

Influence of transformational leadership on affective commitment and job performance: mediation by engagement and trust



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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effects of transformational leadership on affective organizational commitment and job performance, while investigating the parallel mediating roles of employee engagement and trust in leadership among academic and administrative staff at the University of The Gambia. Using survey data from 201 respondents and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis, the findings reveal that transformational leadership positively and significantly influences employee engagement, trust in leadership, and affective organizational commitment. However, no direct effect on job performance was observed. The results further demonstrate that employee engagement and trust in leadership significantly mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and job performance, while partially mediating the relationship with affective organizational commitment. These findings suggest that transformational leaders enhance employee outcomes indirectly by cultivating trust and fostering engagement. This study contributes empirical evidence from a West African higher education context, offering practical implications for university administrators seeking to strengthen staff retention and institutional effectiveness through leadership development initiatives.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership; Employee Engagement;
University of The Gambia; Affective Organizational Commitment



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INTRODUCTION

Why do some employees remain emotionally attached to an organisation even when conditions are challenging? This question is central to organisational behaviour, particularly in higher education. Universities in developing countries depend not only on staff presence but on genuine commitment employees who care deeply about institutional success (Dube & Ndofirepi, 2024). This emotional attachment, known as affective organisational commitment, reflects an employee's desire to stay because they believe in the organisation's purpose and feel a sense of belonging. Unlike commitment driven by necessity, it promotes resilience, discretionary effort, and long-term performance. At University of The Gambia, staff retention and motivation remain ongoing concerns. Despite investments in training, turnover persists, and many employees appear to lack strong emotional attachment.

Existing research suggests that transformational leaders enhance employee engagement and build trust, which in turn strengthen commitment and performance (Suhartini & Sary, 2025). However, most of this evidence is drawn from private organisations or public institutions in Europe, North America, and East Asia. There is limited research focusing on public universities in West Africa, where contextual realities differ. Resource constraints, cultural expectations, and institutional structures may influence how leadership is experienced. The Gambia is a particularly underexplored setting, and findings from other regions cannot be directly generalised. Furthermore, previous studies often examine employee engagement and trust in leadership separately (Al-Hinai, 2026). Few studies have tested them together as parallel mediators, and even fewer have done so in a higher education context like UTG.

This study offers several contributions. First, it integrates employee engagement (a motivational factor) and trust in leadership (a relational factor) within a single model. By examining both simultaneously, the study seeks to determine whether transformational leadership works primarily by energising employees, strengthening relationships, or both. Second, it focuses specifically on affective organisational commitment, which is widely regarded as the most valuable form of commitment for organisations. Third, by examining UTG, the study provides empirical evidence from a context that is largely absent in existing literature.

This study's primary goal is to investigate how transformational leadership affects affective organisational commitment and job performance at UTG, with employee engagement and leadership trust serving as parallel mediators. The paper responds to multiple research enquiries: Does transformative leadership effect work performance, affective commitment, trust, and employee engagement? Do trust and engagement have a direct impact on performance and commitment? Do they act as a mediator in the relationship between affective commitment and transformative leadership?

Both theoretical and practical contributions are anticipated from this investigation. In theory, it adds to the body of literature by testing a dual mediation model and offering evidence from a West African higher education setting. It provides UTG university administrators with useful information. If the results validate the theories, they imply that good leadership should not only motivate staff members but also cultivate involvement and trust via open communication, acknowledgement, and assistance.

LITERATURE REVIEW, RESEARCH FRAMEWORK, AND HYPOTHESES

Literature Review

Social Exchange Theory (SET) is a general theory of workplace behaviour and relationships. Set was developed in the early years of sociology and social psychology,

and it developed in the middle of the 20th century with the critical contributions of (Coyle-Shapiro & Diehl, 2017; Musleh & Cross, 2025). Homans (1958) was the first to conceptualize social behaviour as an exchange process and Blau noted the importance of power and reciprocity in social exchanges. In its fundamental form, SET assumes that people maximize benefits and minimize costs in interactions through an exchange of resources (tangible or intangible) under the norms of reciprocity. Good interactions with time achieve trust, loyalty, and commitment between parties.

According to Rosário and Casaca, (2025) commitment, loyalty, and trust are the results of changing relationships that are formed with the help of reciprocity. In organizational behaviour, SET has been extensively applied to describe the way, positive treatment of employees can result in positive attitudes and behaviours. Indicatively, organizational support is likely to be returned with better organizational commitment by employees who have felt that they have been supported.

Transformational Leadership (TFL) is a well-known leadership theory that has developed during the last forty years, focusing on the way leaders can motivate and uplift their followers to accomplish outstanding results. It was proposed by Eaton et al., (2024) in the political leadership context, in which transformational leaders (who encourage followers to pursue something higher than themselves) are contrasted with transactional leaders (who simply exchange rewards in a basic way, in response to performance).

Ideas by Burns (1985) were later operationalized into the organizational setting by. Who came up with the key elements of TFL. Bass (1985) conceptualized transformational leadership in terms of its effects on followers, transformational leaders were trusted, admired, and respected by their followers, who then do more than they would otherwise due to the inspirational mission and vision that a transformational leader offered. Ultimately, TFL will make followers exceed their own perceived capabilities because it will set them with a shared vision and purpose that is greater than personal interest.

Another significant mediating factor in the connection between transformative leadership and its results is employee engagement. By making work more meaningful and engaging, such as through intellectual stimulation and contribution acknowledgement, transformational leaders increase employees' dedication. Studies already conducted show that transformational leadership has a good impact on staff engagement, which enhances performance and strengthens organisational commitment.

This case, Ike et al., (2024) discovered a substantial correlation between better levels of employee engagement and certain transformative leadership behaviours, such as intellectual stimulation and individualised support. In a similar vein, studies conducted in the hospitality industry by Helalat et al., (2025) showed that transformational leadership boosts employee engagement, which in turn partially mediates its impact on work performance.

Employees who have faith in their leader's dependability, fairness, and concern for their welfare are more likely to tolerate vulnerability in the relationship (Mtsweni & Mhlana, 2025). Conceptually, trust is defined as a psychological condition in which one is prepared to be vulnerable because one has good expectations about the intentions or behaviour of another person. Likewise. According to Liu et al., (2025) trust is the willingness of one party to be vulnerable to another (like a leader) in the hope that the latter would act in a way that benefits the trustor, regardless of the capacity to keep an eye on or regulate such activities.

Employees who trust their superiors in leader-follower interactions anticipate that they will behave honourably, truthfully, and kindly (Maximo et al., 2019). Employees

are able to tolerate the leader's influence over their job and career because of the psychological safety this trust fosters. Leadership trust is based on both affective and cognitive factors (Legood et al., 2023). In general, trust lowers the perceived risks associated with vulnerability in workplace relationships, whereas the affective dimension reflects emotional ties marked by care and concern (Lhaden & Dimas, 2025). The cognitive dimension relates to perceptions of the leader's competence and dependability.

According to McLean and Acharya, (2025), affective organisational commitment (AOC) is the degree to which employees form an emotional bond with, identify with, and actively engage with their organization. It denotes the "desire-based" dimension of commitment, which suggests that employees remain with an organization because they authentically align with its values, goals, and mission, rather than due to external pressures or obligations. The emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization is the definition of affective commitment by Almahasneh et al., (2022), the authors of the three-component model of organisational commitment. There is a strong sense of pride and affinity in the organization that employees who exhibit high levels of AOC typically experience.

Positive attitudes on membership in the organization are fostered by the close alignment of their personal beliefs with those of the organization. Employees that are affectively devoted are therefore more likely to exhibit zeal, loyalty, and a readiness to put in extra effort to support organisational objectives. Employees are frequently inspired to act as positive ambassadors of the company and to actively contribute to its overall success by this emotional connection (García-cruz & Valle-cabrera, 2025). Organisational commitment theory is the source of the idea of Affective Organisational Commitment. Daniel and Gentina, (2025) defined affective commitment as the emotional and attitudinal connection between workers and their company and conceptualised commitment as a multifaceted entity.

The actions and behaviors that employees take to support the objectives of the company are referred to as job performance (Ghauri, 2025). Task performance (fulfilling essential job responsibilities as outlined in the job description) and contextual performance (additional role behaviors like assisting coworkers or demonstrating initiative) are usually its two primary components (Princy et al., 2026). While contextual performance measures citizenship behaviours that support the larger work environment, task performance focuses on how successfully an employee fulfils the technical requirements of their role. Both academic responsibilities (teaching quality, research output, student supervision) and administrative responsibilities (effective processing, service delivery, problem handling) are included in job performance in higher education contexts.

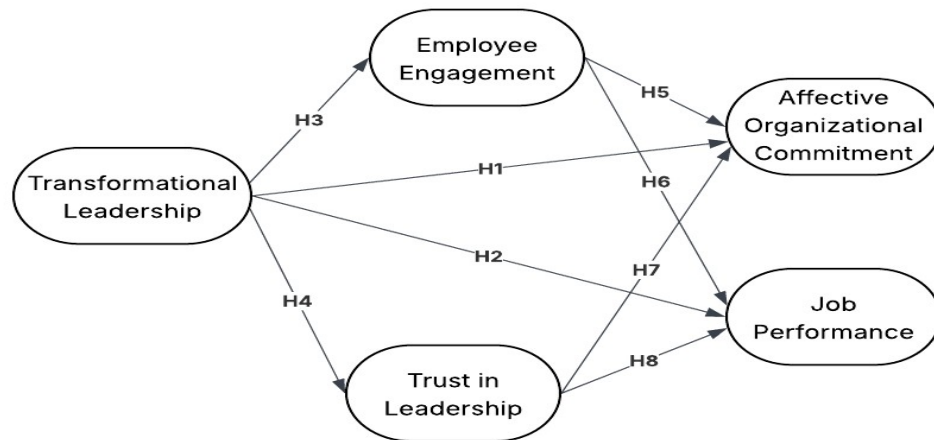
Employee attitudes like dedication and engagement are powerful indicators of job performance, according to earlier study (Kunte et al., 2025). Because they put forth more effort and persevere longer on difficult tasks, engaged workers those who are enthusiastic and fully immersed in their work tend to do better. In a similar vein, workers feel psychologically secure and are more inclined to go above and beyond the call of duty when they have faith in their leaders, which immediately improves their output.

Research Framework

This study's research framework illustrates the hypothesized relationships among transformational leadership (independent variable), employee engagement and trust in leadership (parallel mediating variables), and affective organizational commitment and

job performance (dependent variables). The framework is grounded in Social Exchange Theory, which posits that positive leadership behaviors foster reciprocal employee attitudes and behaviors.

The model proposes that transformational leadership directly influences all mediators and outcomes, while both engagement and trust serve as parallel mediators linking leadership to commitment and performance, as derived from the formulated hypotheses, as shown in Figure 1.



Source : Adapted by the Authors, 2026

Figure 1
Research framework

Hypothesis

Transformational Leadership and Affective Organizational Commitment

The impact of transformational leadership on workers' affective organisational commitment has been thoroughly studied in the past (Peng et al., 2020). Employees' emotional commitment to their company is known to be significantly influenced by transformational leadership. By presenting a compelling vision, offering personalised attention, and cultivating a positive work environment, transformational leaders inspire and encourage their workforce. These leadership actions foster a feeling of community and increase workers' identification with the mission and values of the company.

Transformational leaders inspire people to internalise organisational goals and see their roles as meaningful through the successful communication of a clear and inspirational vision. Stronger affective organisational commitment results from this alignment, which strengthens workers' emotional bond with the company (Pitichat & Riggio, 2025). Additionally, transformational leaders foster trust and show sincere concern for workers' welfare, which strengthens the strong emotional ties that exist between workers and the company.

H1: *Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on affective organizational commitment.*

Transformation Leadership and job performance.

Previous studies have looked closely at the connection between transformational leadership and worker job performance (Zuo et al., 2024). Employee perseverance and

empathy are encouraged by transformational leadership, which improves performance results. Transformational leaders improve workers' well-being and general job performance by fostering psychological fulfilment and a positive work environment.

Transformational leaders increase followers' knowledge of group aims and motivate them to prioritise common interests, which helps them accomplish organisational goals more successfully. These executives encourage and inspire staff members to go above and beyond expectations, frequently pushing them to prioritise the objectives of the company over their own interests. Additionally, research shows that innovative work practices, transformational leadership, and employees' views regarding results are positively correlated (Jameel et al., 2025).

H2: *Transformational leadership has a positive effect on employee job performance.*

Transformational Leadership and Employee Engagement

Employee engagement in organisational settings is commonly acknowledged to be significantly influenced by transformational leadership. By presenting a compelling vision, exhibiting individualised consideration, and promoting intellectual stimulation, transformational leaders inspire and encourage their workforce. Employees' emotional and psychological connection to their work is strengthened by the supportive and empowering work environment that these leadership practices foster.

By boosting motivation and lowering work-related stress, leadership serves as a crucial job resource that promotes employee engagement, according to the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model (Méndez et al., 2025). Employees' sense of competence and self-efficacy is strengthened by transformational leaders who offer insightful criticism, acknowledge individual contributions, and encourage professional growth.

H3: *Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement*

Transformational Leadership and Trust in Leadership

The important factor in the idea of transformational leadership effectiveness at the organisational level is leadership trust. Strong interpersonal relationships are facilitated by the integrity, fairness, and concern that transformational leaders are known to exhibit. These leaders create an environment of transparency and psychological safety where workers feel valued and respected. As a result, the workers have faith in the leaders' choices and actions.

According to the Social Exchange Theory, when leaders exhibit helpful and moral behaviour, employees are likely to reciprocate favourable views toward them, such as loyalty and trust (Eva et al., 2020). Building trust is facilitated by transformational leadership practices such as idealised influence, inspirational motivation, and individualised concern. Leaders who act in the organization's and its members' best interests will be more trusted by their staff.

H4: *Transformational leadership positively affects trust in leadership.*

Employee Engagement and Affective Organizational Commitment

Affective organisational commitment and employee engagement are strongly positively correlated, according to research done in Western environments (Arulsenthilkumar, 2024). Higher levels of organisational commitment have been linked to higher levels of employee engagement. Furthermore, this relationship is theoretically supported by the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, which contends that employee engagement strengthens their commitment to the company by reducing emotional weariness and

burnout. This bond is further strengthened by a meaningful and psychologically safe workplace that fosters employee loyalty. Additionally, research shows that affective organisational commitment and employee engagement are positively correlated, meaning that workers who are more involved in their work are more likely to form a deeper emotional bond with their company (Al Riyami, 2024).

H5: *Employee engagement has a positive and significant effect on affective organizational commitment.*

Employee Engagement and Job Performance

Depending on the context in which it has been discussed, the term "employee engagement" has been defined differently. Employee behaviour (initiatives and productivity rates adopted) and attitude (involvement, loyalty, and dedication) form the foundation of the notion of engagement). Numerous academics have identified employee engagement as a psychological state at work with three traits: emotional, cognitive, and behavioural vigour. According to earlier studies, job performance is positively impacted by employee engagement (Sinha, 2021). Involved workers have a strong sense of duty and commitment to their jobs, which eventually affects worker performance.

H6: *Employee engagement has a positive and significant effect on job performance.*

Trust in Leadership and Affective Organizational Commitment

Employee sentiments toward their company, especially their emotional attachment and sense of belonging, are greatly influenced by leadership trust. Employees feel safe, supported, and confident in the organization's path when they have faith in their leaders. Their willingness to stay devoted and emotionally invested in the organization is increased by this trust (Rai & Koodamara, 2025).

A fundamental element of affective organisational commitment is the development of a positive emotional connection with the company, which is more likely to occur among workers who believe their leaders are trustworthy. Employee commitment is strengthened by trust, which lowers ambiguity and boosts confidence in organisational decisions. Because workers are more inclined to stick with companies where they feel appreciated and treated fairly by their leaders, empirical research has demonstrated that confidence in leadership is positively correlated with higher levels of affective commitment (Mtsweni & Mhlana, 2025).

H7: *Trust in leadership positively affects affective organizational commitment.*

Trust in Leadership and Job Performance

Employee attitudes and work-related behaviours, including job performance, are significantly influenced by trust in leadership (Ye et al., 2021). Employees are more likely to feel safe, appreciated, and supported at work when they believe their leaders are trustworthy. Positive social exchange relationships between leaders and staff are fostered by this sense of trust, which motivates workers to complete duties more successfully and efficiently.

Social Exchange Theory states that relationships based on mutual respect and trust encourage workers to return the favour by putting up more effort, taking on more responsibility, and performing better at work (Tang et al., 2024). Employees are more likely to trust leaders who make decisions with honesty, openness, and consistency.

H8: *Trust in leadership has a positive and significant effect on job performance.*

The Mediating Role of Employee Engagement in the Relationship between Transformational Leadership and Affective Organizational Commitment

A key mediating factor in the explanation of how transformational leadership affects affective organisational commitment is employee engagement. By motivating staff, offering personalised attention, and promoting intellectual stimulation, transformational leaders foster an exciting and encouraging workplace (Pitichat & Riggio, 2025). By boosting employees' levels of vigour, devotion, and absorption in their task, these leadership practices improve psychological engagement.

The work Demands-Resources (JD-R) model states that leadership is a crucial work resource that promotes employee engagement, which results in favourable organisational outcomes (Krasniqi & Hoxha, 2025). When workers are highly engaged, they become more emotionally invested in their work and acquire a deeper sense of identification with the objectives of the company.

H9: *Employee engagement mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and affective organizational commitment.*

The Mediating Role of Employee Engagement in the Relationship between Transformational Leadership and Job Performance

According to Jiatong et al., (2022). employee engagement is a key mediating factor in the explanation of how transformational leadership affects job performance. By expressing a clear vision, offering tailored support, and promoting intellectual stimulation, transformational leaders inspire and encourage their workforce. These leadership practices improve workers' psychological engagement, which is demonstrated by increased levels of zeal, commitment, and focus on their task.

Additionally, the impact of transformative leadership is transferred to job performance through the psychological mechanism of employee engagement (Park et al., 2022). Transformational leadership initially raises employee engagement levels, which leads to improved performance outcomes rather than having a direct impact on performance (Barkat et al., 2024). This indirect relationship has been validated by empirical research, which demonstrates that the impact of transformative leadership on work performance is substantially mediated by employee engagement.

H10: *Employee engagement mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and job performance.*

Mediating Role of Trust in Leadership in the Relationship between Transformational Leadership and Affective Organisational commitment.

Also to being a result of transformative leadership, trust in leadership is a crucial tool for influencing the attitudes and behaviours of staff members. By encouraging openness, moral behaviour, and encouraging relationships, transformational leadership builds trust, which in turn influences workers' emotional attachment to the company.

According to Social Exchange Theory, workers who are led by trustworthy people become more devoted and have more favourable views at work. According to Leesmidt & Jarunratanakul (2022) trust explains how and why transformational leadership influences affective organisational commitment by acting as a psychological link between leadership action and employee outcomes. According to earlier research, trust in leadership mediates the relationship between organisational outcomes and leadership style, suggesting that leadership indirectly affects commitment through the growth of trust (Yang et al., 2020).

H11: Trust in leadership mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and affective organizational commitment.

The Mediating Role of Trust in Leadership in the Relationship between Transformational Leadership and Job Performance

In order to understand how transformational leadership affects work performance, trust in leadership is a key mediating factor (Utomo et al., 2025). By exhibiting honesty, dependability, openness, and care for the welfare of their staff, transformational leaders foster trust. By exhibiting these behaviours, leaders foster a dependable and encouraging workplace where staff members have faith in organisational direction and leadership choices.

Employees are more likely to respond with good attitudes and behaviours when they have faith in their leaders, according to the Social Exchange Theory. Increased drive, collaboration, and a readiness to go above and beyond official employment requirements are examples of this (Kim, 2016). Employees are better able to concentrate on their duties and responsibilities when there is less ambiguity and perceived danger in the workplace. Additionally, a psychological factor via which transformational leadership improves work performance is trust in leadership. Instead of immediately affecting performance, transformational leadership first fosters employee trust, which leads to better performance results.

H12: Trust in leadership mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and job performance.

METHOD

This study was conducted at the University of The Gambia (UTG), the sole public university in the country, situated in the Greater Banjul Area. UTG was selected as the research location because it represents a typical West African higher education setting characterized by limited resources, demanding workloads, persistent concerns about employee turnover, and varied leadership styles across faculties and departments. These conditions allow for a robust examination of how transformational leadership affects employee commitment, engagement, trust, and job performance. The findings are intended to inform similar contexts in developing countries.

Primary data were gathered via a standardized self-administered questionnaire. Google Forms was used to distribute the survey instrument and obtain a centralized set of results. The survey tool was provided by electronic mail through the official university email accounts of the sampled employees.

This study employed stratified random sampling, a probability technique that divides the target population into mutually exclusive strata before randomly selecting participants from each (Maruyama & Ryan, 2014). The population comprised approximately 650 academic and administrative staff at UTG, stratified into two groups: academic (lecturers/researchers) and administrative (managers/support). Proportional selection within each stratum ensured representativeness. The procedure yielded 201 valid responses, representing an 80.4% response rate well above recommended benchmarks for survey research. This high response rate, combined with the stratified design, strengthens the reliability and generalisability of the study's conclusions.

To ensure their validity and reliability, the measurement tools utilized in this study were modified from earlier research that had undergone empirical validation. Eight items that were modified from Dai et al., (2013), were used to measure transformational

leadership, capturing the motivating and encouraging actions of leaders. Seven items from Wang et al., (2020), that represent energy, devotion, and absorption at work were used to gauge employee engagement. Five elements from Leung., (2001), were used to gauge employees' trust in their leader's honesty and justice. Eight measures from Allen and Meyer (1990), were used to measure affective organizational commitment, which gauges identity and emotional attachment to the company. Five questions from Ozer (2011) were used to measure job performance, encompassing both assisting behaviors and task accomplishment. For each of the 33 measuring questions in the study, a five-point Likert scale was used, with 1 denoting "strongly disagree" and 5 denoting "strongly agree."

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile of Respondents

An online survey that was sent to University of The Gambia staff members served as the primary method of data gathering. For the analysis, a total of 201 valid replies were obtained. Table 1 displays the respondents' demographic information.

Table 1
Demographic Profile of Respondents

Profile	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	117	58.2%
	Female	84	41.8%
Age	18-30 years	43	21.4%
	31 – 40 years	77	38.3%
	41 – 50 years	50	24.9%
	> 50 years	31	15.4%
Education	Diploma	66	32.8%
	Bachelor's Degree	91	45.3%
	Master's Degree	25	12.4%
	PhD	19	9.5%
Tenure	1 – 5 years	58	28.9%
	6 – 10 years	69	34.3%
	11 – 15 years	42	20.9%
	> 15 years	32	15.9%

Source: Processed by the Researcher, 2026

Academic and administrative personnel make up the sample. Males make up 58.2% of responders, while females make up 41.8%. The largest age group is those between the ages of 31 and 40 (38.3%), followed by those under 30 (21.4%) and those between the ages of 41 and 50 (24.9%). A master's degree is held by most respondents (45.3%), followed by a bachelor's degree (32.8%) and a doctorate (12.4%). In terms of duration, the majority have worked at UTG for 6–10 years (34.3%), followed by 1–5 years (28.9%). This distribution shows a skilled workforce that is appropriate for analyzing commitment and leadership dynamics.

Indicator Reliability, Internal Consistency, and Convergent Validity

The outer loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and AVE for each construct are shown in Table 2. Each indicator accurately reflects its corresponding construct since all outer loadings are higher than the suggested cutoff of 0.70. Internal consistency is confirmed by Cronbach's alpha values, which range from 0.848 to 0.941 and are all more than 0.70. Reliability is further supported by composite reliability scores that are higher

than 0.70. All constructs have AVEs more than 0.50, with Employee Engagement having the lowest (0.526), which nevertheless satisfies the convergent validity requirement (Indu et al., 2025).

Table 2

Measurement Model: Outer Loadings, Reliability, and Convergent Validity

Construct	Indicator	Outer Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	AVE
Affective Organizational Commitment (AOC)	AOC1	0.794	0.909	0.926	0.610
	AOC2	0.792			
	AOC3	0.804			
	AOC4	0.818			
	AOC5	0.801			
	AOC6	0.800			
	AOC7	0.715			
	AOC8	0.719			
Employee Engagement (EE)	EE1	0.621	0.848	0.885	0.526
	EE2	0.708			
	EE3	0.759			
	EE4	0.792			
	EE5	0.778			
	EE6	0.728			
	EE7	0.674			
Job Performance (JP)	JP1	0.784	0.876	0.910	0.669
	JP2	0.843			
	JP3	0.841			
	JP4	0.834			
	JP5	0.787			
Trust in Leadership (TIL)	TIL1	0.720	0.882	0.915	0.684
	TIL2	0.869			
	TIL3	0.907			
	TIL4	0.860			
	TIL5	0.764			
Transformational Leadership (TL)	TL1	0.787	0.941	0.952	0.711
	TL2	0.769			
	TL3	0.887			
	TL4	0.860			
	TL5	0.897			
	TL6	0.863			
	TL7	0.864			
	TL8	0.811			

Source: Processed by the Researcher, 2026

Discriminant Validity

The Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio were used to evaluate discriminant validity. The Fornell-Larcker criterion states that each construct's square root of the AVE (bold diagonal values) should be higher than its correlation with any other construct (Ab Hamid et al., 2017). This requirement is met for every construct, as Table 3 illustrates.

Table 3
Discriminant Validity: Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Construct	AOC	EE	JP	TIL	TL
AOC	0.781				
EE	0.546	0.725			
JP	0.678	0.556	0.818		
TIL	0.654	0.568	0.529	0.827	
TL	0.698	0.543	0.561	0.715	0.843

Source: Processed by the Researcher, 2026

Note: The square root of the AVE is represented by diagonal values (bold); inter-construct correlations are represented by off-diagonal values.

Table 4 displays the HTMT ratios. Strong evidence of discriminant validity is provided by all values being below the conservative threshold of 0.90 and the majority being below the stricter threshold of 0.85.

Table 4
Discriminant Validity: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Construct Pair	HTMT
EE ↔ AOC	0.617
JP ↔ AOC	0.759
JP ↔ EE	0.641
TIL ↔ AOC	0.721
TIL ↔ EE	0.661
TIL ↔ JP	0.600
TL ↔ AOC	0.750
TL ↔ EE	0.601
TL ↔ JP	0.616
TL ↔ TIL	0.781

Source: Processed by the Researcher, 2026

Overall, the measurement model demonstrates satisfactory validity and reliability, allowing for the evaluation of the structural model.

Hypotheses Testing (Path Coefficients)

Before testing individual hypotheses, the overall structural model was assessed for explanatory power and predictive relevance. As shown in Table 5, the model explains 54.2% of the variance in affective commitment ($R^2 = 0.542$) and 39.8% of the variance in job performance ($R^2 = 0.398$), indicating moderate to substantial explanatory power. All Q^2 values are positive, confirming the model's predictive relevance.

Transformational leadership demonstrated a very large effect on trust ($f^2 = 1.045$) and a large effect on engagement ($f^2 = 0.418$), while its direct effect on job performance was trivial ($f^2 = 0.012$), suggesting full mediation through engagement and trust. These general findings support the dual-mediation model proposed in this study. The hypotheses were tested by examining the path coefficients and their significance levels

using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 subsamples. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5
Hypotheses Testing (Path Coefficients)

Construct	R ²	Q ²	Predictor	f ²	Effect Size Interpretation
Affective Commitment (AOC)	0.542	0.518	TL → AOC	0.198	Medium
Job Performance (JP)	0.398	0.375	EE → AOC	0.089	Small
			TIL → AOC	0.112	Small
			TL → JP	0.012	Trivial (no direct effect)
			EE → JP	0.142	Small
Employee Engagement (EE)	0.295	0.288	TIL → JP	0.112	Small
			TL → EE	0.418	Large
Trust in Leadership (TIL)	0.511	0.496	TL → TIL	1.045	Very large

*Note: f² interpretation based on Cohen (1988): 0.02 = small, 0.15 = medium, 0.35 = large. Values >0.35 are considered large; values >0.80 are very large. *

Source: Processed by the Researcher, 2026

Table 6
Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	Path Coefficient (β)	T-Statistics	P-Values	95% CI	Result
H1	TL → AOC	0.422	7.914	0.000	[0.321; 0.493]	Endorsed
H2	TL → JP	0.065	1.085	0.278	[-0.046; 0.179]	Not Endorsed
H3	TL → EE	0.543	10.259	0.000	[0.466; 0.607]	Endorsed
H4	TL → TIL	0.715	18.746	0.000	[0.658; 0.762]	Endorsed
H5	EE → AOC	0.172	3.294	0.001	[0.090; 0.246]	Endorsed
H6	EE → JP	0.377	5.880	0.000	[0.273; 0.468]	Endorsed
H7	TIL → AOC	0.255	4.437	0.000	[0.164; 0.337]	Endorsed
H8	TIL → JP	0.315	4.971	0.000	[0.216; 0.409]	Endorsed
H9	TL → EE → AOC	0.094	3.179	0.001	[0.048; 0.139]	Endorsed
H10	TL → EE → JP	0.205	4.806	0.000	[0.139; 0.271]	Endorsed
H11	TL → TIL → AOC	0.182	4.495	0.000	[0.122; 0.243]	Endorsed
H12	TL → TIL → JP	0.225	4.880	0.000	[0.148; 0.302]	Endorsed

Note: All reported CIs are Bias-Corrected and Accelerated (BCa) 95% confidence intervals.

Source: Processed by the Researcher, 2026

Discussion

At the University of The Gambia, this study offers a thorough grasp of the mechanisms relating transformative leadership to employee outcomes. The findings demonstrate that affective organizational commitment and work performance are both strongly influenced by transformational leadership; however, this influence is mainly indirect, functioning through the concurrent mediation functions of employee engagement and trust in leadership (Udin, 2023).

Direct consequences. Strong direct effects of transformative leadership on employee engagement (H3), trust in leadership (H4), and commitment and performance (H5-H8) were discovered in the study. This emphasizes how crucial these mental states are as direct results of leadership. Leadership has a direct emotional impact on employees' sense of belonging, as evidenced by the large direct effect of transformational leadership on affective organizational commitment (H1). However, the absence of a direct impact on job performance (H2) implies that the relational (trust) and motivational (engagement) pathways are crucial for performance (Gittell et al., 2010).

The verified mediation theories are this study's primary contribution. It was discovered that trust in leadership and employee involvement were important mediators. A motivational pathway is highlighted by the indirect impacts through engagement (H9, H10): transformative leaders motivate and inspire their staff, which raises commitment and performance. A relationship pathway is highlighted by the indirect benefits through trust (H11, H12): leaders who are fair, consistent, and encouraging develop trust, which in turn promotes commitment and performance. Crucially, the relationship between transformational leadership and job performance was fully mediated by both engagement and trust (H10 and H12). This means that the impact of leadership on performance can be fully explained by its capacity to increase engagement and foster trust (Håvold et al., 2021). Both mediators (H9 and H11) served as partial mediators for affective commitment because leadership had a direct impact as well.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study makes three theoretical contributions that directly respond to the gaps identified in the Introduction. First, by testing employee engagement and trust in leadership as parallel mediators, the study resolves a key theoretical ambiguity: whether transformational leadership influences employee outcomes primarily through motivational or relational mechanisms. The findings show that both pathways are significant and complementary, supporting a dual-mediation model.

Second, the study challenges the implicit Western-centric assumption that transformational leadership directly affects job performance. The non-significant direct path (TL → JP) combined with significant indirect paths through engagement and trust indicates that in a West African higher education context, leadership effectiveness is fully contingent on intermediate psychological states.

Third, the study provides empirical evidence from an under-researched geographic setting (West Africa), addressing the call for more diverse samples in organizational behaviour research. By focusing on affective organizational commitment, the most valuable form of commitment the study shows that transformational leadership can foster emotional attachment even in resource-constrained environments, but only when engagement and trust are actively cultivated. This finding enriches the literature

on commitment in developing countries, where necessity-based commitment often dominates.

For university managers and policymakers, the message is clear. Training leaders to be transformational to articulate a vision, show genuine care for staff, and encourage creative thinking is valuable, but it is not enough on its own. Leaders must also actively build engagement and trust. This means regularly recognizing employee contributions, providing meaningful feedback, and creating opportunities for staff to grow. It also means being transparent, keeping promises, and treating people fairly. When employees see that their leaders are consistent and honest, trust grows, and with trust comes higher commitment and better performance.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the data are cross-sectional, making it difficult to establish causality definitively, even though the relationships were hypothesized based on theory. Second, the study relied entirely on self-reported questionnaires, introducing the risk of common method bias. Third, the research was conducted at a single public university, which may limit generalizability to other sectors or countries.

Future studies should address these limitations by using longitudinal designs to better establish cause-and-effect relationships. Researchers could incorporate objective measures of job performance, such as supervisor ratings or productivity data, alongside self-reports to reduce bias. Replicating this study at other universities in West Africa, or in other sectors such as healthcare or banking, would help determine whether the findings hold across different settings.

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