



## TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND ACADEMIC STAFF PERFORMANCE: THE MODERATING ROLE OF JOB SECURITY

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study investigates the effects of transformational leadership (TL) and job security (JS) on academic staff performance (PAS) in Ugandan universities and examines whether JS moderates the relationship between TL and PAS. An explanatory research design was employed, with data collected from 727 full-time academic staff across six public and private universities using structured questionnaires. Hierarchical regression and moderation analyses were conducted using SPSS 29. Results indicate that TL significantly predicts PAS, and JS also has a significant positive effect on PAS. Moreover, JS significantly moderates the relationship between TL and PAS, such that transformational leadership has a stronger positive effect on performance when employees perceive higher job security. The findings suggest that higher education institutions can enhance academic staff performance by simultaneously developing transformational leadership capacities among administrators and implementing policies that improve job security, including fair promotion pathways, stable contracts, and consistent remuneration practices. These combined interventions strengthen both individual and institutional performance outcomes.*

**KEYWORDS:** Transformational Leadership, Job Security, Academic Staff Performance.



## INTRODUCTION

Universities are globally recognised as engines of economic growth, social transformation, and innovation. They perform a threefold mission of teaching, research, and community engagement, and their performance directly influences national development trajectories (Al-Aamri et al., 2024). Academic staff are central to this mission, generating and disseminating knowledge, producing research outputs, and preparing the next generation of professionals and innovators (Norizan et al., 2025).

In today's increasingly competitive and unpredictable higher education landscape, institutional performance is evaluated in terms of teaching quality, research productivity, and community service (Turan et al., 2024). Universities that excel in these dimensions attract more students, secure greater research funding, and contribute more meaningfully to national development goals (Kılınç et al., 2025). In advanced economies such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, the creativity and knowledge generated in universities are not only commodified but also directly channelled into technological advancement and socio-economic transformation (Deuren, 2012). By contrast, many developing countries face significant performance challenges, as massification of higher education often outpaces available resources, undermining research capacity, innovation, and staff productivity (Suresh & Kumaravelu, 2017).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, universities struggle to balance competing priorities of expansion and quality, access and equity, autonomy and accountability, and global competitiveness and local relevance (Mushemeza, 2016; Cole, 2023). Within East Africa, including Uganda, performance dilemmas further manifest in weak research output, questions of academic freedom and professional ethics, and difficulties in aligning higher education to national development priorities (Tan, Harland, & Daniel, 2021; Rwothumio et al., 2021). These challenges underscore the need for leadership approaches that can mobilise academic staff to achieve higher levels of creativity, innovation, and performance despite resource constraints.

In Uganda, universities have undergone rapid expansion over the last two decades due to liberalisation and massification (Atwebembeire et al., 2018). While enrolments and programmes have expanded, human and financial resources have not kept pace, leading to deteriorating lecturer-student ratios, reduced research productivity, and strained teaching quality (NCHE, 2022). In response, the National Council for Higher Education has called for adoption of transformational leadership as a means of revitalising staff performance (NCHE, 2022). However, leadership practices across Ugandan universities remain inconsistent. Some leaders prioritise infrastructure expansion over human resource development, while others face conflicts with staff over delayed salaries, inequitable pay, and precarious contracts—factors that undermine job security and, ultimately, academic performance (Kasule, 2019; Times Higher Education, 2024).

Declining research output, unprofessional conduct, and frequent staff strikes further reflect a deepening crisis in academic staff performance (Injikuru, Etomaru, & Onen, 2024). This has been mirrored in international rankings: Makerere University has fallen from 3rd to 17th position in Africa over the last decade, while private universities, such as Kampala International University and Uganda Christian University, remain poorly ranked (Scimago Institutions Ranking, 2024).



Despite the established role of transformational leadership and job security in shaping employee outcomes, limited empirical evidence exists on how these factors interact to influence academic staff performance in Ugandan universities. Previous studies have examined leadership and performance in other sectors (Dwomoh, 2012; Militaru, 2014), but little attention has been given to higher education or to the moderating role of job security. This study therefore investigates the effect of transformational leadership on academic staff performance, the effect of job security on academic staff performance, and the moderating influence of job security on the relationship between transformational leadership and academic staff performance in Ugandan universities.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Framework: Transformational Leadership and Psychological Contract Theories

**Transformational Leadership Theory** (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985) provides a useful lens in this regard. Transformational leaders inspire and motivate staff by articulating a compelling vision, providing intellectual stimulation, modelling desired behaviours, and offering individualised consideration. Empirical evidence demonstrates that transformational leadership enhances employee commitment, innovation, and performance outcomes in higher education (Ngaithe et al., 2016; Langat, Linge, & Sikalieh, 2019; Lai et al., 2020). By fostering optimism, creativity, and shared purpose, transformational leaders enable academic staff to transcend self-interest and pursue collective institutional goals (Morton et al., 2011). Alongside transformational leadership, job security is also a critical factor influencing academic staff performance. Job security refers to the assurance of continued employment and stability of working conditions (Knapp et al., 2020). When employees perceive high job security, they are more motivated, committed, and willing to focus their efforts on long-term organisational objectives (Woodman, 2019). This logic is supported by Psychological Contract Theory (Rousseau, 1960), which emphasises the implicit obligations and mutual expectations between employers and employees. When universities fulfil employees' expectations of job continuity and fair treatment, staff reciprocate with higher levels of performance, commitment, and innovation (Montes et al., 2015). Conversely, perceived job insecurity undermines morale, increases stress, and reduces performance outcomes.

### Empirical Literature Review and Study Hypotheses

#### Transformational Leadership and Employee Performance

Transformational leadership has been widely associated with enhanced employee performance due to its emphasis on inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Qalati et al., 2022). While studies in non-academic sectors, such as telecommunications (Khan et al., 2020), state-owned enterprises (Ngaithe et al., 2016), and SMEs (Ogola et al., 2017), confirm its positive influence, their contexts limit applicability to higher education. Within academia, Milelu (2019) found that the four core dimensions of transformational leadership significantly improved institutional performance at Kenyatta University, although mediating and moderating factors, such as employee voice and job security, were overlooked. Similarly, Baffour-Awuah and Agyei (2019) linked leadership to job satisfaction without directly assessing performance outcomes, while studies in public service and healthcare (Retno &



Sudiro, 2020; Langat et al., 2019) emphasized indirect pathways, such as satisfaction, engagement, and communication. Conceptual work by Jameel and Ahmad (2019) also underscored leadership's role in academic performance but lacked empirical validation. More recent contributions highlight the mediating role of work engagement and moderating effects of job security (Lai et al., 2020; Njiraini et al., 2018), though they often omit critical variables such as employee voice. Furthermore, sector-specific studies (Komakech et al., 2021) reveal variations in leadership effectiveness but fail to provide multidimensional assessments of academic staff performance. Collectively, these gaps underscore the need for research situated in higher education that incorporates intervening variables and multidimensional performance measures. The present study addresses this gap by examining transformational leadership in universities, integrating job security and employee voice as intervening factors, and adopting a multidimensional framework for assessing academic staff performance. Hence, the first hypothesis is generated as follows:

***H<sub>1</sub>: Transformational leadership and academic staff performance are significantly related.***

### **Job Security and Academic Staff Performance**

Imam and Javed (2019) found that job security and organizational support enhanced employee satisfaction, which in turn improved physician performance in Pakistan's medical sector, though their focus on doctors limits generalizability to academia. Similarly, Hur's (2019) meta-analysis of 37 studies revealed significant positive correlations between job security and both organizational commitment ( $\rho = 0.253$ ) and job satisfaction ( $\rho = 0.327$ ), highlighting its role in shaping work attitudes, though the emphasis on attitudes rather than performance presented conceptual gaps. Extending this line of inquiry, Kim and Kim (2020) demonstrated that organizational commitment and job stress sequentially mediated the relationship between job insecurity and performance, with ethical leadership buffering the negative effects of insecurity among employees in South Korea. Collectively, these studies underscore job security as a critical factor influencing performance directly and indirectly, yet they remain limited in scope and context. The present study addresses these limitations by examining the role of job security in shaping academic staff performance within universities, thereby extending the discourse to higher education. As a result, the following second hypothesis is generated:

***H<sub>2</sub>: Job security is significantly related to academic staff performance.***

### **The Moderating Influence of Job Security on Transformational Leadership and Academic Staff Performance**

Studies have increasingly highlighted the link between transformational leadership, job security, and employee outcomes across diverse organizational settings. Inusah et al. (2023), examining security organizations in Rivers State, found that idealized influence and inspirational motivation significantly enhanced employee passion and perceived job security, though their focus excluded intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. Similarly, Karam and Tasmin (2020), drawing on data from commercial organizations in the United Arab Emirates, established a strong association between transformational leadership and employee performance, moderated by job security, but noted that increased stability sometimes reduced employee voice. Within academia, Blumenthal et al. (2024) demonstrated that transformational leadership dimensions such as articulating a vision, modeling behavior, promoting group goals, and providing individual support were positively associated with employability among university support staff, though attention to job security was found to



limit employee input. Collectively, these studies confirm that transformational leadership strengthens employee performance and related outcomes through mechanisms shaped by job security, but they are limited by their non-academic or support-staff contexts, omission of key leadership dimensions, and narrow performance measures. The current study addresses these gaps by examining transformational leadership, job security, and academic staff performance within universities using a multidimensional framework.

***H<sub>3</sub>: Job security significantly moderates the relationship between transformational leadership and academic staff performance.***

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design, Population, and Sample Size

To investigate the causal links between the hypothesized constructs, this study used an explanatory research approach. Explanatory designs fit with hypothesis testing based on existing literature (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012) and are appropriate for testing theoretical assertions and demonstrating cause-effect correlations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A self-administered, structured questionnaire was used to gather quantitative data, allowing for cross-sample comparability and standardized replies. To guarantee representativeness, the study focused on full-time academic staff from six public and private universities spread across Uganda's four geographical regions. Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table, a sample size of 844 was established, guaranteeing statistical soundness for generalization. To reduce bias and improve external validity, institutions were grouped by geography using cluster sampling, and then randomly selected within clusters (Roberts, 2025). Hayes' PROCESS Macro (Model 4) and SPSS 29.0 were used to analyze the data in order to assess for direct and mediation effects. An 87% response rate was obtained from the 727 completed and useable surveys out of the 844 that were delivered.

### Measurement

We chose well-established metrics and modified them to fit the Ugandan setting after completing the literature study. Transformational leadership (Asencio, 2016; Schreiner, 2019), job security (Blumenthal et al., 2024), and academic staff performance (Molefe, 2010) were among the characteristics that were measured. To take into consideration their possible impact on performance, control factors (age, gender, and educational attainment) were measured using nominal scales (Saunders et al., 2012). In order to quantify each issue, a five-point Likert scale was used, with the range being "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."





## RESULTS

### Respondent's Attributes

The demographic profile of the 727 respondents reflects a broad representation across gender, age, education, work experience, and institutional type. Male participants constituted 58.2% of the sample, while females accounted for 41.8%. In terms of age distribution, the majority fell within the 28–37 age bracket (44.3%), followed by 38–47 years (25.6%) and 48–57 years (22.7%), with smaller proportions in the youngest (18–27 years) and oldest (58–67 years) categories. Regarding educational attainment, most respondents held a master's degree (66.9%), while 14.9% possessed a bachelor's degree, 18.0% a doctorate, and 0.3% postdoctoral qualifications. Work experience varied considerably: 28.6% had between one and five years of service, 24.3% between six and ten years, and 20.4% between eleven and fifteen years, whereas 6.9% reported more than fifteen years and 19.8% were relatively new, with less than one year of tenure. With respect to institutional affiliation, 68.2% of the respondents were drawn from public universities, while 31.8% were from private institutions.

### Correlation Matrix

Before testing the hypotheses, a preliminary correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between transformational leadership (TL), Job Security(JS), and academic staff performance (PAS). As shown in Table 1, TL is positively and significantly correlated with JS ( $r = .638$ ,  $p < .001$ ), JS with PAS ( $r = .686$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and TL with PAS ( $r = .556$ ,  $p < .001$ ). These results indicate that higher TL is associated with greater Job Security and better performance.

**Table 1: Correlation Matrix**

Construct	TL	JS	PAS
TL	1		
JS	.638**	1	
PAS	.556**	.686**	1

N=727, \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed).

### Hierarchical Regressions

**Table 2: Hierarchical Regression Results for the Effect of TL and JS on PAS (Controlling for Demographics)**

Model	Predictor	$\beta$ (Standardized)	R <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$	p-value
1	Demographics	0.100	0.080	—	<.001
2	TL	0.556	0.322	0.242	<.001
3	JS	0.559	0.494	0.172	<.001

**Note:** TL = Transformational Leadership; JS = Job Security; PAS = Performance of Academic Staff. N = 727.



### Interpretation:

**Model 1:** The composite demographic control explains 8% of the variance in PAS.

**Model 2:** Adding TL substantially increases explained variance to 32% ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.242$ ), indicating a strong positive effect.

**Model 3:** Including JS further raises the total variance explained to 49% ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.172$ ), highlighting its additional contribution to performance.

All the effects are significant ( $p < 0.01$ ).

**Table 3: Moderation Analysis of JS on the TL → PAS Relationship (Controlling for Demographics)**

Predictor	$\beta$ (Standardized)	SE B	t	p-value
Demographics	0.096	0.57	4.21	<.001
TL	0.389	0.64	9.06	<.001
JS	0.430	0.59	10.51	<.001
TL × JS (Interaction)	0.095	0.51	4.12	<.001

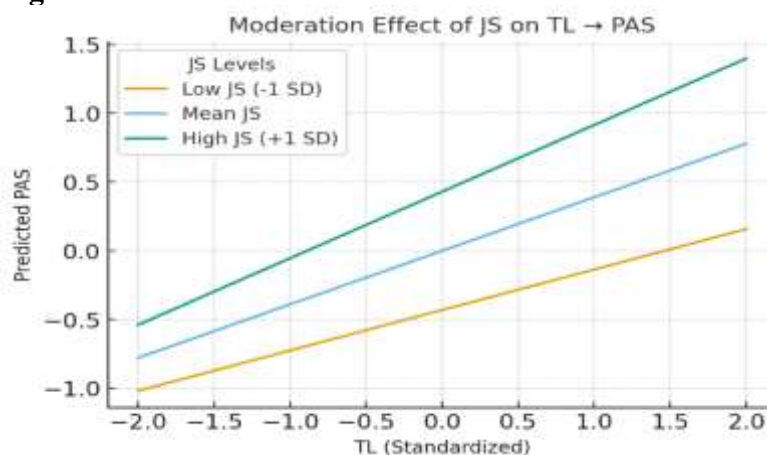
### Model Summary:

$R^2 = 0.528$ ,  $F(4, 722) = 201.3$ ,  $p < .001$

The significant interaction term (TL × JS) indicates that Job Security moderates the effect of TL on PAS, such that the positive effect of TL on PAS is stronger at higher levels of JS. The significant interaction ( $\beta = 0.095$ ,  $p < .001$ ) confirms that JS moderates the TL–PAS relationship.

The significant moderation effect of JS on TL and PAS attested by the modigraph (Figure 1). The figure shows that at higher levels of Job Security, the positive effect of TL on PAS is stronger. Otherwise stated, when JS is high, the slope is steeper, meaning TL has a stronger positive effect on PAS. At lower levels of Job Security, the effect is weaker, that is, when JS is low, the slope is flatter, indicating a weaker effect of TL on PAS.

**Figure 1: The Moderation effect of JS on TL and PAS**





## Hypotheses

### **H<sub>1</sub>: Transformational Leadership (TL) has a significant effect on academic staff performance (PAS).**

The hierarchical regression analysis (Table 2) indicates that Transformational Leadership (TL) is a significant positive predictor of academic staff performance (PAS), with a standardized coefficient of  $\beta = 0.556$  ( $p < .001$ ). This finding suggests that higher levels of TL behaviors such as idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration are associated with higher levels of performance among academic staff. In practical terms, for each one-unit increase in TL, PAS increases by 0.556 units, highlighting the substantive impact of transformational leadership on staff effectiveness. These results provide empirical support for **H<sub>1</sub>**, confirming that transformational leadership is a critical determinant of performance in the academic context.

### **H<sub>2</sub>: Job Security (JS) has a significant effect on academic staff performance (PAS).**

The full regression model (Table 2) demonstrates that Job Security (JS) is a significant positive predictor of academic staff performance (PAS), with a standardized coefficient of  $\beta = 0.559$  ( $p < .001$ ). This indicates that higher perceptions of job security are associated with increased performance levels among academic staff. In essence, when employees feel secure in their positions, they are more likely to exhibit greater commitment, motivation, and productivity, which enhances overall performance outcomes. These findings provide strong empirical support for **H<sub>2</sub>**, underscoring the critical role of job security in fostering academic staff effectiveness and contributing to institutional performance.

### **H<sub>3</sub>: Job Security significantly moderates the relationship between transformational leadership and academic staff performance.**

The moderation analysis (Table 3) indicates that the interaction between Transformational Leadership (TL) and Job Security (JS) is significant ( $\beta = 0.095$ ,  $B = 2.1$ ,  $p < .001$ ), suggesting that JS moderates the relationship between TL and academic staff performance (PAS). Specifically, the positive effect of TL on PAS is stronger at higher levels of job security, indicating that secure employment conditions enhance the extent to which transformational leadership behaviors translate into improved performance outcomes. This finding provides empirical support for **H<sub>3</sub>**, highlighting the importance of job security as a contextual factor that amplifies the effectiveness of transformational leadership within higher education institutions.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide robust empirical evidence for the critical roles of Transformational Leadership (TL) and Job Security (JS) in enhancing academic staff performance (PAS) within higher education institutions. Consistent with prior research, TL was found to be a significant positive predictor of PAS ( $\beta = 0.556$ ,  $B = 8.3$ ,  $p < .001$ ), supporting **H<sub>1</sub>**. This aligns with the work of Milelu (2019) and Qalati et al. (2022), who documented that transformational leaders—through behaviors such as idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration—significantly influence employee outcomes by fostering motivation, engagement, and goal alignment. Similarly, these





findings resonate with Khan et al. (2020), who reported that transformational leadership positively predicts job performance in organizational contexts, though the present study extends this evidence specifically to the academic sector.

Job Security (JS) also emerged as a significant positive predictor of PAS ( $\beta = 0.559$ ,  $p < .001$ ), supporting **H<sub>2</sub>**. This finding corroborates prior studies in both organizational and academic contexts, which have highlighted the role of secure employment in promoting employee motivation, commitment, and overall performance (Imam & Javed, 2019; Hur, 2019; Kim & Kim, 2020). Secure employment likely reduces anxiety and job-related stress, enabling staff to focus on teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities more effectively. By empirically linking JS to academic staff performance, the study extends the literature by demonstrating its relevance in higher education, complementing earlier findings from medical and corporate sectors (Blumenthal et al., 2024).

Importantly, the moderation analysis revealed that JS significantly strengthens the positive relationship between TL and PAS ( $\beta = 0.095$ ,  $B = 2.1$ ,  $p < .001$ ), supporting **H<sub>3</sub>**. This indicates that the effectiveness of transformational leadership is contingent upon the perceived security of staff positions, echoing theoretical assertions from Expectancy Theory (Vroom, 1964), which posits that employees are more likely to respond positively to motivational leadership when they perceive stability and reward certainty. This moderation effect aligns with findings from Kim and Kim (2020) and Lai et al. (2020), who emphasized that contextual factors such as job security and organizational support amplify the influence of leadership behaviors on performance outcomes.

## CONCLUSION

The findings underscore a multidimensional model in which leadership behaviors and organizational conditions interact to determine academic staff performance. Practically, this suggests that universities aiming to enhance staff effectiveness should not only invest in developing transformational leadership capacities among administrators but also implement policies that enhance job security, including transparent promotion pathways, fair remuneration, and consistent contractual arrangements. By addressing both behavioral and structural determinants of performance, higher education institutions can optimize employee engagement, productivity, and overall institutional performance.

## IMPLICATIONS

### Theoretical Implications

This study makes a significant contribution to leadership and organizational behavior theory by empirically validating employee voice as a partial mediator in the relationship between transformational leadership (TL) and academic staff performance (PAS) in Ugandan universities. The findings confirm that TL influences PAS not only directly but also indirectly through the mechanism of employee voice, thereby opening the "black box" of leadership impact in a Sub-Saharan African higher education context. The results provide strong support for Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964), which posits that positive organizational



outcomes arise from reciprocal relationships between leaders and followers. When transformational leaders demonstrate care, inspiration, and individualized consideration, employees perceive this as a social investment. In return, they reciprocate through discretionary behaviors such as speaking up, sharing ideas, and going beyond formal duties collectively known as employee voice. This reciprocal exchange enhances engagement and performance, aligning with SET's core principle of mutual obligation and trust. Furthermore, the study also addresses critical contextual gaps in the literature. Most prior research on TL and voice has been conducted in Western or corporate settings (Rasheed et al., 2021; Tian et al., 2020). By focusing on Ugandan universities, this research extends the generalizability of SET to resource-constrained, collectivist academic environments, where hierarchical norms and limited autonomy may shape exchange dynamics differently.

### Theoretical Implications

The findings contribute to leadership and organizational behavior theory by empirically demonstrating the joint influence of Transformational Leadership (TL) and Job Security (JS) on academic staff performance (PAS). The results extend the applicability of **Transformational Leadership Theory** to the higher education context, confirming that behaviors such as idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration significantly enhance staff performance. Moreover, the moderation effect of JS supports **Expectancy Theory** (Vroom, 1964), highlighting that employees' responsiveness to leadership is contingent on their perception of job stability. By integrating leadership behavior and organizational context, this study advances multidimensional models of employee performance, emphasizing that performance outcomes are shaped by the interplay between managerial practices and structural employment conditions.

### Practical Implications

From a managerial perspective, the results underscore the importance of cultivating transformational leadership competencies among university administrators to foster motivation, engagement, and goal alignment among academic staff. Additionally, ensuring job security through transparent policies, stable contracts, and fair promotion pathways enhances staff performance and amplifies the effectiveness of transformational leadership. Universities can therefore optimize institutional outcomes by simultaneously investing in leadership development and strengthening organizational structures that promote employment stability. These findings provide actionable guidance for human resource management and policy formulation within higher education institutions.

### Limitations

Despite the robust findings, several limitations should be noted. First, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causality between TL, JS, and PAS. Second, the study relied on self-reported measures, which may be susceptible to common method bias and social desirability effects. Third, although the sample was drawn from multiple public and private universities, the study was limited to one country, potentially affecting the generalizability of the results to other higher education systems. Finally, the analysis focused on TL and JS, and other potentially relevant variables, such as organizational culture, leadership training, and resource availability, were not included, suggesting avenues for future research.



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**Conflicts of Interest:** We declare no conflicts of interest.

**Data Availability Statement:** Please visit the link for [data availability sample](#) statements.

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