with opportunities to improve their teaching skills and holistic personal development, enabling them to become better educators. This, in turn, raises organizational performance and improves student learning outcomes. Educational institutions led by transformational leaders tend to achieve higher levels of success. As a result, it is recommended that educational leaders adopt transformational leadership practices, as it empowers teachers to innovate and adapt their teaching strategies to meet evolving student needs. For this to happen, policymakers, the bureaucratic system, and society must create supportive environments that allow transformational leadership to thrive, ultimately increasing educational outcomes by enhancing teacher accountability. Moreover, this study offers significant contributions to both leadership and accountability literature. It addresses a gap in existing research, as few studies have previously examined the relationship between transformational leadership and teacher accountability in higher education institutions. By focusing on a Government College in Bangladesh, this study provides empirical evidence that transformational leadership positively influences employee accountability. However, it also highlights challenges and potential drawbacks, such as instances where some individuals exploit the flexibility and support offered by transformational leaders. Overall, this research provides valuable insights for educational leaders in public institutions. It offers guidance on how to weigh the benefits and challenges of transformational leadership to foster accountability and improve educational outcomes.

### **7.1 Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research**

A key limitation of this study is its small sample size, involving only eight teachers from a single government college. While the qualitative case study approach enabled rich, in-depth exploration of participants' perceptions, the limited number of voices may not fully reflect the diversity of experiences and understandings of transformational leadership and teacher accountability across the broader public education system. Furthermore, the selection of only one institution restricts the contextual diversity, making it difficult to generalize the findings to the broader landscape of over 350 government colleges in Bangladesh, which differ in terms of geographic location, institutional culture, student demographics, and administrative dynamics. As a result, the conclusions drawn from this study may have limited generalizability to other colleges operating under different conditions.

To address these limitations, future research should include a larger and more diverse sample, incorporating teachers from multiple government colleges across various regions. Expanding the sample size and institutional variety would enable comparative analysis and provide a more comprehensive understanding of how transformational leadership is enacted and experienced in different contexts. Furthermore, future studies could benefit from employing mixed-methods or longitudinal designs. Mixed-methods research would allow for the integration of qualitative depth with quantitative breadth, strengthening the reliability and applicability of the findings. Longitudinal studies, in particular, could offer insights into how sustained transformational leadership practices evolve over time and influence teacher accountability and institutional performance in the long term.

Taken together, these approaches would not only address the methodological constraints of this study but also contribute to building a more robust and transferable body of knowledge on leadership and accountability in public education systems, both within Bangladesh and in similar contexts globally.

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