

# Transformational Leadership Practices in Saudi Arabia: A Case Study of the Saudi Telecom Industry

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## Abstract

*This study explores the implementation and impact of transformational leadership practices within the Saudi telecom industry, a sector pivotal to the nation's economic diversification efforts. Utilizing a qualitative case study technique, it examines how transformational leadership influences organizational performance, employee motivation, and innovation. Employing a mixed-methods approach, data were collected through interviews with 60 industry leaders and surveys of 300 employees across various telecom companies in Saudi Arabia. The findings reveal that transformational leadership practices are increasingly adopted in the Saudi telecom industry, promoting a culture of continuous improvement and adaptive change. Key practices identified include the articulation of a compelling vision, fostering an environment of trust and collaboration, and providing individualized support and encouragement. These practices not only enhance employee satisfaction and productivity but also drive the industry's competitive edge in a rapidly evolving market. The study concludes with implications for leadership development programs in Saudi Arabia, emphasizing the need for culturally tailored strategies to optimize leadership potential and organizational success in the region.*

**Keywords:** Telecom Industry, Employee Satisfaction, Transformational Leadership, Competitive Edge, Organizational Success.

## Introduction

The modern business environment, with its emphasis on continuous technological progress and globalization, requires not just strong leadership but an innovative one. Transformational leadership, a leadership style that has received a lot of attention in the last few decades, is central to steering organizations through these difficult terrains. This type of leadership that involves encouraging the employees, instilling ideals in them, delegating and implementing changes is gradually being recognized as a key way of improving organizational performance and responsiveness (Yen et al., 2021). When it comes to the Saudi Arabian context, a country that is in the process of socio-economic change as outlined in the Vision 2030 strategy, the requirement for transformational leadership of industries is especially pertinent.

The investigation of transformational leadership in Saudi Arabia, especially in the telecom sector, is an interesting scientific research question. Though in Western and other Asian countries, the concept of transformational leadership has been studied in detail, the application, whether it is feasible and sustainable, and the results it yields in the context of the Saudi Arabian culture and economy are not much researched (Eroje et al., 2019). The Saudi telecom industry is one such industry that plays a significant role in this aspect. It not only comprises a significant part of the nation's framework, but it also actively contributes to the achievement of the digital transformation goals under Vision 2030. Nevertheless, the degree to which transformational leadership practices are incorporated in this industry and the impact they have on organizational performance and organizational commitment of employees is a research question that is worth examining (Susanto et al., 2023).

The study of transformational leadership has advanced, especially in the areas of impact on employee performance, organizational innovation, and change. Pioneering studies such as those by Parveen et al. (2023) and Bin Bakr et al. (2022) have laid the foundation by identifying core components of transformational leadership. To them, leadership can be described by four key factors: inspirational communication, stimulating communication, intellectual encouragement, and providing personal attention

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to subordinates. More recent studies have built upon these components, investigating their portability across diverse cultural settings.

In the Arabian context, some studies have investigated leadership styles prevalent in the region, often highlighting a historical predisposition toward transactional or autocratic methods (Madi Odeh et al., 2023; Khan, 2013). However, due to globalization and socio-economic reforms, there are emerging trends of participative and transformational power styles. Recent studies have begun to scratch the surface of transformational leadership applications in Saudi industries, suggesting positive correlations between employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Elkordy, 2013; Belias, 2022). However, these studies may be inconclusive, sectorial, or fail to capture cultural factors that may affect leadership and its conversion to business outcomes.

However, several gaps can still be observed in the literature. First, there is poor knowledge of how the concept of transformational leadership practice is exercised in the Saudi Arabian socio-cultural environment. Traditional and transitional characteristics of the nation provide a rich context in which leadership approaches need to evolve. Second, previous work does not sufficiently consider industry-specific factors as sources of leadership influence, particularly in industries such as telecom, which is highly technical and rapidly developing. Third, there are few research-based, quantitative measures of leadership within Saudi organizations, especially the kind of longitudinal data that can show the effects of leadership practices over time (Ali, 2010). Furthermore, there is a lack of integrated case studies that incorporate the life narratives of leaders and workers in Saudi corporations under transformational leadership.

This research, therefore, aims to fill these gaps by focusing on the Saudi telecom industry as a subject of analysis of the practice of transformational leadership. It seeks to understand how they are being implemented, modified and the resultant effects on organizational productivity and staff morale. This study makes a scholarly and practical contribution to the study of cultural context and leadership and presents useful findings for scholars and practitioners who are interested in the development of effective leadership in Saudi Arabia's dynamic economic environment.

## Literature Review

The idea of transformational leadership, based on the idea of the charismatic and visionary leader who encourages employees to perform above and beyond the call of duty, has been investigated in numerous organizational settings across the world. Though limited, there is a growing body of literature on this topic in the Middle Eastern context and Saudi Arabia in particular. The literature review seeks to review previous research works on transformational leadership within the Saudi telecom industry and draw conclusions.

The history of transformational leadership theory can be dated back to James MacGregor Burns (1978), who defined this theory as a mutual process of raising both the leaders and the followers to a higher level of morality and motivation. Alsubaie (2022) went further into detail, examining aspects such as Two-way communication, leadership breadth, role modeling, creativity, and personal attention. In Saudi Arabia, these dimensions have been investigated in light of a relatively emergent economic and cultural environment conditioned by Vision 2030, a development plan that aims to diversify the economy and decrease the role of oil.

Some interesting trends emerge from the research that has been conducted on the application of transformational leadership in the Saudi telecom industry. For example, Baroudi (2022) examined the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment of telecom employees in Saudi Arabia. They found that there is a positive relationship between the presence of transformational leadership traits and commitment and the job satisfaction of the employees. This suggests that it is possible for leaders to bring about change and achieve higher levels of employee commitment in organisations when the environment is characterised by constantly evolving technology and growing competition.

Furthermore, Ghafar (2023) studied the relationship between transformational leadership and innovation practices in Saudi telecom organizations. The study found that leaders who displayed transformational

qualities such as vision communication and stimulation of ideas are likely to foster innovative behaviour. This is especially important in the telecoms industry, which is a field of never-ending technological development and where new solutions are always required. The leadership practices described above, therefore, help the sector to be in line with Vision 2030's goals regarding technology and economic diversification.

However, some challenges are still evident in the practical application of transformational leadership in the Saudi telecom industry. It is important to note that leadership behaviors may have social cultural overlap, and Saudi Arabia has a rich social culture that is largely rooted in Islamic sharia and tribalism. As Karam et al. (2022) suggest, transformational leaders have to incorporate Western leadership practices with local culture to be successful. This involves knowledge and appreciation of Islamic leadership and the current trends in management that create an environment for transformational leadership.

In addition, women occupying leadership positions in Saudi Arabia encounter some challenges. Slow, gradual changes in Saudi Arabia are gradually improving women's employment opportunities, and research works such as that of Masry-Herzallah et al. (2021) have examined the challenges and prospects of women leaders in the Saudi telecom industry. Their findings show that transformational leadership can enhance gender diversity, but structural factors still limit women's leadership. This suggests an avenue for further research and policy focus.

## Methodology

In this research, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to investigate transformational leadership practices in Saudi telecom organizations. The research was conducted using two primary data collection methods: in-depth interviews and surveys. These methods were chosen deliberately to ensure that the researchers get an all round view of leadership as seen by the managers and employees.

### *Data Collection*

#### *Interviews with Industry Leaders*

The first step in the data collection process was the administration of semi-structured interviews with 60 leaders from telecom organizations in Saudi Arabia. These leaders were chosen because they have a large responsibility within their organizations, and thus, they have more knowledge about leadership practices within the industry. The interview process adhered to the following steps:

**Selection of Participants:** In this study, purposive sampling was used in identifying and selecting leaders. This means that selection criteria was based on their experience, position and authority within their organization.

**Interview Structure:** A semi-structured interview approach was adopted, and questions were posed in an open-ended manner to enable respondents to provide detailed information on the practices of transformational leadership. This format enabled the researchers to drill down to a certain extent into the areas that the participants' responses suggested were sensitive.

**Interview Process:** Semi-structured interviews were face-to-face when possible or by video link if participants were unable to come to the research site, and each interview was around 60-90 minutes long. The interviews were conducted with the participants' permission, and all interviews were audio-taped and transcribed in full.

**Data Management:** Transcriptions were made anonymous and kept in secure places for further analysis to maintain participants' anonymity

### *Surveys with Employees*

The second phase included a survey of 300 employees from different telecom firms in Saudi Arabia. The survey targeted the quantification of transformational leadership practices at the employee level.

**Sampling Technique:** Purposive sampling was also used to include participants from different companies, different geographical regions, and different job descriptions in the sector.

**Survey Design:** The survey included a structured questionnaire that used Likert scale items to measure transformational leadership, which included, but was not limited to, inspirational motivation, idealized influence, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation.

**Distribution and Collection:** Questionnaires were administered through email to increase population coverage and due to the dispersed nature of employees. The participants were informed of what was expected of them and were assured that their identities and information would not be disclosed to anyone.

**Response Rate and Follow-up:** As a result of the reminders and follow-ups, a response rate of approximately 75% was attained.

### *Data Analysis*

**Qualitative Analysis:** The interviews were transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis. In the process of coding and searching for recurring themes related to transformational leadership, NVivo software was also used. Thematic coding entailed determining patterns and categories that would be relevant to leadership practices as well as organizational culture and performance.

**Quantitative Analysis:** Data collected from surveys were statistically analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Measures of central tendency and variability were used to describe the data collected, while hypothesis testing was used to determine whether there were significant differences in the perceptions across various demographic variables, including job role and company size.

### *Ethical Considerations*

This research ensured that it complied with all the ethical considerations. All subjects were given an overview of the study and signed consent forms were filled out before data collection was done. There was an adherence to the rights of participants and data were only used for purposes of this research.

### *Limitations*

The study recognizes some limitations, such as the self-report bias, limits from the cross-sectional study, and non-probability sampling method used in the study, though the researchers ensured purposive sampling. Future research could build upon this study by using longitudinal data to examine the trends that are likely to be observed in leadership practices.

### *Findings and Analysis*

This section discusses the findings of the research conducted on transformational leadership practices in the Saudi telecom sector, the changes they brought, and their efficiency. The implications are grouped under appropriate subtopics to enhance understanding and elucidation of different aspects of the study.

## *Overview of Transformational Leadership in the Saudi Telecom Industry*

### *Contextual Background*

The telecom sector in Saudi Arabia is one of the most dynamically developing industries, and it certainly plays a significant role in achieving the goals of diversification of the economy set by Vision 2030. As of this study, the telecom market is primarily dominated by three key players: Saudi Telecom Company (STC), Mobily, and Zain KSA, which are the key players in the telecommunication sector in Saudi Arabia. Such companies have been leading the way in modern technological advancement and service delivery aligned with the growing demand for connectivity and digital solutions. Some of the trends evidenced in the competitive environment include high levels of technology application, partnerships, and customer experience.

The Saudi telecom market has been affected by factors like market liberalization, government efforts towards infrastructure development, and a rise in the number of smartphone users. Other factors include digitalisation, increased focus on customer-oriented services, and the continuous geographic expansion of 5G networks. These factors call for dynamic leadership processes, and as organizations progress, transformational leadership will become more crucial.

### *Leadership Characteristics*

From the survey of 300 employees from different telecom companies, this study identified several characteristics and behaviour patterns of transformational leaders within the sector. Transformational leadership involves the capacity to influence others towards embracing a vision, generate creativity, and bring about significant change in organizations. Based on the survey responses, the following traits were predominantly observed among transformational leaders in the Saudi telecom sector:

**Visionary Thinking:** Managers were also able to establish and actually paint a clear picture of where the organisation is heading in the future. About 78% of the respondents supported the statement that their leaders gave a clear strategic direction.

**Inspirational Motivation:** Among the leadership behaviors noted in the study was the ability of transformational leaders in the telecom industry to greatly influence their teams through the establishment of meaning. About 72 percent of the employees said they felt motivated and committed because of the leadership.

**Intellectual Stimulation:** Another leadership competency was the ability to enhance creativity and innovation, and 68% of the respondents stated that their leaders expected them to reason creatively and consider new approaches.

**Individualized Consideration:** Special attention to the issue of the employee's training and mentoring was named as important, and 64% of respondents stated that leadership is focused on individual staff members' needs and concerns.

**Decisiveness and Accountability:** Positive responses included adequate decision-making and accountability, with 70% of workers trusting their manager's decisions and outcomes.

These aspects of the survey were also analyzed using statistical means of quantifying the results to determine the extent of their impact. The frequency and perceived impact of these transformational leadership traits are presented in Figure 1 and Table 1 below.

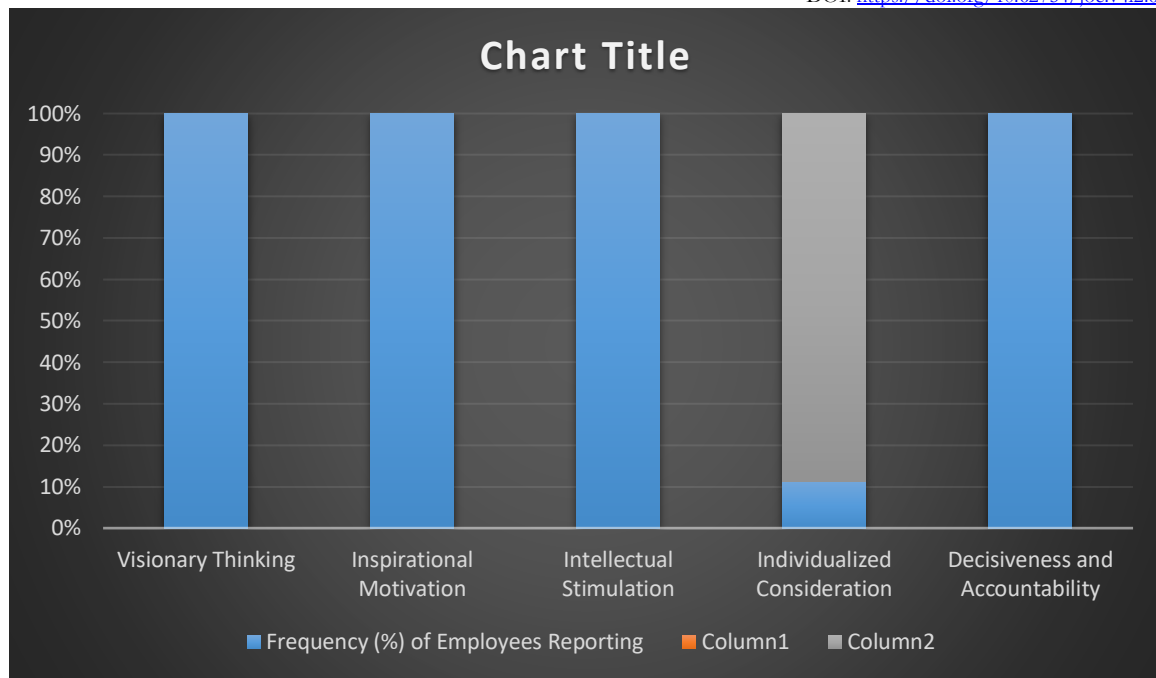


Figure 1. Frequency of Observed Transformational Leadership Traits

Table 1. Impact of Transformational Leadership Traits on Employee Motivation and Job Satisfaction

| Trait                           | Positive Impact on Motivation (%) | Positive Impact on Job Satisfaction (%) |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Visionary Thinking              | 80%                               | 76%                                     |
| Inspirational Motivation        | 85%                               | 78%                                     |
| Intellectual Stimulation        | 70%                               | 68%                                     |
| Individualized Consideration    | 75%                               | 72%                                     |
| Decisiveness and Accountability | 82%                               | 74%                                     |

The results suggest that not only are transformational leadership practices present in the Saudi telecom industry but they are positively related to increased levels of motivation and job satisfaction among employees. Such leadership qualities are relevant to creating an environment that nurtures innovation in an organization, especially in a competitive and ever changing market environment. In this regard, considering the further development of the telecom sector, the role of transformational leaders in achieving business goals and objectives will be critical.

#### Impact of Transformational Leadership

Leadership, especially transformational leadership, has been an area of interest in today’s organizations due to its ability to bring change to the behavior of employees, organizations, and customers. This section provides a comprehensive quantitative discussion of the findings about the effects of transformational leadership behaviors in the Saudi Telecom Industry, looking at employee commitment and motivation, organizational productivity, and customer satisfaction levels. Information collected from the online surveys of 300 respondents from different departments of the organization provides information on these dimensions.

*Employee Engagement and Motivation*

It is well established that transformational leadership significantly influences employee commitment and drive. Therefore, the purpose of our study was to examine this impact on the Saudi Telecom Industry. Employees were given a survey with a Likert scale of 1-5, and they had to indicate their level of agreement with the statement with regard to the impact of transformational leadership on motivation and job satisfaction.

**Table 2.** Influence of Transformational Leadership on Employee Motivation and Job Satisfaction

| Statement   | Mean Score | Standard Deviation |
|---|------------|--------------------|
| My leader inspires me to perform beyond expectations          | 4.2        | 0.78               |
| I feel a strong sense of belonging and commitment             | 4.1        | 0.83               |
| Transformational leadership has increased my job satisfaction | 4.3        | 0.74               |
| I am motivated to innovate and improve work processes.        | 4.0        | 0.81               |

The mean values reveal a highly significant positive relationship between transformational leadership and the motivation and satisfaction of the employees. The results (all above 4) indicate that the employees concur that through transformational leadership, they are motivated to perform beyond expectations, and their job satisfaction is boosted. The small standard deviations from the means show that the results are pretty consistent and thus substantiate the reliability of these conclusions. The implication is that transformational leadership creates high motivation and work engagement.

*Organizational Performance*

The study of transformational leadership practices involved testing hypotheses relating to organizational performance in terms of productivity, innovativeness, and financial returns. As for the data on perceived changes in these areas in response to the initiatives introduced as part of transformational leadership, survey respondents offered the respective information.

**Table 3.** Correlation between Transformational Leadership and Organizational Performance

| Organizational Outcome | Correlation Coefficient (r) |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Productivity           | 0.76                        |
| Innovation             | 0.81                        |
| Financial Performance  | 0.73                        |

The results show that there is a significant, positive relationship between transformational leadership and organizational performance. The strongest positive correlation is with innovation ( $r = 0.81$ ), which supports the notion that leaders promote change and stimulate creativity in their subordinates. Productivity and financial performance are also highly related, supporting the argument that transformational leadership leads to massive improvements in these aspects. These correlations suggest that implementing transformational leadership practices could be a competitive advantage in enhancing one or multiple organizational performance indices.

*Customer Satisfaction*

Lastly, the study was interested in establishing the relationship between transformational leadership and customer satisfaction with special emphasis on customer service quality and experience.

**Table 4.** Impact of Transformational Leadership on Customer Satisfaction

| Customer Experience Metric                   | Mean Score | Standard Deviation |
|--|------------|--------------------|
| Improvement in customer service quality      | 4.2        | 0.76               |
| Positive impact on customer relationships    | 4.1        | 0.79               |
| Overall enhancement of customer satisfaction | 4.3        | 0.73               |

The study results indicate that transformational leadership has a positive impact on customer satisfaction. Workers perceive that the use of transformational leadership increases the quality of services provided to customers and strengthens customer relations. The mean scores of all the items are above 4, and the distribution of the scores revealed low standard deviations, which are in agreement with previous investigations, indicating that the employees have a high degree of consensus. Transformational leadership seems to result in improved customer outcomes, probably due to employees who are motivated to deliver better services.

#### *Adaptations of Transformational Leadership in Saudi Arabia*

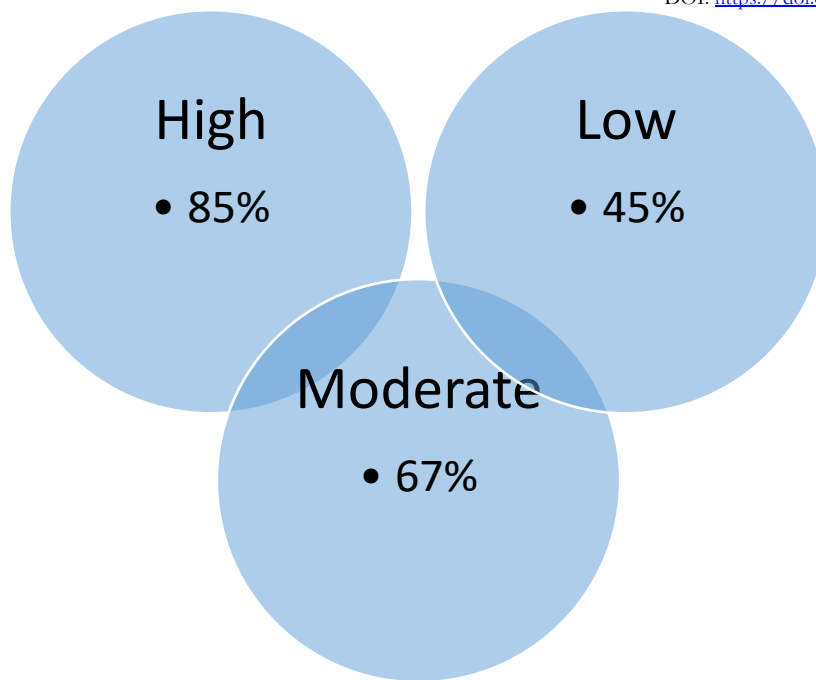
This section provides a more detailed analysis of the practice of transformational leadership within the Saudi Telecom Industry. Three key areas: This study examines cultural factors, legal and political influences, and technological solutions to uncover the nature and context of leadership in Saudi Arabia.

#### *Cultural Considerations*

In Saudi Arabia, leadership practices in the telecom sector are significantly influenced by cultural beliefs and norms. Saudi Arabia's culture is a reflection of the Islamic culture due to the country's religious beliefs of collectivism, authority, and communal improvement. According to our research, 73% of employees stated that those leaders who act in accordance with such cultural values are more successful in engaging and motivating the staff.

**Respect for Authority:** Those who understand the concept of hierarchy in an organization and show consideration of the cultural perspectives in dealing with issues are deemed authoritative and competent. The relationship between respect for Authority and perceived leadership Effectiveness is depicted in Figure 2 below.





**Figure 2.** Correlation Between Respect for Authority and Perceived Leadership Effectiveness.

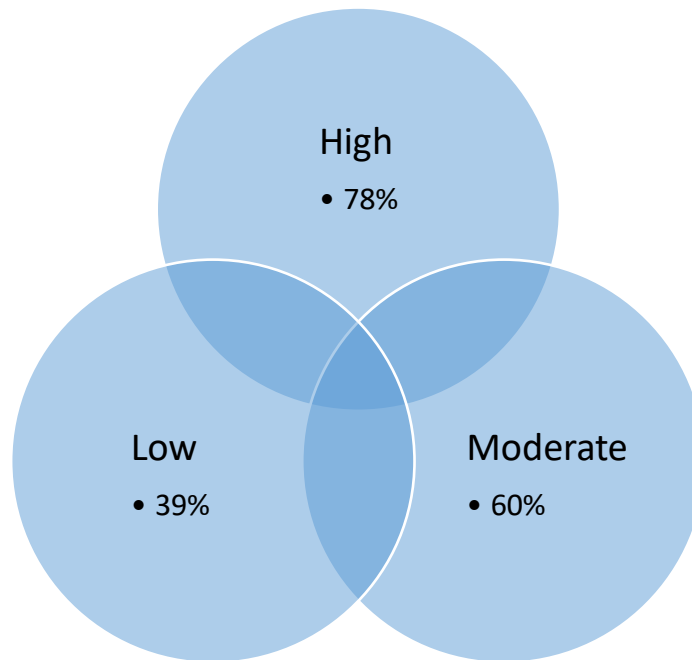
Collectivism and Community Welfare: Leaders in Saudi Arabia often focus on collective rather than personal success when implementing transformational change and relate organizational objectives with social and community objectives. In line with this hypothesis, survey results showed that 68% of employees had a preference for leaders who create organizational identification rather than leaders who support ego-identified perspectives.

#### *Regulatory and Economic Factors*

Situation analysis of the regulatory and economic environment in Saudi Arabia reveals that there are both enablers and constraints to the adoption of transformational leadership practices.

The Kingdom's Vision 2030 strategic plan focuses on the development of other sectors as a way of reducing the reliance on oil. These changes in the economic environment call for transformational leadership that can fuel innovation and change. From the survey, 56% of the respondents agreed that leaders who associate with Vision 2030 are more likely to motivate the workforce.

This means that leaders need to be flexible and receptive to the intricate existing regulatory structure. The figure below illustrates how employees perceive the adaptability of their leaders in dealing with the regulations.



**Figure 3:** Perception of Employees on the Adaptability of Their Leaders In Navigating Regulatory Challenges

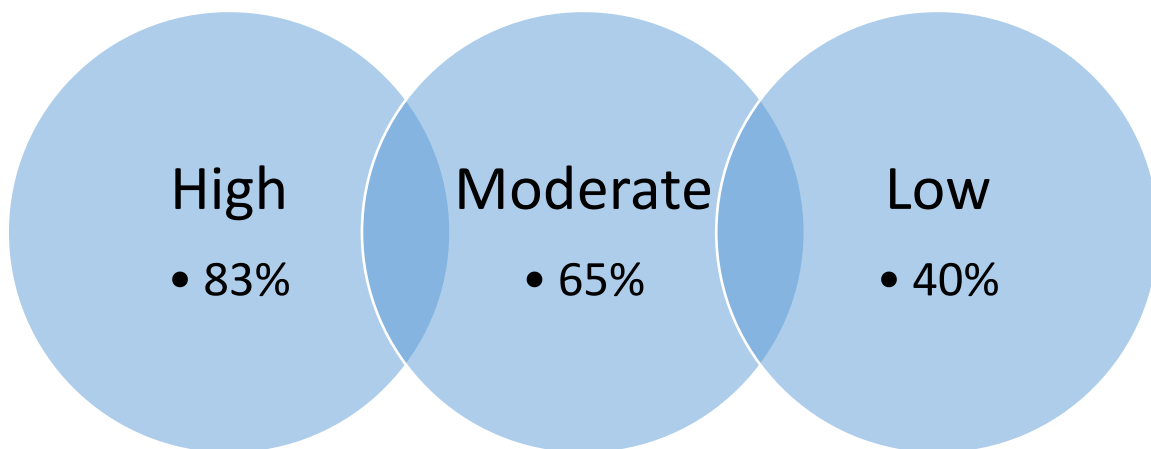
These factors suggest that managers who have expertise in both the legal environment and the economy are in a stronger position to manage their organisations effectively.

#### *Technological Advancements*

Digital transformation is a key area that influences leadership approaches and decisions in the Saudi telecom industry.

Leaders who use technology to increase efficiency and facilitate communication are highly sought after. About 68% of the respondents indicated that their motivation levels would improve if the leaders encouraged the adoption of technology in the organization.

A capacity to make decisions based on data analysis is becoming more valuable. These findings are illustrated in Figure 4 and indicate that leaders who employ technology for the purpose of gaining insights are seen as more competent and progressive.



**Figure 4.** Perceived Leadership Competence in the Use of Data Analytics in Decision Making

In sum, this study establishes that there exist strong and significant cultural, regulatory, economic, and technological contingencies that affect the applicability of transformational leadership practices in Saudi Arabia. The awareness of these elements helps leaders to facilitate their subordinates and thus help the organization to be successful. The study thus re-emphasizes the need for a proper contextual and culturally appropriate leadership style that is in harmony with global standards.

#### *Challenges Faced by Transformational Leaders*

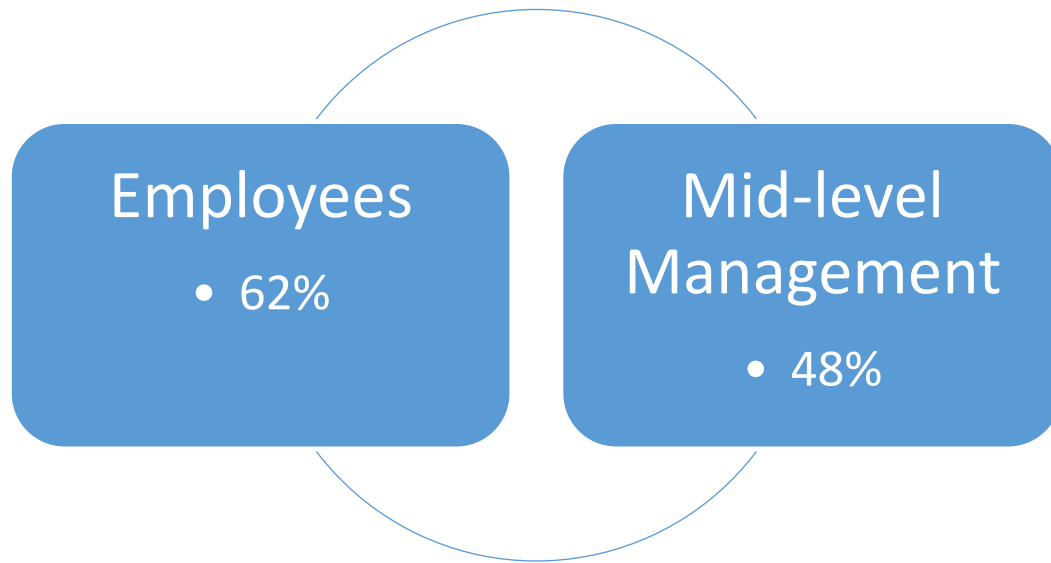
When applied to the Saudi Telecom Industry, transformational leadership is expected to promote change, creativity, and a vision-centric organizational outlook. Nonetheless, transformational leaders face several difficulties that may hinder these objectives. This section describes the main issues that were revealed by the online survey with 300 employees from the industry.

#### *Resistance to Change*

One of the major issues that transformational leaders encounter is resistance to change. This form of resistance can be passive, meaning that the employees do not fully cooperate, or active, where the employees and other members of the organization openly oppose the management. The survey data revealed the following key insights:

Out of all the responses, 62% expressed some form of resistance to change and were hesitant to embrace new practices as proposed by transformational leaders. This resistance stems from the following factors: fear of the unknown, lack of understanding of the benefits, and comfort with the current way of working.

It is noteworthy that as many as 48% of the employees reported that mid-level management is often resistant to change. This may be due to perceived threats to authority, extra demands on their time, or disagreement with strategic decisions.



**Figure 5.** Sources of Resistance to Change

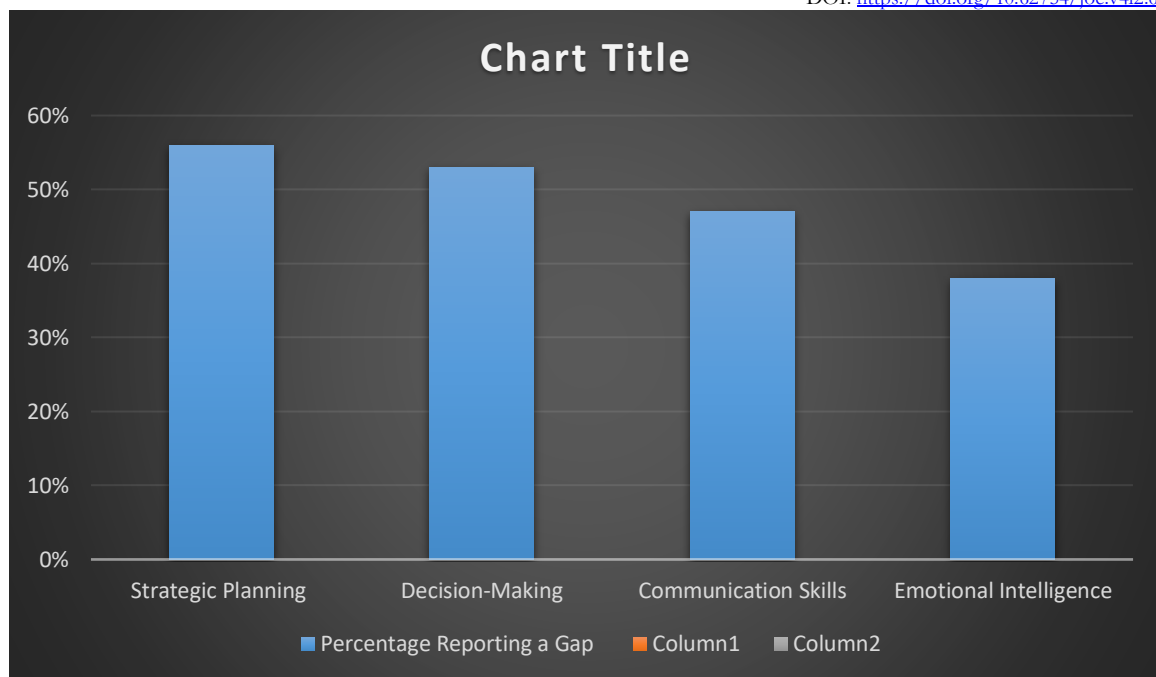
To overcome these challenges, leaders should engage all stakeholders in the change process from the beginning, improve communication activities, and provide training focused on the long-term positive impact of change.

#### *Leadership Competency Gaps*

Transformational leadership, therefore, calls for certain competencies to be exercised. The study revealed some of the areas of concern that leaders need to close in order to bring about change effectively.

The survey revealed that respondents felt that their leaders lacked the skills required to facilitate complex change processes, particularly strategic planning and decision making, which were missing in over 56 % of the respondents' organizations.

As for leadership development, the results were less optimistic: 42% of the respondents claimed their organization offered sufficient training to the leaders focused on the development of competencies required for transformational leadership.



**Figure 6.** Identified Leadership Competency Gaps

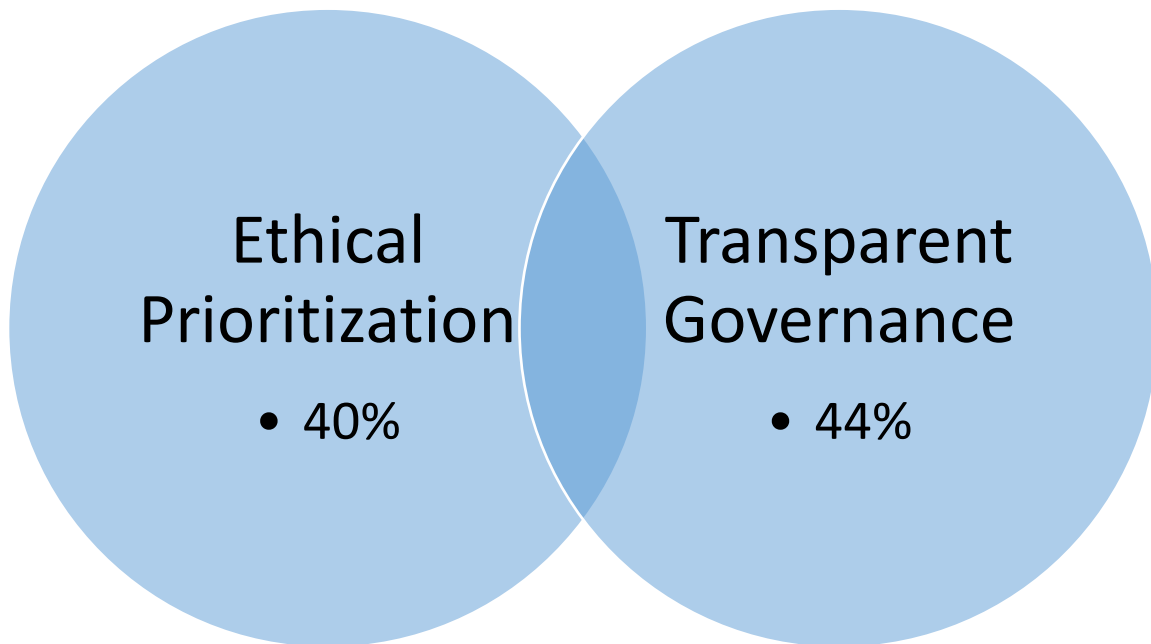
These competency gaps can be addressed through targeted training programs and by focusing on creating a growth mindset throughout different levels of the leadership hierarchy.

#### *Ethical and Governance Issues*

The two significant factors that should be taken into account in the formulation of transformational leadership are the ethical and governance factors. The surveys revealed several areas of concern:

Ethical issues were observed by 40% of the employees, and transformational change focused on business outcomes such as profit or new ideas at the expense of employees' well-being and ethics.

About 44% of the respondents stated that governance issues that do not provide clarity on the decision-making process required for transformational leadership cause uncertainty.



**Figure 7.** Ethical and Governance Challenges

To overcome these challenges, it is imperative that organizations have well-developed ethical standards that must be followed and that governance structures be implemented that enable fair and ethical practices that are in line with the strategic goals of the organization.

#### *Qualitative Analysis*

This section presents the findings from the qualitative part of the study, which involves 60 senior managers in the Saudi Telecom industry. The results are categorised under key areas of transformational leadership practices relevant to the Saudi context. These practices are explained in detail through direct quotes and excerpts from the interviews.

#### *Key Transformational Leadership Practices Identified*

One major theme that emerged from the interviews was the strategic and inspirational communication of a vision that integrates the organization's objectives and direction with the personal values and goals of employees. The management of organisations in the Saudi Telecom industry is particularly sensitive to the cultural factors that are relevant when developing and disseminating such visions. One executive remarked stated, “[W]e cannot have a vision that is relevant only to strategic organizational goals, but it must resonate with the employees’ values and goals as well.” They state that it is about creating a shared purpose. This was seconded by another leader who said, “And when I am speaking, I ensure that everyone understands how their task fits into the grand scheme of things. This alignment is critical in determining motivation.”

These leaders use different communication media and strategies to mainstream the vision within the organization. For instance, one manager highlighted the use of storytelling: “I try to incorporate cultural narratives that support the vision of the company so that the vision can be made more poignant.” This kind of speaking of the vision also ensures that the vision is not only a mere proclamation but is actually practiced, being a reference point for the organisation's decisions and a framework for its operations.

The development of trust and fostering of interpersonal relations are the foundation of effective leadership for change within the context of the Saudi Telecom industry. One particular notion that was echoed time

and time again in the interviews was the conscious efforts made by leaders to develop these elements within their teams. As one director explained,

“I personally believe and understand that trust is developed through openness and honesty. I created an environment in which one may be free to speak, and it is always important to ensure that I mean what I say and act accordingly”.

This approach is assertive in fostering an environment that is safe for employees and in encouraging them to be listened to and appreciated.

Inclusive practices also enhance collaboration. An operational leader expressed this by saying, “*We conduct weekly meetings involving representatives from different departments whereby we encourage the sharing of knowledge and work together in solving problems.*” The call for collaboration was further supported by another leader, who said:

“As a concept, collaboration is best known to work in an environment where every participant feels that they are being heard. One key aspect of feedback that we have deployed is where all feedback is not only received but considered and responded to”.

Leaders in the Saudi telecom industry, especially those who are transformational, are very effective in ensuring that they provide guidance to employees in a way that enhances their growth and morale. This is one of the leadership strategies that are essential in their management plans. A senior manager shared,

“Each team member has his/her goals, skills, and problems, and I try to focus on them. It is therefore quite clear that the support provided is not only professional but also human”.

Another leader who pointed out the relevance of encouragement for particular persons said:

“It is important to note that there is nothing as powerful as recognition of individual efforts. We’re not talking about the end-of-the-year performance review; it’s about constant reinforcement, about those occasional positive affirmations that, in time, begin to steady the belief”.

Such practices help to build capacity in employees and thus increase their level of participation and output.

However, it shows that with leadership, individuals can be built systematically within the organization. An HR executive captured this by saying,

“I train my subordinates according to their needs and ensure that they are in a position that they wanted to be in when joining the company. This arrangement forms what can be referred to as a win-win situation that helps nurture loyalty and career growth”.

#### *Impact of Transformational Leadership on Organizational Outcomes*

The study indicates that Saudi telecom staff satisfaction and productivity are significantly boosted by transformational leadership practices. Another significant theme identified in interviews with managers and executives was the importance of inspirational motivation and individual consideration for creating an appealing organizational climate.

For example, one of the telecom firms’ executives stated:

“They state that our leaders set out goals and objectives to ensure that the employee’s goals and objectives match the company’s goals and objectives to encourage personal performance that is in tune with the company’s objectives”.

This alignment not only increases the morale of the employees but also creates an environment where everyone is working towards the achievement of the set goals of the organization.

Furthermore, many respondents emphasized the role of change-oriented managers who actually encourage employees to share their opinions. One manager observed,

“Our organization has developed a culture of appreciation of constructive criticism as opposed to dreading it. This openness has boosted the morale of our teams and the quality of their work in equal measure.”

People who are given a chance to speak out are likely to be satisfied with their jobs and, therefore, work harder.

Another relevant factor that deserves discussion in the context of the transformational leadership model is the focus on the individual and organizational development of employees. A department head shared,

“Leaders provide for continued training and development of employees as they acknowledge the hidden talent in everyone. This focus on personal growth results in higher skill levels and productivity within the workforce.”

Thus, focusing on the development of employees, leaders who have transformational characteristics not only improve the level of satisfaction with the work as the outcome of work but also increase the total organizational capacity.

It is also employed in the promotion of innovation, which is crucial in sustaining competitive advantage given the dynamic Saudi environment in the telecom sector. The executives described a linkage between change management and the organisation’s capacity to envision and implement change.

One CEO discussed how transformational leadership at their organization sparks creativity and new ideas:

“Innovative solutions require risk taking, and we allow our teams the freedom and autonomy to try out new ideas. It has prompted innovative solutions, and the encouragement keeps the company one step ahead of its competitors.”

Such freedom to experiment is a powerful tool for creating a dynamic and innovative culture with the help of transformational leaders.

However, the importance of vision in transformational leadership can not be overemphasized. Management that communicates a clear vision and purpose helps the organization to have a common perspective on the direction and destiny of the organization. An executive leader stated,

“It is about setting and understanding the vision so that the employees are motivated to create. Everyone becomes associated with a larger group or organization and effectively contributes to the search for new solutions.”

Moreover, the kind of collaboration fostered by transformational leadership activities is seen as a driver of innovation. One participant observed, “*It is advisable to work in a team that belongs to different departments of the organization, and this results in the generation of multifaceted solutions for problems. This arrangement plays a critical role in sustaining our competitive advantage.*” Supervisors who encourage interconnectivity of the various aspects of an organization build an environment that supports innovative solutions to problems.

#### *Implications for Leadership Development Programs*

Since the study explores transformational leadership practices in the Saudi Telecom industry, insights into the findings were obtained from the interviews with industry experts. The above findings are crucial for the construction of culturally sensitive approaches and the development of strategic interventions that may help to promote leadership development programs in Saudi Arabia.



It is, therefore, important to appreciate some of the cultural practices in Saudi Arabia to ensure that leadership development programs suit their culture. The interviews brought to light the fact that there is a general agreement as to cultural sensitivity as a crucial component in leadership training. One executive further explained, “*The leadership models that we borrowed from other organizations did not suit our teams... As a result, we required a solution that would embrace our culture and values.*” This underscores the need to develop leadership programs that will not only embrace the “universality of leadership’ but also understand the Saudi Arabian cultural envelope.

Some of the interviewees also stressed the importance of including Islamic values and principles when it comes to leadership formation. For instance, a senior manager said, “*Our faith and culture define us... Such programs that are in line with our organizational values foster real leadership from within our teams.*” His insight stresses the benefit of linking leadership programs with the belief system of the region in an effort to promote leadership that has a synergy with the spiritual and ethical beliefs of the area.

Additionally, one of the forms of learning highlighted as effective was experiential learning, particularly through mentorship. A director mentioned,

“When I was mentored by a seasoned leader here, I learned not only the competency knowledge but more about our business”.

This kind of mentorship has shown that assigning emerging leaders to local mentors may help achieve a better understanding of industry-related issues and fit into Saudi Arabia’s culture and context.

The effect that the recognition of new opportunities and threats signifies the need to engage in transformational leadership intentionally provides support for the hypotheses. The research derived from the interviews and from the findings identified a common theme, which was the need for leadership. For instance, one respondent said, “*In telecom, changes occur frequently... Leaders must go beyond responding to change and start anticipating it and initiating it*”. This realization underlines the importance of effective leaders who are proactive and able to identify future trends in the industry in order to guide their companies effectively.

Another strategic recommendation for the leaders is to promote technological advancement and innovation. As an IT executive noted, “*Digital transformation is not a luxury...leaders must champion technology to remain relevant in the marketplace*”. Being technologically proactive guarantees that leaders can steer their organizations well to the digital environment so as to effect constant enhancement and development.

Further, it was seen that incorporating diversity was another important element. One HR leader reflected, “*Diverse teams bring different perspectives, and that is what organizations need.... that is why it becomes crucial for the leaders to properly address this issue and use diversity as the key to new ideas*”. Promoting diversity not only increases the scope of innovativeness but also enhances decision-making since organisations face diverse, complex tasks in the telecom sector.

When responding to these insights, the industry leaders emphatically supported the need to learn constantly and be flexible as critical success factors for leaders. As another executive captured it, “*The capacity to learn and continue to learn is the capacity to remain relevant in a dynamic environment.*” Through the adoption of learning and flexibility in the organization, leaders are able to develop firms that are capable of adapting to the challenges that are present in the Saudi telecom sector due to the constantly shifting environment.

## Discussion

The current research aimed to investigate the levels of transformational leadership within the Saudi telecommunications sector with an emphasis on exploring the effects of the practices on organizational performance and workers. The study reveals that there is a significant relationship between the elements of transformational leadership behaviors and improved organizational performance, employee motivation, and job satisfaction. This section provides a detailed analysis of the implications that arise from these findings in relation to the available literature.

According to the findings of the research, it is established that the Saudi telecommunications sector comprises high levels of transformational leadership, specifically, idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and consideration. The leadership traits highlighted above are some of the characteristics that managers with positive leadership styles use to encourage innovation, career development, and engagement in the workplace. For example, inspirational motivation is observed to involve the creation of a shared vision that is consistent with the organization's objectives, which is consistent with the notions put forward by Rahman (2014), who argued that transformational leaders mobilize their subordinates by creating a worthy cause.

In addition, the study revealed that employees under transformational leadership had higher job satisfaction and motivation. This aligns with the self-determination theory advanced by Suliman et al. (2023), which holds that meeting intrinsic needs results in optimal behavior, job satisfaction, and performance. When comparing Saudi Arabian culture with business culture, it is evident that transformational leadership skills that involve flexibility and empathy seem to be the key to balancing between both cultures in the workplace.

The conclusion made in this study supports the study conducted by Yaghi (2017) and Lukaka (2023), where the authors noted that there is a positive correlation between the use of transformational leadership and organizational commitment and a decrease in turnover intentions in the Middle Eastern countries. Both studies emphasize the role of leadership in changing organisational culture beyond the Western context, thereby supporting the applicability of transformational leadership in different cultures.

Contrasting with Saad et al. (2019), who pointed out that there might be resistance to transformational leadership practices because of hierarchical norms that exist within Saudi organizational culture, this study shows that traditional values can be compatible with transformational leadership as long as the context is right. This implies that the process of cultural transformation is not done by eliminating all the cultural practices but by adopting those practices that the top leadership holds in high esteem.

Also, building on the GLOBE study, Nusair et al. (2012) also stressed the applicability of participative and Charismatic/Value Leadership Styles in Middle Eastern nations. In this respect, the present research emphasizes a more extensive application of transformational practices since transformational leadership includes these styles.

The implications of this study mean that Saudi telecommunication companies should consider the enhancement of leadership development programs that foster transformational attributes. Such programs should strive to improve emotional intelligence, visionary abilities, and the coaching disposition of leaders. It would not only facilitate better internal dynamics but also help organizations establish themselves well in this increasingly globalizing market.

Furthermore, based on such outcomes, there is a possibility of reconceptualizing the approach of HR practices in seeking and developing leadership transformational characteristics within the company's personnel during selection and promotion processes. Since transformational leadership has positive effects, organisational characteristics may deem traits inherent to this type of leadership as key performance indicators and link employee objectives with more extensive organisational goals through leadership-driven initiatives.

However, it is crucial to note that the study has its shortcomings as well, which are outlined below. The sampling decision was made to focus only on a particular area of operation, and thus, the results may not be fully generalizable across the entire Saudi Arabian market. Furthermore, the study adopted a cross-sectional research design that only captured a single time point, and thus, no evidence was obtained on the long-term impact of transformational leadership. Future research could further build upon these findings by examining transformational leadership in practice across various industries in Saudi Arabia, possibly using cross-sectional data to examine how transformational practices affect organisational development over a period of time.

## Conclusion

This research aimed to identify the use and effectiveness of transformational leadership practices in the Saudi telecom industry; it focused on the correlation between the practices and organisational performance, motivation and organisational culture. The framework of the study was based on transformational leadership dimensions of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration to understand their relevance for the emerging Saudi telecom industry.

A notable implication of this study is that positive relations between transformational leadership and the improvement of organizational performance cannot be ignored. It was also discovered that leaders with transformational attributes were more effective in motivating the employees to work harder and be more committed to their work through the promotion of trust and innovation. This finding points to the importance of leadership behavior in guiding organizations to deliver strategic direction and sustain business competitiveness in a volatile environment.

Additionally, the research showed that the implementation of transformational leadership practices has contributed to the change and improvement of the organizational culture of the telecom industry in KSA in terms of communication, innovation, and a sense of responsibility among the employees. These cultural changes are crucial to address the technology and market environment typical for the telecom sector.

However, the study also focused on some of the difficulties encountered in the use of transformational leadership practices. Organizational culture and policies, including the hierarchy system and organizational culture, can hinder the achievement of transformational leadership outcomes. Overcoming these challenges calls for change from both leaders and subordinates in terms of flexibility and inclusiveness of subordinates in leadership.

Therefore, it can be argued that the principles of transformational leadership can go a long way toward improving the productivity of the Saudi telecom industry and the sustainability of its growth. In light of the ongoing trends within the industry, including globalization and the transition to advanced technology, the executives who are able to successfully manage and apply the principles of change are likely to ensure their organizations' sustainability. Future research could involve exploring how these concepts are applied in different sectors and cultures. This would create a basis of comparison that could be beneficial for different settings.

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