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## Leader Strategies That Increase Employee Performance in the Nigerian Public Sector

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Oluwashola Martha Elias-Fatile

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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the review committee have been made.

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2021

Abstract

Leader Strategies That Increase Employee Performance in the Nigerian Public Sector

by

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MS, Schiller International University, 2009

BS, Kaduna Polytechnic, 1997

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2021

## Abstract

Low employee performance can hinder productivity in the Nigerian public sector. Leaders of public sector organizations in Nigeria who lack strategies to increase employees' performance experience decreased productivity. Grounded in transformational leadership theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies leaders in the Nigerian public sector used to increase employee performance. Participants were four public sector leaders in Nigeria who successfully developed and implemented strategies to increase employee performance. Data were collected from semistructured interviews and internal and external documents, such as training programs, training calendars, meeting agendas, staff letters of recommendation, and staff handbooks. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. Five themes emerged: (a) communication, (b) leadership by example, (c) on-the-job training, (d) motivation, and (e) teamwork. A key recommendation is for public sector leaders to implement on-the-job training and promote teamwork to motivate employees to achieve higher performance levels. The implication for positive social change includes the potential to increase employment opportunities and improve the quality of life for the populace in communities.

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## Dedication

This doctoral study is dedicated to the Almighty God and Father who has strengthened me through the journey, to God alone be all the glory. To my darling husband, my friend and sponsor for giving me the will and determination to stay focused and never give up regardless of the numerous roadblocks encountered. Thank you, my dear husband, God bless you abundantly. To my son, Tiwatope Jesutogbojule, you have been my inspiration, thank you and God bless. My family is my strength and my light; you allow me to be the person and the professional that I am. You both stood by me even at odd times, encouraging me to keep pushing. I appreciate your support always. Tiwatope and Tiwatope Jesutogbojule, this is our accomplishment; we did it!

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## Table of Contents

Section 1: Foundation of the Study.....	1
Background of the Problem .....	1
Problem Statement.....	2
Purpose Statement.....	2
Nature of the Study .....	3
Research Question .....	4
Interview Questions .....	4
Conceptual Framework.....	5
Operational Definitions.....	6
Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations.....	6
Assumptions.....	6
Limitations .....	7
Delimitations.....	7
Significance of the Study .....	7
Contribution to Business Practice.....	7
Implications for Social Change.....	8
A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature.....	8
Organizational Leadership.....	10
Transformational Leadership Theory .....	12
Transactional Leadership Theory .....	29
Servant Leadership Theory.....	35



Laissez-Faire Leadership Theory.....	39
Employee Performance.....	40
Analysis of the Public Sector in Nigeria.....	48
Implementing Transformational Leadership Strategies in the Public Sector in Nigeria .....	49
Transition .....	58
Section 2: The Project.....	59
Purpose Statement.....	59
Role of the Researcher .....	59
Participants.....	62
Research Method and Design .....	64
Research Method .....	64
Research Design.....	67
Population and Sampling .....	68
Ethical Research.....	70
Data Collection Instruments .....	73
Data Collection Technique .....	75
Data Organization Technique .....	76
Data Analysis .....	77
Triangulation.....	78
Analysis.....	78
Reliability and Validity.....	81

Reliability.....	81
Validity .....	82
Transition and Summary.....	86
Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change .....	87
Introduction.....	87
Presentation of the Findings.....	87
Emerging Themes .....	88
Theme 1: Communication.....	88
Theme 2: Leadership by Example .....	93
Theme 3: On-the-Job Training.....	98
Theme 4: Motivation.....	101
Theme 5: Teamwork.....	107
Application for Professional Practice .....	110
Communication.....	111
Training.....	112
Motivation.....	113
Teamwork .....	115
Implications for Social Change.....	115
Recommendations for Action .....	117
Reccomendation 1: Leadership by Example.....	118
Recommendation 2: Motivation .....	119
Recommendation 3: Teamwork.....	119

Disseminating the Results.....	120
Recommendations for Further Research.....	121
Reflections .....	121
Conclusion .....	122
References.....	124
.Appendix A: Interview Protocol.....	181
Appendix B: Interview Questions.....	183

## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Researchers have long connected employee performance with achieving organizational objectives (Alfani & Hamzah, 2019; Samanta & Lamprakis, 2018; Tabiu, 2019). The success of the public sector is dependent on a performance-centric workforce capable of delivering services to the populace professionally and effectively (Ahmad & Saad, 2020). Efficient and effective performance in public organizations entails clarification of goals to ensure the organization's directions and enhanced employees' commitment towards goal attainment (Andersen et al., 2018; Samanta & Lamprakis, 2018). However, the strategy adopted by the leader determines the performance level and the employee's commitment (Abasilim et al., 2019).

### **Background of the Problem**

Effective management of human resources depends on effective organizational leadership (Ahmad & Saad, 2020; Elmasry & Bakri, 2019; Ugwu et al., 2020). An efficient leader strategy that increases employee performance is key to organizational growth. According to Ahmad and Saad (2020), the public sector's competitive edge on a global scale is hinged on its delivery system's efficiency and effectiveness. The public sector in Nigeria represents the realm where the government provides services to the populace (Obasa, 2018). Public sector performance has been of practical concern for developing countries with a major challenge to increase employee performance (Obasa, 2018).

A high-performance driven workforce in the public sector enhances effective service delivery to citizens (Ahmad & Saad, 2020; Matthew et al., 2018). Studies have

shown that leader strategy can increase employees' performance (Ahmad & Saad, 2020; Elmasry & Bakri, 2019; Holbert et al., 2021; Ugwu, 2020). Sudha et al. (2016) suggested that the leadership style adopted is an essential factor influencing effectiveness and employee performance. Leaders choose the most appropriate and effective leadership style to inspire and motivate employees to higher performance levels to accomplish organizational goals (Ahmad & Saad, 2020). Therefore, to ensure the public sector's effectiveness and efficiency, leaders are expected to continuously develop strategies that will increase employee performance.

### **Problem Statement**

An insufficient high-performance workforce that is capable of delivering services effectively hinders growth in the public sector (Ahmad & Saad, 2020). Recently, the lack of a sufficient high-performance workforce has led to a 15-point decline in public sector performance ranking, thereby positioning Nigeria as 125 out of 140 countries (World Bank Group, 2018). The general business problem is that decreased employee performance negatively affects organizational performance. The specific business problem is that some leaders in the Nigerian public sector lack strategies to increase employee performance.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that leaders in the Nigerian public sector use to increase employee performance. The targeted population comprised of four leaders from four distinct ministries and parastatals of the Nigerian public sector in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja who have

successfully developed and implemented strategies that have increased employee performance. The contribution to positive social change within the public sector includes the potential to benefit society by providing strategies that can be used to stabilize employment, which may result in employee prosperity and increase the wellbeing of families. Stabilized employment may enhance the efficient and effective delivery of services rendered to communities through the public sector.

### **Nature of the Study**

The three research methods are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed (Yin, 2018). I selected the qualitative method for this study. Qualitative researchers use interviews and observations to explore what, how, and why about a phenomenon from a realistic view (Yin, 2018). The qualitative method was appropriate for my study to explore strategies leaders in the public sector use to increase employee performance. In contrast, quantitative researchers test hypotheses to examine and analyze independent and dependent variables' relationships or differences using statistical methods (Boeren, 2018). Researchers use the mixed method to combine qualitative and quantitative elements (Frais & Popovich, 2020). Because I did not test hypotheses and analyze independent and dependent variables' relationships or differences using statistical methods, neither the quantitative nor mixed method was appropriate.

I considered three qualitative research designs: (a) case study, (b) phenomenology, and (c) ethnography. Case study researchers use a single or multiple case study design to explore a phenomenon within a real-world context bounded by time (Mostert, 2018). Researchers use the multiple case study to describe a phenomenon

through multiple perspectives from two or more cases or businesses; hence, the evidence is more compelling, and the outcome can have a stronger validity than a single case study (Yin, 2018). The multiple case study was appropriate for the current study because it enabled the exploration of leaders' strategies from multiple organization leaders' experiences. Phenomenological researchers explain the world by exploring individuals' perceptions of their personal meanings of their lived experiences (Neubauer et al., 2019). The phenomenology design was not appropriate as the focus was not on exploring individuals' perceptions of their personal meanings of their lived experiences. Ethnographic researchers spend protracted time in a cultural setting to study individuals' behavior (Goopy & Kassan, 2019). Thus, ethnography was not appropriate as I did spend time to directly observe participants to explore and characterize a group's culture.

### **Research Question**

The research question that served as the foundation for this study was the following: What strategies do leaders in the Nigerian public sector use to increase employee performance?

### **Interview Questions**

1. What strategies have you used to increase your employees' performance?
2. What strategy did you find most effective to increase your employees' performance?
3. What were the key barriers to implementing your strategies to increase your employees' performance?

4. How did your organization address the key barriers to increase your employees' performance?
5. How did your employees respond to your different strategies to increase their performance?
6. What, if any, modifications did you apply to any strategy to increase your employees' performance?
7. What additional information would you like to share about your strategies to increase your employees' performance?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework selected for the study was Burns's (1978) transformational leadership theory. Burns used the theory to explain leadership based upon the premise that some leaders can inspire followers to change expectations, perceptions, and motivations to work toward common goals. Burns identified the following key constructs underlying the transformational leadership theory: (a) idealized attributes, (b) idealized behaviors, (c) intellectual stimulation, (d) inspirational motivation, and (e) individualized consideration. Leaders who apply transformational leadership theory inspire followers to higher levels of performance and motivate and encourage employees to excel beyond personal interest (Ugwu, 2019). As applied to this study, the transformational leadership theory was the lens through which I explored strategies that leaders use to increase employee performance in the Nigerian public sector.



## **Operational Definitions**

Several operational definitions were used in designing this study.

*Employee performance:* The record of an employee's ability to accomplish assigned tasks based on the expectation of the organization (Nwakoby et al., 2019).

*Parastatals:* A company, agency, or intergovernmental organization that possesses political clout and is separate from the government but whose activities serve the state either directly or indirectly (Mazibuko, 2018).

*Public sector:* As contained in the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the public sector is a body of officials responsible for the execution of programs and policies of the federal government (Igbokwe-Ibeto et al., 2020).

*Transformational leadership:* The process of motivating, encouraging, and inspiring followers to achieve higher levels of performance and excel beyond personal interest (Ugwu, 2019).

## **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

Several assumptions, limitations, and delimitations were considered in the development of this research.

### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are void of proof or empirical evidence but are considered accurate by the researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). My first assumption was that leaders would provide honest information regarding strategies that can increase employee performance. I expected the leaders to be open, truthful, and unbiased. The second assumption was that the strategies presented in the interview would increase employee

performance in the public sector. The third assumption was that the interview questions would be appropriate for an in-depth exploitation of leaders' strategies to increase employee performance.

### **Limitations**

Limitations are potential weaknesses and constraints out of the researcher's control (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). I identified three limitations for this research: (a) The study was limited to a particular geographical location, (b) only leaders who had successfully increased employee performance in the public sector were interviewed, and (c) other leaders with divergent views were not interviewed.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations are boundaries that are within the researcher's control (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I identified two delimitations for this research: (a) All participants were in the same geographical location, FCT, Abuja, Nigeria; and (b) only four leaders in the public sector who had successfully implemented strategies that increased employee performance were interviewed.

## **Significance of the Study**

### **Contribution to Business Practice**

The study's significance is that findings could be of value to businesses by enabling an understanding of the strategies that leaders use to increase employee performance in the Nigerian public sector. Findings may improve business practice by providing awareness of strategies that may motivate employees and increase employees' performance and retention and decrease derivative costs. A high-performance workforce

capable of delivering services efficiently is pertinent to the growth of the public sector (Ahmad & Saad, 2020).

### **Implications for Social Change**

The results of this study could contribute to social change in the public sector by providing strategies that leaders in the Nigerian public sector can use to increase employee performance. Increased employee performance promotes job stability, resulting in high employee retention and a stable workforce (Matthew et al., 2018). A stable workforce may enhance the efficient and effective delivery of services to communities' citizens (Ahmad & Saad, 2020).

### **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

This review of the academic and professional literature provides a foundation for the subject of leader strategies that increase employee performance in the Nigerian public sector. The purpose of this study was to offer an analysis of past and existing strategies that public sector organization leaders have used to increase employee performance; the study's foundation was Burns's (1978) transformational leadership theory. Burns's transformational leadership theory explains leadership based on the premise that some leaders can inspire followers to change expectations, perceptions, and motivations. The sources used in this literature review address topics related to leadership strategies that can influence the required increase in employee performance in the public sector.

I organized the literature for this study by topic, by first analyzing leadership theories and their impact on employee performance. The leadership theories considered are (a) transformational leadership theory, (b) transactional leadership theory, (c) servant

leadership theory, and (d) laissez-faire leadership theory. The following were the other headings used to expound on the topic under consideration: (a) employee performance in the public sector, (b) transformational leadership in the public sector, (c) the public sector and idealized influence strategy, (d) the public sector and the inspirational motivation strategy, (e) the public sector and intellectual stimulation strategy, (f) the public sector and individualized consideration strategy, and (g) the impact of transformational leadership theory on employee performance in the public sector. The study reflects strategies used by public sector leaders to increase employee performance using transformational leadership theory. The contrasting theories included transactional leadership theory, laissez-faire leadership theory, and servant leadership theory. The subsections that follow are the nature of the public sector in Nigeria and the strategies that can increase the performance of public sector organizations. Additional topics analyzed include performance evaluation, leadership strategies, and the impact of transformational leadership strategy on employee performance.

To accomplish a detailed literature review, I obtained relevant scholarly sources for this study using academic libraries, websites, databases, peer-reviewed journals, and related books. I used databases from the Walden University library to access research literature through ABI/INFORM Complete, Business Source Complete, EBSCO, Google Scholar, ProQuest, SAGE, Emerald, and Dissertations and Theses. The search terms and phrases included *employee performance*, *productivity*, *leadership*, *leadership theories*, *public sector*, *parastatal*, and *strategies*. The total number of references used for this study were 250 peer-reviewed journals, books, and dissertations, with 90% published

between 2017 and 2021, in accordance with Walden’s DBA doctoral study requirements.

Table 1 contains the summary of sources used in this literature review and reference type and percentages.

**Table 1**

*Literature Review Sources by Year of Publication*

Literature type	Older than 5 years	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total %	Total no.
Peer-reviewed articles	5	29	50	60	50	6	90%	313
Nonpeer-reviewed articles	0	0	0	8	12	0	8%	28
Books	2	5	8	13	2	0	12%	6
Other	0	0	0	0	0		0	1
Total	7	34	58	81	64		100%	348

### **Organizational Leadership**

The concept of leadership has been a significant construct in human existence for centuries (Nam & Park, 2019). Organizational goals are not limited to existence but rather the improvement of employee performance effectiveness and efficiency (Durmishi & Popovski, 2020). Leadership is one factor that predates organizational performance (Nam & Park, 2019; Sandvik et al., 2019). Orunbon (2020) opined that leadership is a catalyst for much-needed organizational change effectiveness. Leadership is considered a critical element with a substantial influence on employee dedication and performance (Abasilim et al., 2019). Therefore, the overall impact of organizational outcomes can be narrowed to leaders’ style and strategies.

Leadership can influence behaviors to achieve common organizational goals (Ugwu et al., 2020). Durmishi and Popovski (2020) opined that the core of leadership is the ability to persuade employees to implement organizational goals in an increasingly complex and changing world. Leaders set directions and align employees into the direction (Andersen et al., 2018). Northouse (2018) defined leadership as the process of influencing a group of individuals to achieve common goals. Leaders strategically motivate and influence others to act in a particular manner (Durmishi & Popovski 2020). Thus, leadership contribution to organizational success cannot be overemphasized and should be duly considered (Adatsi et al., 2020).

The nexus between leadership styles, employee performance, and productivity has received scholarly attention (Abasilim et al., 2019). For example, identifying an appropriate leadership style that best resonates with employees helps achieve organizational growth (Kelly & MacDonald, 2019). Abasilim et al. (2019) posited that transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership have been classified as the most embraced leadership style in the private and public sectors.

Leaders are individuals with the skills and integrity to influence followers to successfully achieve a common mission and vision (Chen et al., 2018; Quaquabeke & Felps, 2018; Toufaily, 2018). Researchers have posited a strong influence of leadership style on employee performance, whether in the public or private sectors (McClean & Collins, 2019; Quaquabeke & Felps, 2018; Sandvik et al., 2019). Furthermore, leaders' behaviors are visible to all employees in the organization, and they are either positively or negatively inspired, affecting performance and organizational outcomes (Andersen et

al., 2018; McClean & Collins, 2019). Transformational, transactional, servant leadership, and laissez-faire leadership styles and their impact on employee performance in the public sector were evaluated in this study.

Leadership plays a vital role in charting the course of the organization to achieving desired goals and vision by influencing higher employees' performance to accomplish goals (Ahmad, 2018; Holbert et al., 2021; Ohunakin et al., 2019). Strategic leaders motivate and inspire employees to higher performance levels, potentially creating a competitive advantage and greater operational efficiency (Ahmad & Saad, 2020; Durmishi & Popovski, 2020; Holbert et al., 2020; Kawiana et al., 2010). Identifying the leaders' leadership style is a powerful and substantial way of yielding an effect on employees' performance (Ahmad, 2018; An et al., 2019; Crews et al., 2019; Hee et al., 2018; Kawiana et al., 2020; Samanta & Lamprakis, 2018).

### **Transformational Leadership Theory**

Burns (1978) developed the transformational leadership style, which many scholars view as one of the most effective leadership styles (Buil et al., 2019; Pradhan et al., 2018; Ribeiro et al., 2018). Bass (1985) noted how leaders could use transformational leadership abilities to build trust, motivate followers, promote followers' creativity, encourage innovation, increase performance, and promote professional development for the good of the organization (Bass, 1985; Buil et al., 2019; Campbell, 2018a; Dialoke & Ogbu, 2018; Toufaili, 2018). Pradhan et al. (2018) posited that transformational leaders are passionate goal-oriented motivators; they influence and inspire their followers in

strategic ways that leads to increased performance (Andersen et al., 2018; Campbell, 2018a; Chen et al., 2018; Harb & Sidani, 2019; Jiang & Chen 2018).

### **Employee Motivation**

According to Chen et al. (2018), transformational leaders strategically engage employees to increase their motivation and probity displayed in both the leader and follower. Burns's (1978) perspective of transformational leadership posited that leaders effectively increase performance through their capacity to influence employees to achieve desired outcomes. Bass (1985) noted how leaders could use transformational leadership abilities to motivate and inspire employees through (a) influencing followers to transcend self-interest and focus on the organizational goal rather than personal interest, (b) heightening high-performance and task/goal and encouraging accomplishment, and (c) activating the followers' higher order of need. Numerous researchers have posited that this transformational leadership approach could be used to develop and influence an employee's performance in achieving full potential in the public sector (Buil et al., 2019; Campbell, 2018b; Dialoke & Ogbu, 2018; Harb & Sidani, 2019; Oloruntoba & Gbemigun, 2019).

### **Organizational Vision Articulation**

Transformational leaders can coordinate employees through careful articulation of organizational vision and effective communication to employees; these leaders strategically motivate them to accept and internalize the vision (Abasilim et al., 2019; Chen et al., 2019; Harb & Sidani, 2019). Bass (1985) and Burns (1978) established transformational leadership as the style that influences performance through a well-



articulated and communicated vision to employees, thereby achieving clarity of vision and stimulating employees to develop competence to achieve organizational goals. The transformational leader is the bearer of the vision that instills conscious knowledge in an employee's ability to achieve goals beyond expected outcomes, which significantly motivates followers to higher performance levels (Flynn, 2019; Samanta & Lamprakis, 2018). Transformational leaders' behaviors foster some level of trust that builds competence among employees, resulting in increased performance (Harb & Sidani, 2019; Ribeiro et al., 2018; Samanta & Lamprakis, 2018).

### **Improved Communication**

Transformational leaders increase employee commitment and performance when they effectively communicate organizational goals and vision (Toufaily, 2018). Employees experience an increased sense of worth and commitment (Munyiva & Kihara, 2018). Through effective communication, employees feel valued, motivated, and rewarded for their efforts toward goal achievement (Tian et al., 2020). Transformational leaders exert influence through effective communication of idealistic goals and vision to employees.

### **Innovation**

Transformational leaders strategically inspire and motivate employees to be innovative, which is noted to yield a positive effect on performance (Chen et al., 2019; Jia et al., 2018; Sheehan et al., 2020). According to Sheehan et al. (2020), transformational leaders convey purposeful vision to employees and by so doing provide inspirational motivation that enhances innovation. Transformational leaders

- encourage employees to challenge the status quo (Jian-Xun et al., 2019);
- encourage positive change (Faupel & Süß, 2019; Sheehan et al., 2020);
- encourage openness among employees (Le & Lei, 2019);
- inspire employees to think outside the box (Jian-Xun et al., 2019);
- encourage followers to adopt generative and exploratory thinking processes (Sheehan et al., 2020); and
- instill confidence in employees to take risks and be innovative (Hughes et al., 2018).

Encouraging employees to be innovative not only increases knowledge and shared experiences but has been noted by researchers to be an effective element of transformational leadership that increases employee performance (Al-edenat, 2018; Edelbroek et al., 2019; Jia et al., 2018; Le & Lei, 2019).

### **Increase Employee Performance**

Transformational leaders are noted to have the ability to influence employee perceptions and achieve outcomes beyond the normal levels of performance (Buil et al., 2019; Campbell, 2018a; Samanta & Lamprakis, 2018; Toufaili, 2018). Transformational leaders envisage concerns, preoccupations, and needs of followers (Abasilim et al., 2019). Explaining further, Hee et al. (2018) opined that transformational leader could successfully change employee perception by influencing values, expectations, and aspirations.

According to Dialoke and Ogbu (2018), transformational leaders can create a positive work environment that boosts employee morale, leading to higher performance.

Lai et al. (2020) posited that improved workplace standards influence employees' behavior and encourages performance that exceeds expectations and achieves goals. Having a motivated workforce that ensures efficiency and high-performance outcomes are results of the attributes of a transformational leader (Boamah et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2019).

Furthermore, Bass (1985) posited that the uniqueness of transformational leadership is not enshrined in the exchange of commodities between followers and leaders as is the case with transactional leadership, but rather, an influence of personal beliefs and values that achieves increased positive employee commitment (Munyiva & Kihara, 2018; Passakonjaras & Hartijasti 2019). These findings have aided in transformational leadership gaining scholarly attention as a model that best interprets organizational results and employees' performance (Buil et al., 2019; Manzoor et al., 2019; Samanta & Lamprakis 2018). Burns (1978) and later Hee et al. (2018) stated that transformational leadership revealed in-depth connectivity between leaders and followers in terms of employee performance, commitment, and moral values.

The public sector occupies an important place in the society (Abasilim et al., 2019; Andersen et al., 2018; Harb & Sidane, 2019; Oloruntoba & Gbemigun, 2019). Leadership style has been considered one of the vital elements that increases employee performance in the public sector (Abasilim et al., 2019; Awang et al., 2020; Dialoke & Ogbu, 2018; Elmasry & Bakri, 2019; Manzoor et al., 2019). Transformational leadership style is seen to have a significant effect in increasing and sustaining employee performance in public sector organizations because of the interdependence between

leaders and employees (Ahmad & Saad, 2020; Andersen et al., 2018; Elmasry & Bakri, 2019; Manzoor et al., 2019; Sheehan et al., 2020; Siangchokyoo et al., 2020). According to Abasilim et al. (2019), transformational leadership has four distinctive components: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

Leaders applying the transformational leadership style within their organization have different outcomes (Alghusin & Al-Ajlouni, 2020). A few of the noted outcomes are as follows:

- inspiring employees to higher levels of performance;
- increasing the level of employee motivation toward achieving organizational goals;
- unambiguously communicating vision and mission, which is a strong motivation for employees;
- assigning tasks and responsibilities that motivate employees to accomplish competently beyond expectations;
- motivating and creating a favorable social condition that promotes job satisfaction and increase performance; and
- encouraging employees to be innovative and creative, which is one of the bases for increased performance (Andersen et al. 2018; Alghusin & Al-Ajlouni, 2020; Ali et al., 2019; Awang et al., 2020; Bednall et al., 2018; Crews et al., 2019; Edelbroek et al., 2019; Eliyana & Ma'arif, 2019; Jnaneswar & Ranjit, 2020; Kawiana et al., 2020; Manzoor et al., 2019; Siangchokyoo et al., 2020).

### ***Idealized Influence Strategy***

Idealized influence originated from Bass (1990), who defined the term as role model strategies that leaders could use that may enhance organizational commitment. Ohunakin et al. (2019) defined idealized influence as the personality and behavioral traits of the leader as a role model. Elmasry and Bakri (2019) described idealized influence as a leader's charisma trait of a role model admired, trusted, and respected by employees. According to Langat et al. (2019), charisma qualifies identification with the leader and creates a desire to achieve beyond expectation as a demonstration of support to the leader. Leaders exhibiting this trait are perceived by employees as having extraordinary abilities and skills.

According to Al-Yami et al. (2018), idealized influence is hinged on attitudinal components of the leader and employees' perceptions are based on observations. Followers not only have faith but also a bond of identification, pride, enthusiasm, and trust in the leaders' vision (Laing, 2019). Transformational leaders demonstrating idealized influence behaviors pay attention to high standards of moral and ethical consequences (Elmasry & Bakri, 2019). Leaders in the public sector strategically increase employee performance through behavior integrity (Kawiana et al., 2020).

Employees in the public sector working with high integrity leaders develop affectionate attitude reflected in high commitment to work and job satisfaction (Ennis et al., 2018; Marathe & Kakani, 2020; Tuan & Thao, 2018). Employee motivation is further strengthened when they work in an environment where serving others is valued and thus develop a higher appraisal of the leaders' commitment to improving the organization and

are thereby motivated to doing same (Luu et al., 2019; Tuan & Thao, 2018). Therefore, when leaders in the public sector are noted to exhibit charismatic behaviors, service failures are easily remedied by a motivated workforce that professionally accomplish goals and tasks (Abasillim et al., 2018; Luu et al., 2019; Tuan & Thao, 2018).

Charismatic leadership may be effective in the public sector that is characterized by a bureaucratic structure of governance (Ekmekcioglu et al., 2018; Ennis et al., 2018; Luu et al., 2019; Marathe & Kakani, 2020).

Al -Yami et al. (2018) explained that leaders who demonstrate idealized behavior sacrifice their interest in advancing the interest of others. The leaders set examples and influence the behaviors of followers who learn by observing and emulating credible behavior displaying high standards of conduct (Abasilim et al., 2018; Boamah et al., 2018). Ibrahim et al. (2018) stated that a significant increase in employee performance could be achieved in organizations where leaders exhibit transformational leadership idealized attribute traits. Followers are influenced by the integrity, moral values, and respectful behaviors displayed by transformational leaders (Khan et al., 2020). However, employees are inspired, motivated and display trust in the beliefs of the leader which is a conscious strategic move that motivates employees to achieve higher performance levels in the organization.

Leaders that apply idealized influence strategy are highly honored, adored, appreciated, and trusted (Abasilim et al., 2019; Al-Yami et al., 2018; Khan et al., 2020). Employees admire and imitate such a leader's exemplary ethical behavior and are motivated to cooperate with the leader to achieve higher standards of performance

(Langat et al., 2019; Munyiva & Kihara, 2018). However, Miao and Cao (2019) explained that transformational leadership idealized behavior creates a sense of well-being and satisfaction in employees, increase unfeigned trust in the leader, and a sense of belongingness to the organization which is demonstrated by increase in performance.

Another notifiable aspect of transformational leadership idealized influence is the leaders' readiness and willingness to sacrifice personal gain for organization's good (Munyiva & Kihara, 2018). The employees perceive them to be sincere and dedicated to improving public sector's growth and hence are submissive, dedicated, and unwavering in supporting their vision, notably increases performance (Ekmekcioglu et al., 2018; Tuan & Thao, 2018). The leaders set high standards and are role models to achieving those standards (Dialoke & Ogbu, 2018; Miao & Cao, 2019); this supports transformational leaders using an idealized influence strategy to motivate employees in public sector organizations (Al -Yami et al., 2018; Munyiva & Kihara, 2018).

Idealized influence strategy focusses on behavioral traits that notably endear and inspire employees (Chan et al., 2019; Ohunakin et al., 2019; Shafi et al., 2020). Under the idealized influence, the transformational leader displays attitudes that promote trust, respect, and loyalty; they serve as role model to employees (Ahmad, 2019; Langat et al., 2019; Moghadam, 2020). Ethical behaviors of leaders promote employee emotional attachment to the organization which, in turn, fosters increase in performance outcomes (Ohunakin et al., 2019). Leaders are seen to be exemplary, sincere, honest, and high integrity which employees in the public sector view as indicators of strategic leadership (Crews et al., 2019; Elmasry & Bakri, 2019; Khan et al., 2020). Therefore, employees

confidence and trust in the leader inspires and motivates performance above expectation (Koveshnikov & Ehrnrooth, 2018; Kueenzi, 2019; Lai et al., 2020). The idealized influence attribute is one whereby the leader is consistent, shares risks, and behaves ethically (Chan et al., 2019; Crews et al., 2019; Sharif, 2019). Inspirational motivation is considered a technique that leaders apply to influence employees to view the optimistic future (Alghusin & Al- Ajlouni, 2020; Chan et al., 2019; Collins et al., 2020; Kueenzi, 2019).

### ***Inspirational Motivation Strategy***

Leaders using inspirational motivation create a positive work environment for employees (Elmasry & Bakri, 2019; Langat et al., 2019; Odunlami, 2017). As a transformational leadership construct, inspirational motivation allows leaders to influence subordinates by identifying new opportunities and developing vision for the future (Chan et al., 2019). Langat et al. (2019) corroborated inspirational motivation as vision creation, development of clear and plausible strategies for achieving the vision and mobilizing commitment of followers to achieving the vision (Geoffrey et al., 2019; Langat et al., 2019). Elmasry and Bakri (2019) posited that inspirational motivation ensures team spirit and motivates employees to achieve envisioned organizational goals. The leaders set high work standards and display character, optimism, and high enthusiasm in employees' capacity (Edward & Kaban, 2020). The leader's strategy is to inspire employees through a well-articulated vision, generate motivation by setting high workplace standards, and inspire employees through display of trust in their ability to accomplish set standards



(Edward & Kaban, 2020; Manzoor et al., 2019; Odunlami, 2017; Yamamoto & Yamaguchi, 2019).

Using inspirational motivation strategy, transformational leaders inspire employees to change and develop new approaches for completion of tasks. Employees can be inspired when leaders create a positive work environment and establish trust in followers (Jena et al., 2018; Munyiva & Kihara, 2018). Transformational leaders tacitly display enthusiasm and team spirit by emphasizing goals and stimulating employees to accomplish them (Edward & Kaban, 2020). Inspirational motivation encourages creativity, innovative problem-solving and task accomplishment techniques (Mohsin et al., 2020).

Boukamcha (2019) opined that for vision and goals to be productive, there is need for an active interactive communication channel; this is one of the benchmarks of inspirational motivation. Transformational leaders that can distinctly communicate visions and goals are seen to perform better (Langat et al., 2019). Effective communication improves satisfaction and team spirit which in turn improves performance (Boukamcha, 2019; Elmasry & Bakri, 2019; Langat et al., 2019). Chan et al. (2019) corroborated that the strategy leaders could adopt is development of an effective interactive communication and value sharing relationship with employees. According to Elmasry and Bakri (2019), this leadership strategy will lead to high motivational, enthusiastic, and optimistic levels in employees which in turn arouse performance levels (Langat et al., 2019; Schuesslsbauer et al., 2018).

The uniqueness of transformational leadership is not enshrined in the exchange of commodities between followers and leaders as the case with transactional leadership but rather an influence of personal beliefs and values that fosters increased performance levels (Munyiva & Kihara, 2018; Passakonjaras & Hartijasti, 2019). Notably, transformational leadership is considered as a model that best leads to organizational results and employees performance (Buil et al., 2019; Samanta & Lamprakis, 2018). Burns (1978), using transformational leadership, revealed in-depth connectivity between leaders and followers regarding employee performance, commitment, and moral values.

Transformational leadership through the inspirational motivation strategy is one that

- encourages employees to envision an attractive future, create and articulate shared vision,
- allows for effective vision communication to employees,
- encourages teamwork and challenges employee vision accomplishment and,
- provides continuous encouragement and application of the principles of shared power (Boies & Fisjet 2018; Collins et al., 2020; Edward & Kaban, 2020; Jena et al., 2018; Langat et al., 2019; Munyiva & Kihara, 2018; Yamamoto & Yamaguchi, 2019).

Notably, an inspirational motivation strategy focuses more on team related content among employees while intellectual stimulation strategy is more task related (Collins et al., 2020; Dartey-Baah & Addo 2019; Lo et al. 2020; Mohsin et al., 2020).

### ***Intellectual Stimulation Strategy***

Intellectual stimulation as one of the constructs of transformational leadership is the leaders' ability to create a work environment that encourages followers' creativity, innovation, professionalism, and educational growth. Leaders who inspire and contribute to intellectual growth of employees are noted to have contributed to subordinates' performance and overall success (Gregory et al., 2017). Intellectual stimulation is achieved when leaders encourage followers to be innovative and encourage teamwork (Munyiva & Kihara, 2018; Sanchez-Cardona et al., 2018).

Employees are being innovative through questioning beliefs, assumptions, and values which may be seen as outdated or inappropriate to handle current challenges (Elmasry & Bakri, 2019; Munyiva & Kihara, 2018). The continuous search for new knowledge enables transformational leaders to teach, illustrate, and expound on new ways of solving problems (Munyiva & Kihara, 2018). The premise of intellectual stimulation is the encouragement of task-oriented communication, creative and innovative work environment that inspires and challenges followers to focus on rational solutions, and confidence to challenge existing assumptions (Abasilim et al. 2019; Boeis & Fiset, 2018; Odigbo, 2018; Seltzer & Bass, 1990). Munyiva and Kihara (2018) corroborated that innovation and creativity is the heart of intellectual stimulation.

Transformational leaders do not expose or publicly criticize employee errors but rather encourage followers to think individually through the problems under the leader's guidance and analyze plausible options (Reza, 2019). This strategy creates a positive atmosphere that generates positive expectations translating to increased performance

(Minai et al., 2020). The strategy encourages creativity and supports self-development (Edward & Koban, 2020). The leader's communication skill can notably reduce uncertainty (Chan et al., 2019; Minai et al., 2020). When leaders adopt an intellectual stimulation strategy, followers participate in the decision-making process fostering critical thinking and new problem-solving strategies (Dialoke & Ogbu, 2018).

Leaders that provide feedback to employees on task completion enable a better assessment of competence (Minai et al., 2020). When employees freely communicate challenges, encouraged to solve problems using new approaches without fear of consequences, they place higher value on personal and colleagues' opinions (Yin et al., 2020). Employees perception of established psychological safety promotes knowledge sharing, commitment, and performance (Awang et al., 2020; Yin et al., 2020).

Intellectual stimulation encourages critical thinking and creativity (Collins et al., 2020; Sheehan et al., 2020; Viver et al., 2020). Employees are encouraged to initiate new problem-solving ideas and freely formulate innovative ideas for the organization (Elmasry & Bakri, 2019; Gulmez & Negis Isik, 2020). Leaders create a working environment that enables innovation, creativity, and challenge procedures without fear of intimidation and harassment (Collins et al., 2019; Crews et al., 2019; Viver et al., 2020). Through intellectual stimulation strategy, transformational leaders can change the status quo and introduce new productive ideas (Aranha et al., 2019; Dartey-Baah & Addo, 2019; Elmasry & Bakri, 2019; Viver et al., 2020). The leadership strategy of individualized consideration is to promote personalized relationship with employee's (Alghusin & Al-Ajlouni 2020; Chan et al., 2019; Sharif, 2018).

### ***Individualized Consideration Strategy***

Individualized consideration is the last construct of transformational leadership and leaders use this strategy to help employees develop their potential (Reza, 2019). Individualized consideration involves the inclusion of followers into the transformation process by creating a supportive climate and new learning opportunities such as training of employees to acquire more knowledge (Munyiva & Kihara, 2018). Leaders' coach and mentor employees simultaneously considering their needs, abilities, interests, and goals (Hee et al. 2018). The leadership skills involved include interacting with subordinates (human skills), attentive to their aspirations, and career development (Edward & Kabana 2020).

This leadership approach embraces many facets which includes values, ethics, emotions, and achieving long term goals (Hee et al., 2018). An individualized consideration strategy enables successful achievement of goals and superordinate organizational visions (Islam et al., 2018). Leaders

- are positioned as role models for employees,
- consider employees aspirations, abilities, and needs,
- challenge and align employees toward achieving organizational objectives selflessly, and
- raise employees' self-image and provide adequate mentoring (Edward & Kabana, 2020; Hee et al., 2018; Munir & Aboidullah, 2018; Ohunakin et al., 2019).

Leaders applying this individualized consideration strategy attend to employees' emotional needs, treat them uniquely, provide personal support and respect employees not minding their career levels (Koveshnikov & Ehmrooth, 2018; Munir & Aboidullat, 2018). The strategy results in employees recognizing their capabilities, motivating and propelling them to higher levels of performance (Al Zefeiti, 2017; Yin et al., 2020).

The individualized consideration strategy reveals that leaders are sensitive to employee needs (Dialoke & Edeh, 2018; Munyiva & Kihara, 2018). The leader gives personal attention to employees and is keenly interested in career growth and development (Alghusin & Al-Ajlouni 2020; Khan et al., 2020; Vyver et al., 2020). This strategy creates a sense of belonging and inspires employees to higher performance levels (Aranha et al., 2019; Edward & Kabana, 2020; Koveshnikov & Ehrnrooth, 2018; Munyiva & Kihara, 2018).

### ***Summary Transformational Leadership Theory***

Transformational leaders influence and transform the thinking of followers to unwaveringly accept the position of the leader which is regarded as a strategic system of changing and transforming people to achieve higher performance (Andersen et al., 2018; Anselmann & Mulder, 2020; Dialoke & Ogbu, 2018; Samanta & Lamprakis, 2018). The major premise of transformational leadership theory is the ability of the leader to motivate employees to perform beyond expectations (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Dialoke & Ogbu, 2019; Jia et al., 2018). Subordinates are encouraged by the importance of their contributions to the organization (Boamah et al., 2018; Nam & Park, 2019). In contrast to transformational leadership, transactional leadership is premised on economic exchange

whereby leaders focus on contingent rewards for performance and sanctions for nonperformance (Ma & Jiang, 2018; Passakonjaras & Hartijasti, 2019). This leadership style has the leader's attention on deviations, mistakes, or irregularities and taking punitive actions (Bass, 1985).

Transformational leadership constructs are relevant for completion of tasks, inspire, and motivate employees to higher levels of performance (Faupel & Süß, 2019; Ibrahim et al., 2020). A transformational leadership style ensures change in the organization through idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration transformational leadership constructs and strategies to achieve increased performance and dedication to organizational vision and goals (Ennis et al., 2018). Motivating employees to achieve collective organizational goals rather than personal gains positively affects the public sector's performance (Elmasry & Bakri, 2019; Guterresa et al., 2020). Transformational leadership emphasize employee needs, values, morals, ethical responsibilities, thereby ensuring employee commitment resulting in increased performance (Ennis et al., 2020). Transformational leaders create a positive vision of change and inspire employees to adopt the vision through their charismatic nature (Harb & Sidani, 2019; Ibrahim et al., 2018). The leaders encourage innovative problem-solving ideas that propels employee productivity (Faupel & Süß, 2019; Gennaro, 2019). Transformational leadership strategy when applied in the public sector in Nigeria can inspire and motivate employees to transcend self-interest for the actualization of organizational vision.

## **Transactional Leadership Theory**

The literature review revealed several additional leadership theories; they include transactional leadership, servant leadership, and laissez-faire leadership theories.

According to Bass (1990), transactional leadership is an alternative to transformational leadership that allows the leader influence employees through financial exchange. The transactional leadership theory was developed by Weber in 1947 and Bass (1985) extended Weber's theory. According to Bass (1985), transactional leadership is a reciprocated relationship whereby a follower's commitment and efforts is exchanged for rewards. Hannah et al. (2020) explained that transactional leadership is a relationship in which the leader is focused on providing direction, goals, support, and resources in exchange for economic benefits. Transactional leaders identify and clarify roles and task requirements for followers to reach desired outcomes, noncompliance to stipulated goals results in punishment (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Ma & Jiang, 2018).

According to Bass (1985), transactional leaders practice a cost-benefit economic exchange to meet the needs of followers. Explaining further, Passakonjaras and Hartijasti (2019) reiterated that transactional leaders operate a conventional relationship that provides economic reward in exchange for contracted services rendered by followers. Transactional leadership as a symbiotic beneficial relationship with economic rewards for task completion and punishment for failures which notably promotes change (Ma & Jang, 2018; Samanta and Lamprankis, 2018).

The essential focus of transactional leadership is task-oriented and result focus (Semarco & Cho, 2018). The leader articulates organizational goals, protocols, and



procedures unambiguously for employees, so they are aware of expectations and the reward/punishment attached (Toeman & Ulengin, 2018). Transactional leaders set responsibilities for employees and carefully monitor performance (Russell et al., 2018; Samanta & Laprankis, 2018). Achievements are rewarded either by salary increase, cash gifts, step level promotion, or recognition through the issuance of exceptional performance certificates (Samanta & Laprankis, 2018). Subsequently, transactional leaders can influence employees' behavior using power, influence, reward, and punishment (Passakonjaras & Hartijasti, 2019).

Sireger (2018) postulated that the Bass (1985) transactional leadership theory is grounded on the use of a reward system, and punitive measures for non-completion of assigned tasks (Passakonjaras & Hartijasti, 2019). Bass (1985) introduced three components of transactional leadership, they are: (a) contingent reward, (b) management by exception – active, and (c) management by exception – passive.

### ***Contingent Reward Strategy***

The contingent reward strategy may positively affect employee commitment and productivity because transactional leaders use contingent reward to gain mutual benefits (Alrowwad et al., 2020). Raziq et al. (2018) described contingent rewards (CR) as entailing a well-stipulated economic reward given to an employee for successful task completion and punishment when there is failure. Transactional leaders' economic relationship motivates employees through enticing rewards and inspire higher performance and completion of assigned tasks/goals (Alrowwad et al., 2020). However,

to successfully monitor jobs and procedures for reward-punishment, transactional leaders create a structured and efficient system for task monitoring (Semarco & Cho, 2018).

According to Nelson et al. (2019), the rationale for leaders using a contingent reward strategy is to create an incentive mechanism through which employees will be adequately rewarded for exceptional performance. The contingent reward strategy motivates task completion and increase performance, as the focus is on the reward (Raziq et al., 2018). However, they also equally create fear of punishment and embarrassment which could either drive or hinder performance (Russell et al., 2018). The primary motivator is the reward (Alrowwad et al., 2020). Employees who demonstrate extraordinary work competence are guaranteed of rewards (Boye et al., 2019; Raziq et al., 2018).

### ***Management by Exception – Active Strategy***

Management by exception – active strategy is one of the transactional leadership constructs. According to Xu and Wang (2019), management by exception – active strategy closely monitors employees performance, correct mistakes, and proffer advise thereby creating room for improvement. Toeman and Ulengin (2018) corroborated that such monitoring is designed to ensure compliance to approved procedures for task implementation. However, this strategy might be effective in some organizations, overall, it hinders innovation and creativity (Semarco & Cho, 2018). The transactional leader's strategy using management by exception – active is designed to maintain the organization's status quo, the leader does not encourage innovation, rather organizational

procedures are maintained even if faulty (Alrowwad et al., 2020; Semarco & Cho, 2018; Toeman & Ulengin, 2018; Xu & Wang, 2019).

### ***Management by Exception – Passive Strategy***

Leaders may adopt a passive leadership strategy to influence employees. In management by exception – passive, the leader waits for mistakes to be reported before acting, especially when the situation becomes uncontrollable (Semarco & Cho, 2018). Passakonjaras and Hartijasti (2019) noted that leaders implementing passive management by exception are seen as timid and unresponsive, petrified to take decisions, neither of which promotes growth, innovation, and increase in performance.

Passakonjaras and Hartijasti (2019) opined that transactional leaders pursue a cost-benefit economic exchange in return for task completion as a strategy to increase performance. Alrowwad et al. (2020) stated that leaders who guarantee rewards for task completion and deploy appropriate punishment to employees who lag behind achieve better employee performance (Toeman & Ulengin, 2018). Boyer -Davis (2018) opined that, in transactional leadership, the leader is prominent in achieving daily work routines through management by exception which makes the leader less inclined to promote innovation and new ideas. Conversely, in transformational leadership, leaders inspire employees to achieve performance targets higher than the set standards (Passakonjaras & Hartijasti, 2019).

### ***Summary Transactional Leadership Theory***

The nature of the relationship in transactional leadership is ruled by the well-established guideline of engagement which stipulates reward in return for good

performance and adverse consequences for poor performance (Bass, 1995; Samanta & Laprankis, 2018). Employees are motivated to higher efforts to qualify for rewards (Russell et al., 2018). However, incorporating a transactional leadership style in the organization does not guarantee continuous employee commitment, dedication to the organization, or a steady increase in employee performance (Toeman & Ulengin, 2018).

Employees contribute more when they are aware of the leader's expectations (Jacobsen & Anderson, 2019; Semarco & Cho, 2018; Toeman & Ulengin, 2018). A transactional leader's strategy is to identify what to do and the reward for satisfactory completion of tasks (Alrowwad et al., 2020). Setting high performance expectations and the rewards attached to it is a strong motivator for employees who, for the sake of the benefit, increase performance (Jacobsen & Anderson, 2019; Russell et al., 2019; Steffensen et al., 2018).

In transformational leadership, employees are rewarded for outstanding performance, even though the relationship is not economic driven (Ugwu, 2019). Transformational leaders display high levels of integrity, ethics, respect, attention to the professional development and career of the employee, and capacity to interpret and communicate visions unambiguously (Samanta & Lamprakis, 2018; Ugwu, 2019; Yin et al., 2020). These attributes endear employees to the leader and are motivated to higher performance levels (Samanta & Lamprakis, 2018; Yadav & Yadav, 2018; Yin et al., 2020). Transformational leaders notably create a positive work environment devoid of anxieties and tension, encourage teamwork, brainstorming for new problem-solving

ideas, and inspire employees professional development (Fenwick et al., 2019; Yin et al., 2020).

Transformational leaders in the public sector have intrinsic motivation; they encourage employees to constantly introduce and adapt to changes (Ahmad & Saad, 2020). They are mentors and provide moral support to employees (Fenwick et al., 2019). Transformational leadership is more embedded in the leader's ability to influence, inspire, create a shared vision for the organization, and motivate employees to greater levels of performance (An et al., 2019; Ugwu, 2019; Yin et al., 2020; Xu & Wang, 2019).

In contrast, transactional leadership style is an economic driven relationship whereby leaders build a working frame with well-defined tasks ((Ugwu et al., 2020; Vuong et al., 2019). Employees are enticed with rewards for task completion and punished for laxity and failures (Raziq et al., 2018; Vuong et al., 2019; Xu & Wang, 2019). Both styles have been noted to yield influences on employees performance in the public sector (Raziq et al., 2018; Ugwu et al., 2020). Notably, public sector employees perform better with the transformational leader who is willing to provide support for career development and teamwork (Ahmad & Saad, 2020; An et al., 2019; Fenwick et al., 2019; Ugwu, 2019; Yadav & Yadav, 2018; Yin et al., 2020).

The public sector is characterized by bureaucratic processes and procedures that slow down employee creativity and performance (Hansen & Pihl- Thingyad, 2019; Torfing, 2020). Transactional leadership in the public sector results in having a workforce that is not motivated to be innovative but rather economically driven (Passakonjaras & Hartijasti, 2019; Razzaq et al., 2019). Innovation contributes to superior performance and

better problem resolution (Varadarajan, 2018; Wikhamn et al., 2018). Political objectives and policies notably can be achieved through innovation and if absent in the public sector under transactional leadership would challenge employee performance (Hansen & Pihl, 2019; Razzaq et al., 2019; Torfing, 2019). Collaborative innovation in public sector organizations reduces bureaucracies through active and creative problem-solving techniques. (Torfing, 2019).

Transactional leadership is task-oriented, results-focused, and economic driven (Semarco & Cho, 2018). The leader closely monitors task performance thereby little gap is recorded in terms of task completion (Toeman & Ulengin, 2018). Using the contingent reward and management by exception – active strategy, leaders can ensure employee adherence to established policies and procedures, rewards for effective task completion and punishment meted out for failures (Boyer-Davis, 2018; Semarco & Cho, 2018). This leadership style creates an atmosphere of rivalry and ignores followers’ social and emotional needs (Boyer-Davis, 2018; Ma & Jiang, 2018). Transactional leadership when applied in the public sector can wield a level of influence. Employees may out of desire for reward motivated to achieve higher levels of performance.

### **Servant Leadership Theory**

The term “servant leadership” was first developed by Greenleaf in the early 1970s and published in 1977 (Eva et al., 2018). According to Greenleaf (1977), servant leadership is described as an altruistic calling on a leader who is engulfed with a deep-rooted desire to make a positive difference in the life of others. The servant leadership approach is unique because it inverts the leadership pyramid starting with the leader at

the bottom (Lumpkin & Achen, 2018). Heyler and Martin (2018) posited that servant leaders believe that the essence of leadership is serving followers by helping them develop professionally and personally. Lumpkin and Achen (2018) corroborated that the servant leader is a steward engaged in active service. Therefore, the servant leaders' primary focus is the development of a strong and long-term relationship with followers, building a well-knitted and vibrant community, and treating others as they would want to be treated (Chi et al., 2020; Lumpkin & Achen, 2018; Northouse, 2018; Stein et al., 2019; Vandenberghe, 2018).

The servant leader focuses attention on achieving vibrant long-term relationship with followers, assist their growth and development professionally and personally (Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2018; Lumpkin & Achen, 2018; Stein et al., 2019). Servant leaders are egalitarian, rejecting the notion that leaders are superior to other employees (Chi et al., 2020). Instead, it suggests that the leader-follower relationship does not see a leader's office as a position with leadership expectations (Lumpkin & Achen, 2018). Chi et al. (2020) stated that in servant leadership, decisions and interventions on issues relating with the organization and job procedures are not determined by the leader. According to Eva et al. (2018), servant leaders value the others' good by placing followers' success above their interest; they place subordinates' interest above organizational goals.

Banks et al. (2018) investigated frameworks and dimensions of servant leadership. Needham (2019) corroborated seven dimensions of servant leadership: (a) emotional healing, (b) creating value for the community, (c) listening and understanding,

(d) empowering, (e) helping subordinates grow and succeed, (f) putting followers first, and (g) good behaviors. Mustard (2020) postulated that the servant leader displays ten characteristics: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to others' growth, and community builders. All these corroborate Greenleaf's (1997) assertion that servant leaders listen to and understand others' problems; they help and empower followers through interpersonal support (Banks et al., 2018). One of servant leadership strategies is the desire to help others through empowerment and goal-oriented support fundamentally achieved by putting employees first (Northouse, 2018; Ragnarsson et al., 2018).

Servant leaders are goal-oriented, good communicators, situational, dependable, creative, trustworthy, and intuitive (Needham, 2017). The leader recognizes and respects the fact that followers have needs, goals, and limitations (Burney & Jockeys, 2020). Crippen and Willows (2019) posited that servant leaders show they are attentive to employee needs by demonstrating high communication skills. They are good listeners and show empathy, and this is a strategy used to build strength, trust, and confidence in the employees (Needham, 2017).

According to Okechukwu (2018), servant leaders motivate followers and develop them to become servant leaders themselves, ready to sacrifice personal interest for others. According to Muafi and Ismail (2018), employee motivation is achieved by creating desire and belief in the good of being a servant before aspiring to leadership position. The desire to serve others instilled in followers is seen to develop their capabilities



(Okechukwu, 2018). This leadership trait is noted to develop employees' skills and build them up to the level of goal achievement (Lumpkin & Achen, 2018).

### ***Summary Servant Leadership Theory***

Servant leadership is viewed as effective in promoting public values and efficient delivery of services to the populace because the emphasis is not on the leader but on self-sacrifice and performance beyond the call of duty (Mostafa & El-Motalib, 2019). The servant leader's motivation and desire to serve others can be effective in the public sector as the focus is to serve others which is considered the bedrock of the public sector (Bayram & Zoubi, 2020; Mostafa & El-Motalib, 2019).

Transformational leadership and servant leadership focus on followers' needs (Bor & Shargel, 2020; Eva et al., 2019). Transformational leaders focus on followers' needs to enable employees to achieve organizational goals, whereas the servant leader's focus on followers' well-being is based on employees' multidimensional development (Andersen, 2018; Stollberger et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2018; Xie, 2020). The servant leader's attitude to employees is more flexible than transformational and transactional leadership style as the focus is on the employee before organizational goals (Wang et al., 2018). The focus of servant leaders on employee wellbeing is a long-term motivation as it inspires the desire of being a leader (Xie, 2020). Servant leadership focuses on humility, authenticity, and interpersonal acceptance while transformational leadership focuses on organizational objectives and inspiring employees to higher performance (Andersen, 2018; Xie, 2020).

Servant leadership is about trust and servant leaders are authentic, reliable, highly supported by employees, and provide direction (Bor & Shargel, 2020; Heyler & Martin 2018; Lumpkin & Achen, 2018; Varela et al., 2019; Mostafa & El-Motalib, 2019). Furthermore, servant leadership attributes position the leader as a role model (Bayram & Zoubi, 2020). These attributes endear employees to their leader, notably increasing performance (Banks et al., 2018; Lumpkin & Achen, 2018; Stein et al., 2019). Researchers found servant leadership will increase employee performance and organizational effectiveness when employees value, trust, and look up to their leader (Adiguzel et al., 2020; Bayram & Zoubi, 2020; Eva et al., 2019; Stollberger et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2018). When leaders in the public sector are able to display the attributes of servant leadership such as trust, reliability, and ability to provide direction, employees become endeared and committed to organizational goal achievement.

### **Laissez-Faire Leadership Theory**

Laissez-faire leadership theory is also known as delegative leadership (Diebig & Bormann 2020). According to Avolio, Bass, and Dug (1999), laissez-faire leadership is considered the absence of a leader behavior or inaction of the person holding the office of authority. Breevaart and Zacher (2019) opined that laissez-faire leader do not take responsibility and avoid interactions with their followers. According to Samanta and Lamprakis (2018), laissez-faire leaders are ineffective, are not interested in their line of duties, do not decide, do not guide, and do not intervene in problems or challenges. The leader displays a high level of confidence in employee's autonomy and permits them to

carry out duties as they deem most appropriate with least supervision (Diebig & Bormann, 2020).

Laissez-faire leadership, according to Nielsen et al. (2019), is a non-leadership situation because the leader is absent, does not make decisions, and is less engaged with employees. Breevaart and Zacher (2019) noted that laissez-faire leadership negatively affects followers. Corroborating, Nielsen et al. (2019) opined that laissez-faire leadership eliminates the supervisory role, guidance, and fundamental communication with employees. Exposure to this leadership style would instigate negative emotions and increase levels of frustration as the leader is not connected to the employee (Breevaart & Zacher, 2019).

### ***Summary Laissez-Faire Leadership Theory***

Laissez-faire leadership is termed as nonexistent leadership (Avolio et al., 1999; Breevaart & Zacher, 2019; Samanta & Lamprakis, 2018). Laissez-faire leaders are not interested in their duties, do not guide nor intervene in crisis situations (Breevaart & Zacher 2019). According to Samata and Lamprakis (2018), this leadership style negatively impacts performance. Explaining further, Diebig and Bormann (2020) postulated that laissez-faire leadership can lead to negative employee reactions due to the leader's neglect of workplace procedures, avoidance of supervisory responsibilities; and voluntarily avoiding employees concerns and expectations (Li et al., 2019).

### **Employee Performance**

Scholars opined a significant increase in human capital development in organizations. (Bose, 2018; Dialoke & Ogbu, 2018; Edward & Koban, 2020). Human resources have

become one of the most important aspects of achieving organizational vision, mission, and objectives (Jeffrey & Prasetya, 2019). The human factor is undoubtedly a strategic necessity in managing customer relationships since no technology can replace skilled communication, problem-solving, and customer-centric services (Dhanpat et al., 2018).

Employee performance, therefore, is of high relevance in determining the survival of an organization, its adaptability to the business environment, and success (Afsar et al., 2019; Alfani & Hamzah, 2019). Therefore, employee performance is the key driver to increase the productivity of any organization (Bose, 2018; Dialoke & Ogbu, 2018; Islam et al., 2018). The performance of an employee can be understood through the comparison of tasks accomplished versus task assigned and the outcome is evaluated to ascertain level of completion according to expected results (Bose, 2018; Tabiu, 2019). Employee performance is viewed as the record of outcomes produced on a specified job function or activity during a specified period, a wide gap between target and achievement can be interpreted as low employee performance (Edward & Kaban, 2020). Assessing performance entails evaluating task proficiency over a specified time period (Saleem et al., 2019; Tripathi, 2020). Performance measurement is a continuous process of goal setting, evaluation, and feedback (Vlu et al., 2019). Performance can be influenced by skills, exposure to work setting, nature of responsibility, and time allotted to complete the work (Eneanya, 2018; Sangperm & Jermisittiparsert, 2019).

Leadership can influence employees work behavior (Rahmadani et al., 2020). Core tasks are relatively stable, and hence, leaders provide followers with specific goals, guidelines, and performance standards; leaders oversee the progress and provide

feedback on employee performance (Kumar, 2020). Dialoke and Ogbu (2018) posited that employees performance is dependent on the style of leadership prevalent in the organization. Leaders are seen to influence the behavior of employees through decision-making, communication, instructions, and motivation. Leaders choose the appropriate leadership style that can positively influence performance towards the attainment of organizational goals (Sangperm & Jernsittiparsert, 2019).

According to Islam et al. (2018), leaders increase employee performance by creating a work environment of mutual respect, cooperation, trust, and support. Udin et al. (2020) posited that leaders increase employee self-confidence and value resulting in an increased performance that is beyond expected levels. Leaders strategically influence employees by providing access to information, support, resources, and opportunities (Boamah et al., 2018; Peng et al., 2019). Allowing employees access to organizational goals, values, policies, technical knowledge, and expertise instills a sense of belonging and value thereby making them more effective at work (Eliyana, & Muzakki 2019).

Creating a supportive work environment that provides social and emotional support, guidance and feedback from peers, subordinates, and supervisors enhances team spirit, collaboration, and healthy competition (Afsar et al., 2019; Peng et al., 2019). Access to resources such as materials, supplies, money, time, and equipment needed to accomplish the job determine effective performance (Peng, et al., 2019). Access to mobility and growth opportunities entails access to challenges, rewards, increased status, recognition for competence, skills, and professional development opportunities (Ohemeng, 2018).

The need for a high-performance workforce in the public sector has made it imperative for leaders to embrace strategies that will increase performance (Ahmad & Saad, 2020; Andersen, 2018; Ohemeng, 2018). Public sector employee performance has been questioned especially in developing countries like Nigeria where employees exert more effort in discharging their assigned responsibilities (Ehiane et al., 2019; Tabiu, 2019). Public sector reform is imperative to community development in developing countries and employees are the potential source of improvement (Campbell, 2018b; Elmasry & Bakri, 2019; Onwuama & Obiora 2020; Vu et al., 2019).

Employee performance is considered an essential component for public sector development (Andersen, 2018; Elmasry & Bakri, 2019; Vu et al., 2019). A high-performance workforce is needed to achieve organizational goals and effectiveness (Ahmad & Saad, 2020; Vuong et al., 2019). Leadership is an essential component that influences and determines employee performance in the organization (Anshori et al., 2020; Peng, 2019; Sandvik, et al., 2019; Vuong et al., 2019; Wahab & Tyasari, 2020).

### ***Transformational Leadership and Employee Performance***

Transformational leadership behavior represents the most effective leadership strategy for achieving increased employee performance (Breevaart & Zacher, 2019; Campbell, 2018a; Ibrahim et al., 2018; Munyiva & Kihara, 2018). Leadership is an art that presents employees with a new horizon of performance goals and achievements (Islam et al., 2018). The transformational leader is theorized to engage employees in a relationship that motivates to higher performance (Langat et al., 2019; Samanta & Lamprakis. 2018).

The transformational leader inspires employees to achieve higher performance levels (Anshori et al., 2020; Aun et al., 2019; Munyiva & Kihara, 2018).

Transformational leaders correlate individual benefits with the identity of the organization and the benefit of the team. Such leaders inspire and challenge employees to demonstrate high-performance, innovation, and a goal-accomplishing attitude (Aun et al., 2019; Buil et al., 2019; Mokhber et al., 2018).

According to Sosrowidigdo (2020), an organization's leadership style can significantly affect employee performance. Ramdas and Patrick (2018) noted a significant correlation between leader strategy and employee performance. Previous studies have also established a causal relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance (Aun et al., 2019; Eliyana et al., 2019; Hee et al., 2018; Ibrahim et al., 2018). Ibrahim et al. (2018) conducted a study on transformational leadership and employee performance in the Malaysian public sector. Using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), 250 questionnaires were administered to staff, and the results concluded a causal relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance (Ibrahim et al., 2018). Burns (1978) opined that there is in-depth connectivity in terms of performance and transformational leadership. Bass and Avolio (1990) recommended that organizations need to teach transformational leadership in all management positions as it positively affects performance.

One of the essential elements of transformational leadership is leaders' ability to influence followers to strive for higher performance and influence employee attitudes, beliefs, and values (Awaang et al., 2020; Hee et al., 2018; Ibrahim et al., 2018). Buil et al.

(2019) explained that transformational leaders can successfully influence employees by focusing on their needs, listening to their challenges, and encouraging them to develop professionally; this attribute promotes employee pride and attachment to the organization (Aun et al., 2019; Buil et al., 2019).

Transformational leaders display firm support and concern for employees welfare by ensuring unbiased treatment and consideration for all (Anshori et al., 2020). Notably, this strategy gives employees a sense of belonging, a feeling of worthiness, and appreciation of their efforts (Mokhber et al., 2018). Transformational leadership strategy can consistently yield a high level of motivation and inspiration that propels employees to transcend personal interest for the organization's good (Awang et al., 2020; Mokhber et al., 2018).

Abasilim et al. (2019) explained that transformational leaders build employees leadership competence, stimulating accomplishment of unprecedented results. Transformational leaders develop procedural approach and encourage employees to participate in the process which develops creative skills and intuitive thinking (Reza, 2019). The leaders are expected to create an enabling work environment that promotes innovation and competitive advantage. Transformational leaders motivate employees to deliver outcomes beyond expectations through developing positive, goal-oriented beliefs and value systems in the organization (Mokhber et al., 2018).

Posner and Kouzes (1988) developed a transformational leadership model by interviewing more than 1,300 managers in public and private organizations. This model entails five effective practices: model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the



process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart. Posner and Kouzes suggested that leadership is not a position but rather a collection of practices and behaviors which serve as guidance for goal accomplishments. Posner and Kouzes stated further that successful leaders work effectively with people because they can create a vision that guides employees' vision and positively influences performance. The transformational leader can transform employee's focus to achieving organization's vision and operate beyond standard achievement; stimulate the intellect and promote employee creativity (Mokhber et al., 2018).

According to Al-Ama (2017), leaders transform employees perceptions and influence their values, expectations, and aspirations through transformational leadership behaviors. Transformational leaders are seen as agents of change that strategically create a conducive work environment that enhances and enables goal accomplishment (Mokhber et al., 2018).

Transformational leaders possess traits through which they enhance employee performance and goal attainment (Bass, 1997). The trait of the component of idealized influence makes the leader a role model. Using this trait, leaders influence followers to believe in their leaders and go beyond their bounds for the leaders. With the component of inspirational motivation, the leader demonstrates the ability to inspire confidence and a sense of purpose (Al – Ama, 2017). The leader has a succinct vision, communicate expectations, and demonstrates genuine commitment to goal accomplishment (Awang et al., 2020). Under the component of intellectual stimulation, the leader inspires creativity and innovation by challenging the followers to achieve above the status quo. The

component of individual consideration ensures the leader focuses on individual growth. The strategy here involves individualized support tools such as counseling, mentoring, and coaching (Bass, 1997). These leadership traits positively influence on employees' commitment to the organization and performance (Al-Amin, 2017).

Transformational leadership is considered the leadership style that positively affects employee performance (Anshori et al., 2020; Bass, 1997; Chen et al., 2019; Nam & Park, 2019). Transformational leaders' personality and behavioral traits motivate and inspire employees (Abasilim et al., 2019; Anshori et al., 2020; Nam & Park, 2019; Reza, 2019). Transformational leaders are noted for having the capacity to intellectually challenge employees to overcome work challenges through teamwork, innovation, and creativity (Breevaart & Bakker, 2018; Raziq et al., 2018).

Transformational leadership ensures effective and efficient communication of organizational vision which notably results in employee commitment and active engagement (Toufaily, 2018). Leaders may learn to appropriate the transformational leadership tenets to increase employee performance with proper understanding and application of a transformational leader's characteristics and attributes. As identified by Bass (1990), the four constructs of (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration can enable leaders to communicate vision effectively, achieve organizational goals, productively engage employees, involve employees in decision making process, and inspire employees to higher levels of performance (Afsaar & Masood, 2018; Ahmad & Saad, 2020; Campbell,

2018a; Chen et al., 2018; Elmasry & Bakri, 2018; Faupel & Süß, 2019; Getachew & Zhou, 2018; Toufaily, 2018).

### **Analysis of the Public Sector in Nigeria**

The public sector is established to provide efficient services to the community (Ahmad & Saad, 2020). According to Elmasry and Bakri (2019), the public sector is the vehicle through which services are rendered to the public in a coordinated and efficient manner. Eneanya (2018) posited that the public sector is a state activity that involves interaction with citizens as customers. According to Onwuama and Obiora (2020), the public sector includes government agencies with specific services under the jurisdiction of the government. The public sector in Nigeria represents the government's realm to benefit the citizenry (Oluruntoba & Gbemigun, 2019).

The public sector in Nigeria is viewed as significant to the federal government as a channel to manage resource allocation, expenditures, policy administration, and service delivery to the community (Ake & Olowojolu, 2019; Chiamogu, 2019; Igbokwe-Ibeto et al., 2020; Oluruntoba & Gbemigun, 2019; Olusola & Daniel, 2019). Ahmad and Saad (2020) posited that the public sector's competitive edge is highly dependent on the efficiency and effectiveness of the workforce. However, some believe that leadership ineffectiveness in the Nigerian public sector is connected to inefficiency and under performance (Ake & Olowojolu, 2019; Chiamogu, 2019; Igbokwe-Ibeto et al., 2020).

Nigeria is a public sector driven economy; hence, government activities' success is dependent upon the sector's performance of efficient service delivery (Adanri, 2016; Ake, 2019; Eneanya 2018; Igbokwe-Ibeto et al., 2020). Onyema (2018) attributed poor

employee performance and poor execution of some national policies of the public sector to lack of strategic leadership. Ake and Olowojolu, (2019) opined that ineffective leadership is the major cause of setbacks recorded in the public sector.

### **Implementing Transformational Leadership Strategies in the Public Sector in Nigeria**

The nature of the public sector is vast and complex. According to Ojala (2013), the complexity results from public dissatisfaction despite government's efforts. Resolving the complexity is hinged on having an effective, efficient, and high-performing public sector (Ehiane et al., 2019; Oloruntoba & Gbemigun, 2019). The public sector's competitive edge on the global scale is highly dependent on effective service delivery and employee performance (Ahmad & Saad 2020; Ehiane et al., 2019). Globally, public sectors are confronted with citizen discontent over service delivery, performance, technology, cultural influence, and globalization; this discontent initiated the need for public sectors worldwide to seek new strategies that can increase employee performance.

A vibrant public sector strengthens the economy and fosters growth. Therefore, improving public sector performance automatically upscales the economy's performance characterized by growth, poverty reduction, and improved human development (Ehiane et al., 2019). Thus, it is pertinent to have a high-performance-centric workforce that will be effective, efficient, productive, and innovative (Ahmad & Saad, 2020). Leadership is paramount to achieving public sector effectiveness (Aun, 2019; Harb & Sidani, 2019; Mau, 2020 Samanta & Lamprakis, 2018).

Public sector's effectiveness is based on strategic leadership's quality and ability to harness human resources efficiently and progressively. Transformational leadership is grounded on the ideology that charismatic leaders are sensitive to followers' needs, motivate and inspire employees to higher levels of performance (Ahmad & Saad, 2020; Awang et al., 2020; Munyiva & Kihara, 2018). Explaining further, Ahmad and Saad (2020) posited that there is a positive relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance in the public sector. According to Campbell (2018), transformational leadership positively affects performance in the public sector. Transformational leaders operate with high integrity therefore they can influence and motivate employees to achieve higher performance levels (Ibrahim et al., 2018; Munyiva & Kihara, 2018). Thus, a leader is expected to have the ability to make strategic decisions rather than just implementing actions, which is a significant driver for growth in the public sector (Fashola et al., 2016). According to Onwuama and Anichebe (2020), the public sector's growth is affected by leaders' ethical behaviors, which implies that the leader's strategic behaviors improve employee performance. A transformational leader uses charisma to coach, mentor, challenge, and support employees to transcend their self-interest for organization's good.

### **The Public Sector and the Idealized Influence Strategy**

Employee confidence in the leader boosts morale, encourage and motivate higher performance levels. Idealized influence strategy makes the transformational leader charismatic, confident, ethical, idealistic, and trustworthy thereby making the leader a role model to the employees (Abasilim et al., 2019; Avolio & Bass, 2004). According to

Elmasry and Bakri (2018), these attributes influence employees' performance in the public sector, stimulate critical thinking, and inspire loyalty (Khaltar & Moon, 2020). Idealized influence strategy enables the leader to understand employees uniqueness, capacity, and talent, and assign tasks according to individual strengths (Kasimoglu & Ammari, 2019). The strategy promotes employee creativity, innovation, and divergent thinking in the workplace (Anthony, 2017; Awang et al., 2020; Campbell, 2018a). This is one of the much-needed attributes that fosters effectiveness and efficiency among public sector employees.

In applying the idealized influence leadership strategy, the leader creates the vision and shares it with employees which notably yields a strong influence on performance in the public sector. Dialoke and Ogbu (2018) stated that, when employees follow the set vision of their leader, they are focused on actualization of organizational vision, influenced to follow in the leaders' steps as a role model and positively perceive themselves as future leaders (Anthony, 2017; Kasimoglu & Ammari, 2019; Matjie, 2018). This combination of activities causes employees to commit to community interest rather than their personal interest (Khaltar & Moon, 2020).

According to Ahmad and Saad (2020), leaders that exhibit the idealized influence strategy are embodied as exemplary and trusted by subordinates. These behaviors promote the assertion that such leaders are powerful and worthy of confidence (Kasimoglu & Ammari, 2019). The leader provides moral support to employees, coaches, mentors, and is concerned about their career path (Gennaro, 2018). Employees feel valued and appreciated, therefore are inspired, and highly committed to achieving set

goals and visions (Tuan & Thao, 2018). The employees are encouraged to see themselves as part of the organization and change agents (Gennaro, 2018). Leaders applying the idealized influence strategy understand public sector employee behavior, motivate them to adapt to uncertainties, and be highly effective (Gennaro, 2018). Munhiva and Kihara (2019) concluded that leaders who apply idealized influence strategy are honored, appreciated, trusted, admired, and imitated, which has led to improved employee performance.

Analyzing the impact of idealized influence on employee performance and importance to the organization, Shaw et al. (2018) investigated 12 employees in Canada to examine their behavior and the impact of leadership strategy on their output. The authors presented that idealized influence enabled leaders to successfully deliver corporate mission, thereby enabling proper understanding of expectations. Employees can relate with the leaders and are inspired to follow their leaders and remain committed to goal accomplishment.

### ***The Public Sector and the Inspirational Motivation Strategy***

The transformational leadership strategy through inspirational motivation exhibits a high level of enthusiasm and optimism when challenging employees; this instills confidence and a sense of purpose in employees, and by so doing, a high level of performance is achieved. The leader articulates organizational vision and generate motivation by setting high workplace standards, inspire employees to achieve standards (Abasilim et al., 2019; Edward & Kaban, 2020; Yamamoto & Yamaguchi, 2019). Dialoke and Ogbu (2018) opined that inspirational motivation transformational

leadership strategy enhances employee capacity to be self-reliant and develop confidence. According to Tuan and Thao (2018), employees are inspired by the leader's tactics and strategies, enhancing performance. Building employees confidence positions the leader favorably, and thus, viewed as unselfish and enthusiastic about employee growth (Dialoke & Ogbu, 2018; Lo et al., 2020).

In the transformational leadership inspirational motivation strategy, leaders communicate vision unambiguously to employees (Ahmad & Saad, 2019). Leaders' motivational strategy is allocation of challenging tasks and motivating employees to accomplish tasks. Munyiva and Kihara (2018) posited that the inspirational motivation leadership strategy increases employee performance through enthusiasm, optimism, teamwork, and positive results.

Harb and Sidani (2019) interviewed 10 general managers in the Lebanese public sector to evaluate the impact of inspirational motivation strategy on employee performance. The results presented those leaders using the inspirational motivation strategy could transparently share their vision and display confidence in employees' capability. The leader treats employees with respect, which in turn gains their respect and loyalty.

### ***The Public Sector and the Intellectual Stimulation Strategy***

Applying the intellectual stimulation transformational leadership strategy, the leader encourages employees to be innovative and creative. The leader encourages employees to freely question beliefs, assumptions, values, and job implementation procedures (Munhiva & Kihara, 2018). Harb and Sidani (2019) postulated that such



attributes enable innovation and new ways of solving problem, encourage knowledge sharing and builds trust which is pertinent to increasing employee performance in the public sector (Besieux et al., 2018; Harb & Sidani, 2019; Khan & Khan, 2019).

According to Bass (1985), the intellectual stimulation transformational leadership strategy encourages employees to ask questions, reason intensely, and think widely to accomplish tasks. Leaders' ability to inspire innovation among employees in the public sector is critical to growth (Khan & Khan, 2019; Vries et al., 2018). Leaders using the intellectual stimulation strategy inspire employees to seamlessly solve problems and address challenges by encouraging and accepting subordinates' suggestions, this builds trust and appreciation of employees' capabilities.

A study carried out on school principals and their influence on teachers' performance by Breevaart and Bakker (2019) revealed a positive influence on teachers' performance. The authors opined that the principals demonstrated intellectual stimulation by listening to teachers and encouraging free communication on problems and proffering solutions. This strategy was noted to enhance creativity, help employees grow professionally, and increase innovative suggestions to organizational challenges (Breevaart & Bekker, 2019). Public sector innovation motivates employees to higher level of performance. Employees are encouraged to solve problems creatively and this builds trust and sense of belongingness which results in increased performance.

### ***The Public Sector and the Individualized Consideration Strategy***

Applying the individualized consideration transformational leadership strategy, the leader helps bring out public servants' potential by providing socio-emotional

support, viewing, and accepting employees as valuable contributors to organization's growth. Munyiva and Kihara, (2018) postulated that employee inclusion is critical in the organization's transformation process. The leader responds to employees' needs in a supportive and helpful manner (Khan et al., 2020). Applying this strategy, the leader can maintain a dyadic relationship with employees and create a more flexible working environment. This strategy fosters interpersonal relationships with the leader and the resulting confidence which transcends the official relationship and fosters trust and dedication.

The individualized consideration leader behavior is a developmental relationship that encourages two-way communication, improves information exchange, allows cordial and familiarity with the leader, inspires employees to grow professionally, and notably improves employee performance in the public sector (Getachew et al., 2018; Harb & Sidani, 2019; Khan et al., 2020; Lo et al., 2020). Leaders pay attention to employees' specific needs, assign tasks according to employees' capacity (Martinez -Corcoles et al., 2020). Application of individualized consideration strategy in the public sector can take the form of personal expressions of words of appreciation to employees for successful completion of tasks (Campbell, 2018b; Getachew & Zhou, 2018; Lauzikas & Miliute, 2019). The acknowledgement of employees' feelings, mentoring, and concern for professional growth endears employees to their leader and instills pride because of close relationship with the leader (Abasilim et al., 2019; Guterresa et al., 2020; Olusola & Daniel, 2019). Leader-employee cordial relationship fosters a high sense of commitment to both the leader and the organization.

An effective leader creates organizational culture that encourages employees to do the work they find satisfying. Ibrahim et al. (2018) opined that the creation of organizational culture is a strategy that could encourage public sector innovation and employee dedication to the leader and the organization (Khan et al., 2020). The strategy inspires interest in work and task accomplishments which is viewed as a strategy for employee performance in the public sector (Awang et al., 2020; Lo et al., 2020). Employees are more relaxed and confident in the work environment characterized by innovation and fair work distributions. Employee's confidence in the system results in increased performance.

### ***Summary Transformational Leadership Strategies in the Public Sector in Nigeria***

Transformational leader encourages employees to be creative and think outside the box. The leader inspires the development of new problem-solving ideas (participatory) instead of the formal, rigid civil service structure. The civil servants are encouraged to operate in a workplace environment that freely questions beliefs, assumptions, traditions, and procedures that may be outdated or inappropriate to handle current challenges (Olaopa, 2018).

In Nigeria, the federal government's developmental policies are implemented through the workforce in the public sector. However, the sector's effectiveness is measured through efficiency of service delivery, which is dependent on leadership and employee performance (Ahmad & Saad, 2020; Eneanya 2018; Igbokwe-Ibeto et al., 2020). Therefore, to achieve improved performance, it is essential to choose and adopt the leadership style that inspires and motivates employees to higher performance levels

(Abasilim et al., 2019; Ahmad & Saad, 2020; Harb & Sidani, 2019; Kelu & MacDonald, 2019). Transformational leaders are noted to be respected and trusted by the employees, thereby, creating a high level of job satisfaction that notably results in increased performance (Anshori et al., 2020; Aun et al., 2019; Awang et al., 2020; Breevaart & Zacher, 2019; Olaopa, 2018).

Bass (1985) stated that transformational leaders inspire followers with strategic organizational vision and mission; transform and motivate through idealized attributes, idealized behaviors, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and individualized consideration. Bass (1985) agreed with Burns' (1978) concept of the transformational leadership style that the leader has a strong influence on followers' motivation and performance. Bass (1985) agreed that a leader is transformational when they can influence followers and followers trust, respect, and are loyal to the leader. Burns (1978), in agreement with Bass (1985), noted that transformational leaders guide followers to align with organizational goals.

The ability of transformational leaders to communicate well-articulated visions and hold high expectations enables team building that facilitates higher performance, trust and loyalty (Anshori et al., 2020; Boamah et al., 2018; Breevaart & Zacher, 2019; Buil et al., 2019; Cai et al., 2018; Harb & Sidani, 2019). Nigeria's public sector transformational leaders would identify the gaps in existing policies that have hindered employees' performance and effectiveness (Ehiane et al., 2019; Olaopa, 2018). The leaders can promote a change agenda that ensures public service values, problem-solving ideas, creative work environment, and innovation (Awang et al., 2020; Boamah et al.,

2020; Hansen & Pihl-Thingvad, 2019; Torfing, 2019). Moreover, creating collaborative leadership inspires and motivates employees to work beyond leader's expectations and implement appropriate changes in bureaucracy that hinder effectiveness (Alrowwad et al., 2020; Anshori et al., 2020; Ehiane et al., 2019; Hansen & Pihl-Thingvad, 2019; Harb & Sidani, 2019; Olopa, 2018).

### **Transition**

Section 1 of this study reviewed the problem and purpose statement, nature of the study, research question, interview questions, and conceptual framework. This section also encompassed operational definitions, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and the study's significance. Finally, this section included a review of professional and academic literature.

In Section 2, I reiterated the purpose statement and discussed my role as the researcher, the participants, the population, sampling methods, and the study's ethical implications. I discussed and validated the research method and design, the plan and procedures used to capture data, data organization, and data analysis. Section 2 concluded with a discussion on how I achieved reliability and validity of data. Section 3 summarized this study's findings relating to the business practice implications, social change implications, potential future research opportunities, and future action recommendations.

## Section 2: The Project

In Section 2, I present details of the methodology and design of this research project. The segment includes the role of the researcher, participants' qualifying criteria, the research method, and design techniques used for the study. The procedure for selection of participants and sampling method to ensure data saturation is discussed. Measures adopted to ensure participants' ethical protection are clearly stated. Data collection instruments, data techniques, and procedures used to achieve validity and reliability of data are also explained.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that leaders in the Nigerian public sector use to increase employee performance. The targeted population comprised four leaders from four distinct ministries and parastatals of the Nigerian public sector in the FCT, Abuja who have successfully developed and implemented strategies that have increased employee performance. The contribution to positive social change within the public sector includes potential to benefit society by providing strategies that can be used to stabilize employment, which may result in employee prosperity and increase the wellbeing of families. Stabilized employment may enhance the efficient and effective delivery of services rendered to communities through the public sector.

### **Role of the Researcher**

My role as the researcher and primary data collection instrument in this qualitative multiple case study included collecting and analyzing the data. The researcher

is responsible for recruiting participants; developing interview questions; collecting, collating, and analyzing data; reporting findings; and making recommendations (Cluley et al., 2020; Denzin & Lincoln 2018). Qualitative researchers ask open-ended questions in semistructured interviews, distribute questionnaires, analyze data, and identify themes in an unbiased and ethical manner (Cluley et al., 2020; Frechette et al., 2020). As posited by Frechette et al. (2020), researchers use semistructured interviews to extract rich details about experiences. For this study, I conducted semistructured interviews using open-ended questions and established necessary interview protocols.

In qualitative research, ethical considerations and confidentiality are vital (Glenna et al., 2019). I ensured strict adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). The Belmont Report stipulates that the code of ethics must be respected to ensure protection and privacy of participants. Research was not conducted until approval was granted by the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB), which is in strict adherence to Belmont Report. After the approval, I contacted selected sample participants through email. A signed informed consent form was obtained from participants after guaranteeing a full understanding of the interview protocol prior to conducting research. In accordance with the standards of the Belmont Report (see U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979), participants confidentiality was not compromised.

Researchers have the responsibility to guard against bias, which can deviate rationality and interpretation (Buetow, 2019). According to Wadams and Park (2018), researcher bias misrepresents participants opinions. I worked in the public sector for 14

years and held leadership positions. Qualitative researchers are expected to exclude personal viewpoints, experiences, and morals when conducting research. To remain neutral, I ensured that my experience in the public sector did not influence participant selection, collation, interpretation, and analysis of data. Participants selected were of the level of ministers, director generals, and executive directors, whose positions were much higher than the highest level I attained, to have an informed unbiased opinion on leader strategies that can increase employee performance in the public sector. Research procedures ensure validity and mitigate bias (Buetow, 2019; Hamilton, 2020; Wadams & Park, 2018). According to Wadams and Park (2018), researchers can mitigate bias through member checking. Member checking is a technique used by qualitative researchers to validate the trustworthiness of the results. I shared the summary of interviews with participants to ensure that the interpretations conformed with their views. I adhered strictly to the ethics of research and protection of participants' privacy.

A reliable and well-established interview protocol is crucial to obtain good qualitative data (Braaten et al., 2020; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). According to Braaten et al. (2020), a carefully developed interview protocol can help the researcher save time and maintain a sense of uniformity and conformity. Researchers collect valuable data, mitigate bias, and ensure reliability of data by imploring interview protocols (Braaten et al., 2020). Credibility in qualitative research can be achieved through semistructured interview protocols. To mitigate researcher bias, I adhered to the protocols of member checking and data saturation ensuring that I had no prior existing personal or professional relationship with participants.



## Participants

The participants were selected purposively to meet the conditions needed to obtain data from leaders in the Nigerian public sector who have successfully applied strategies that increased employee performance. To have informed and rich perspective of the study, it is imperative to have participants who meet the criteria needed for data interpretation and analysis (Saunders et al. 2018). The population sample comprised of four leaders from four distinct ministries and parastatals of the Nigerian public sector in the FCT, Abuja who have successfully developed and implemented strategies that increased employee performance. All participants were screened and met the following eligibility conditions for this study: (a) minimum of 18 years of age, (b) have served in the leadership position in the public sector for a minimum of one term of 4 years, and (c) have developed and implemented strategies that increased employee performance in the public sector.

To identify potential participants, I searched the following websites for public organizations with good rating:

- SERVICOM website. I used the evaluation report to select organizations with positive ratings.
- Public & Private Development Centre. I used their ranking of public sector service performance in Nigeria.
- Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (an umbrella organization for all public sector organizations in Nigeria).
- Secretary to the Government of the Federation.

- World Bank. Public sector performance index for Nigeria.

I searched for email addresses and telephone contacts of the director general, executive directors, and directors of selected public sector organization. Afterwards, I sent an invitation email to four potential participants. I introduced myself as the researcher, provided a detailed explanation of the purpose of the study and the benefits to the Nigerian public sector, and solicited their permission to grant interviews. I requested potential participants to communicate their response to me via email. Participants who were willing responded by email “I consent”. Yin (2018) posited that to gain access to participants, the researcher is expected to contact potential participants through personal communication, such as telephone calls, emails, or personal visit.

Afterwards, I made follow up contact to participants who had indicated a positive response through email to establish their willingness to proceed with the interview. Yin (2018) noted that for the success of the research, it is vital for the researcher to establish an honest and cordial working relationship with the participants. I maintained a professional relationship, encouraging free and open communication. I discussed with participants how the results of the research may contribute to the growth of the public sector. I ensured that participants had a good understanding of the interview protocols to establish an appropriate understanding of the intent and their role in the research. I informed participants of the voluntary nature of the study and that their decision to withdraw at any time they felt appropriate would be respected.

In ensuring successful research, the researcher is expected to build a trust relationship with respondents as it notably fosters an environment that enables

respondents to discuss freely (Wang & Tong, 2020). According to Surmiak (2018), building trust with participants is the bedrock to the success of interviews and data collection in research. To build trust, I assured participants of confidentiality and strict adherence to interview protocols as stipulated by my university. I remained transparent and neutral in my informal discussions, without displaying any form of bias. The participants were able to ask clarifying questions about the purpose of the study as well as review my notes during and after the interview. This was expected to increase their confidence, trust, and sincerity. It is vital that the researcher practice ethical conduct throughout the data gathering process as it notably mitigates bias and fosters a relaxed environment for free undistorted communication (Grant et al., 2019).

### **Research Method and Design**

Researchers use the qualitative research method to explore nonnumerical data from a broader perspective. Using the qualitative research method, the researcher can explore perceptions and gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon through observations and experiences (Yin, 2018). The purpose of this study was to explore leadership strategies that can increase employee performance in the public sector.

### **Research Method**

I selected a qualitative research method for this research study. Researchers use the qualitative research method to explore what, how, and why about a phenomenon from a realistic view through interviews and observations (Yin, 2018). Based on Yin's (2018) recommendations, the qualitative method was the most appropriate for this research as I attempted to answer what and how questions on leader strategies that can increase

employee performance in the public sector. In qualitative research, researchers explore participants' experiences through data collected from interviews and questionnaires (Yin, 2018). Lanka et al. (2021) posited that researchers use qualitative research to explore and understand perceptions on phenomena. Based on Peterson (2019), the emphasis on qualitative research theory is development rather than logical deductions based on assumptions.

Researchers use semistructured interviews to collect and analyze data alongside organizational documents, performance rating, and other useful information on the website (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Yin (2018) stated that the qualitative method uses open-ended questions to obtain data. Therefore, the qualitative research method was the most appropriate to address the research question as it entailed close communication with participants. In guaranteeing the successful conduct of interviews, researchers ensure a friendly and relaxed environment and develop and maintain a trusting relationship with respondents, which notably encourages participants to freely discuss their strategies (Guillemin et al., 2018; Wang & Tong, 2020). Surmiak (2018) posited that building trust with the participant is the bedrock for successful interviews and data collection in research. I engaged with the participants throughout the process to establish and develop a working relationship with each participant. I ensured a free atmosphere that fostered free participation and discussion of experiences using the interview protocol (see Appendix A) to ensure understanding. Using the qualitative method, I collected data from leaders who successfully used strategies to increase employee performance within the public sector.

The other methods of research in addition to the qualitative were quantitative and mixed methods research. In a quantitative research method, researchers test hypotheses to examine and analyze independent and dependent variables' relationships or differences using statistical methods (Boeren, 2018). According to Yin (2018), in the quantitative research method, the researcher attempts to quantify, classify, and examine data using statistical or mathematical techniques. The primary focus of the quantitative researcher is understanding a phenomenon using numerical data and specific statistical techniques to reject or accept a hypothesis. I did not choose a quantitative method for this study because quantitative researchers use predetermined statistical techniques and variables. Therefore, the quantitative research method was not appropriate because the study was not focused on numerical data, testing of hypotheses, and analysis of independent and dependent variables' relationships or differences using statistical methods. Also, close-ended questions could not be used to obtain data for this study, and I did not statistically predict any variable.

The mixed method research inculcates both the qualitative and quantitative approach (Yin, 2018). In the mixed method, the researcher collects data, analyzes data, and uses open-ended and close-ended questions for data gathering (Frais & Popovich, 2020). I did not use the mixed method for this study because I did not need the quantitative component to obtain numerical data or test a hypothesis.

## **Research Design**

### ***Phenomenological Design***

Researchers use a phenomenological design to explain the world by exploring individuals' perceptions of their lived experiences' meanings (Moustakas, 1994; Neubauer et al., 2019). The phenomenological design describes an individual's typical behavior from a common standpoint (Yin, 2017). Researchers using a phenomenological design seek to understand the lived experiences of individuals, acquiring data from several people who experience the same event (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For this study, the phenomenological design was not appropriate as my focus was not exploring individuals' perceptions of the meanings of their lived experiences.

### ***Ethnographic Design***

Ethnographic researchers spend protracted time in a cultural setting to study individuals' behavior (Goopy & Kassan, 2019). Ethnographic researchers use multiple methodological approaches to focus on life stories finding answers and comparing why or what questions (Reyes, 2017). Qualitative researchers use the ethnographic design to observe participants culture for a period (Cantarella et al., 2019). Ethnography was not appropriate as the study did not involve observing participants or exploring and characterizing a group's culture.

### ***Case Study Design***

Researchers use case study design to explore a phenomenon within a real-world context bounded by time, investigate and understand participants' behaviors (Mostert, 2018; Yin 2018). Qualitative researchers use case study design to explore a phenomenon

through participants experiences (Yin, 2018). According to Ebneyamini et al. (2018), case study researchers carry out empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context of undefined boundaries.

The empirical element of case study research consists of real-world data derived from multiple sources (Farquhar, 2020). Yin (2018) stated that the most important advantage of conducting case study research was having the opportunity of a holistic view of a process. According to Ebneyamini et al. (2018), researchers that use the case study intends to gain better understanding of real life complex social phenomena from the viewpoint of the participants using single or multiple cases.

Researchers use the multiple case study to describe a phenomenon through multiple perspectives from two or more cases or businesses hence the evidence is more persuasive, and the outcome can have a more compelling validity than a single case study (Yin, 2018). For this study, I used the multiple case study to understand strategies that can be applied to increase employee performance in the public sector from multiple leaders' perspectives. Multiple case study researchers use triangulation to address multiple data sources validity and reliability (Farquhar, 2020). The multiple case study allowed me to use open ended questions in a semistructured interview to gain in-depth understanding of the interview questions and analyze appropriate leaders' strategies from multiple organizations that can increase employee performance.

### **Population and Sampling**

Sampling is a vital element of qualitative research (Aksakal et al., 2019; Moser & Korstiens, 2018; Yin, 2018). One of the objectives of employing qualitative research is to

gain a deeper understanding of the social phenomenon, and the sample drawn determine answers to research questions, and provide insight into the phenomenon under investigation (Aksakal et al., 2019). In sampling selection, the researcher's primary focus is to ensure a small size that supports the depth of case-oriented analysis fundamental to the study's purpose (Vasilejou et al., 2018).

Purposeful sampling is a nonprobability method whereby participants are not chosen at random, convenience, or availability; rather participants are selected according to the need of the study, participants capacity, and knowledge on the field of study that would provide relevant information on the phenomenon investigated (Benoot et al., 2016; Vasilejou et al., 2018). Moser and Korstiens (2018) opined that purposeful sampling selection of participants is based on the researcher's judgement on the most informative participants. Vasilejou et al. (2018) opined that purposeful sampling is beneficial as it allows the researcher to determine the participant's inclusion, hence, provide the rich data needed for an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. In this qualitative multiple case study, I applied purposeful sampling for the choice of participants. The purposeful sample was made up of four public sector leaders in the FCT Abuja who have successfully applied strategies that increased employee performance.

In ensuring an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon, qualitative researchers select the appropriate population to ensure data saturation (Guest et al., 2020). Data saturation is achieved where no additional data or information can add value to the research (Guest et al., 2020). According to Gugui et al. (2020), data saturation is a point when all relevant concepts have been identified and no new concept would be identified



if interviews should continue. Saunders et. al. (2018) posited that data saturation happens within a range of participants. Hence, researchers use triangulation to validate data using different investigative methods (Ashour, 2018). Data triangulation is obtaining data from multiple sources, compare and analyze (Farquhar et al., 2020). Yin (2018) posited that multiple case study research ensures reliability and validity of data through multiple perspectives hence the evidence is more compelling, and the outcome can have a more substantial validity. Qualitative researchers use interviews as a data collection method to ensure data saturation (Santos et. al., 2020). To enable me gain in-depth understanding of strategies that leaders in the public sector use to increase employee performance, I used methodological triangulation that included data gathered from interview, notes, training programs, training calendar, meeting agendas, staff letter of recommendation, and staff handbook. However, I attained data saturation through data triangulation.

### **Ethical Research**

As posited by Mauthner (2019), ethics in research entails adherence to guidelines and codes of conducts such as informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity to protect research participants from exploitation and infringement of their human rights. Walden University requires that before research can commence, participants are expected to sign a consent form. The consent form contains the purpose of the study, procedures, nature of the study, and participants privacy. Mauthner (2019) posited that informed consent is appropriate to protect participants' rights and dignity in research.

I ensured that the consent form was written clearly and concisely to be easily understood by prospective participants and sufficient time to consider to either accept or

decline was permitted. Participants were informed that participation is voluntary, and conditions for participation was fully understood. According to the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects and Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1978) and Patton (2015), participants are not to be coerced or forced to participate in a research study. This study is voluntary, and participants were free to withdraw from the process willingly at any time they may consider by informing me through email or phone call. (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects and Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1978; Patton, 2015).

Participants were not coerced or forced to participate in the research study (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects and Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1978; Patton, 2015). According to Brown et al. (2019), research participants are sometimes paid for participation in research to show appreciation for participants' contribution. Such payments could have undue influence on the participants, and they may choose to conceal information if not satisfied with the payment (Mweemba et al., 2020). For this study, there was no monetary or incentives for participation. To ensure the ethical protection of the research participants, I adhered to the three ethical principles in the Belmont Report which include respect for persons, beneficence, and justice as indicated in the US Department of Health and Human Services (1979).

Paradis and Varpio (2018) suggested it is appropriate for research to begin after procedural and practical ethics approvals have been obtained. Procedural ethics has to do with obtaining approval on the formal process of ethical board review (Biros, 2018; Paradis & Varpio, 2018). Paradis and Varpio, (2018) posited that it is proper for research

to begin after all necessary approvals have been obtained. In Walden University, before research can commence, the researcher is expected to obtain approval from IRB. I obtained all necessary approvals from the IRB before contacting research participants. I fully adhered to all conditions, procedures, and protocols of the IRB.

After obtaining the IRB approval, I contacted identified organizational leaders through email and phone call. I explained the purpose of the study, the procedures of the interview, the nature of the study, and the importance of their participation in contributing to strategies that can increase employee performance in the public sector. Prospective participants were requested to confirm participation by responding to the consent form by email. The key objective of research ethics is to safeguard and ensure that researchers treat participants ethically and respectfully (Haven & Van Grootel, 2019). I used interview protocol (see Appendix A), transcript checking, and member checking to enhance the reliability and validity of this study.

Qualitative researchers ensure confidentiality of responses and documents (Adrianna, 2018). To ensure participants confidentiality and protect identity, pseudo – codes was used to represent names and responses of participants such as P1, P2, P3, P4 respectively. All information such as participants responses, interview notes, informed consent form will be safely stored and passworded in a flash drive stored in a non-disclosed safe for 5 years. Participants will be duly informed that after 5 years the documents and flash drive will be shredded and destroyed in accordance with the ethical requirement of Walden University research handbook. The IRB approval number for this research is 07-20-21-0560932.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

Clark and Vaele (2018) stated that in quantitative research, the researcher's involvement is defined as detached; while in qualitative research, the researcher is the main research collection instrument. As the primary data collection instrument and analysis in qualitative research, the researcher explores the participants natural environment with the sole responsibility to collect, synthesize and analyze data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). According to Merriam and Grenier (2019), the researchers' responsibility is also to interpret and translate data collected as it relates to the phenomenon being investigated. As the researcher, I was the primary data collection instrument for this study.

Semistructured interviews are vital in qualitative research (Brown & Danaher, 2019; Dadzie et. al., 2018). Yin (2018) determined that qualitative researchers regularly use interviews to collect data in a case study conducting face-to-face interviews with participants. According to Dadzie et al. (2018), in semistructured interviews, the questions are open-ended, allowing flexibility, creativity, understanding of complex issues, and the researcher obtains detailed information (see Appendix B for interview questions). Dejonckheere and Vaughn (2019) posited that researchers use semistructured pre-scripted questions to solicit and collect new exploratory data on the study, allowing the researcher to probe further by asking follow up questions, triangulate other data sources and validate findings. It is important that the researcher is careful not to use leading questions during the interview and allows the participant free expression on issues (McGrath et al., 2018). According to van den Berg et al., (2019), researchers

effectively manage flexibility and are accountable for the interpretation of data by asking multiple participants same questions to obtain divergent views.

According to McGrath et al., (2019), successful interviews start with careful planning that considers the scope of the research question, consideration, and adherence to interview protocols. A well-developed interview protocol can help build quality and consistency (Braaten et al., 2020). Yeong et al. (2018) opined that interview protocols are procedural guides that enables the researcher to successfully develop interview procedures that would produce robust data. Braaten et al. (2020) stated that a well-established protocol builds quality and consistency into the research thus enabling the researcher to successfully investigate constructs, beliefs, and identity. Interview protocols as approved by Walden University was applied to guide interview questions and ensure conformity with the research question and validity (see Appendix A for interview protocol).

The trustworthiness of interview results is the bedrock of high-quality qualitative research (Birt et al., 2016; Candela, 2019; Livari, 2018). In qualitative research, researchers might infuse personal beliefs during data interpretation, however, to reduce the potential for research bias, participants are actively involved in checking and confirming the results, this is known as member checking (Birt et al., 2016). Caretta and Perez (2019) posited that member checking is a technique in qualitative research that permits the deepening, repeating, adjusting of data, and analysis together with participants. According to Candela (2019), member checking ensures accurate presentation of participant's opinions by allowing them to confirm or deny the accuracy

and interpretation of data. Member checking ensures accurate descriptions and interpretation of data which ensures reliability and validity of the research (Birt, 2016). Member checking was implemented by providing detailed summaries of the interview's interpretations to participants. I encouraged participants to freely certify and verify clarity of purpose and that the interpretations are exact representations of the intended ideas they wish to convey. Participant's observations were considered to ensure accuracy of data.

### **Data Collection Technique**

Fritz and Vandermause (2018) explained that in qualitative research, interviews are conversational hence participants freely express their views and experiences thereby making interviews an effective means for data collection. According to DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019), the most common type of interview used in qualitative research is semi-structured interview. The semistructured interview permits the researcher to explore in-depth participants thoughts, feelings, beliefs about a phenomenon using open-ended questions (McGrath, 2018). Al Balushi (2018) stated that semistructured face-to-face interviews are compelling as the researcher not only collect data but also how it is presented through gestures and expressions which can add additional understanding to the study. Referring to Buseto et al. (2020), semistructured interviews have the advantage of being interactive, allowing for unexpected topics to emerge for discussion enriching the whole process. Semistructured interview was the data collection instrument for this study. The interview questions are listed in Appendix B of the study.

Researchers use semistructured interviews to maintain flexibility on interview scheduling, location agreement, timing, and other considerations as it suits the participant

(Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). After obtaining IRB approval, I contacted prospective participants through email seeking their consent to grant interview. I scheduled a 45 – 60 minutes interview with participants duly adhering to interview protocols. The interview was conducted via zoom. I used my private office in my personal house as the venue. I was the only one in the office, it was comfortable, quiet, and appropriate for interview and approved by the participant. An audio recording device was used to record responses from participants. The interview questions were unambiguous, properly presented, aligning with the central research question. Yin (2018) recommended that participants should be well informed of the protocols before the commencement of interviews. Participants were provided with the informed consent form before the interview, I confirmed participants clear understanding of the interview protocols before commencement.

During the interview, participants responded to seven questions, allowing for follow up questions and contributions. I transcribed their responses and provided a two-page summary of interview interpretation to participants for member checking to ensure reliability and validity of data. Livari (2018) opined that member checking allows participants to approve the researcher's interpretations to ascertain whether it represents the viewpoint of participants. After member checking, I effected all observations ensuring that my interpretations accurately reflect participants intent.

### **Data Organization Technique**

Data organization is vital to qualitative research success (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Saunders et al., 2018; White et al., 2012). Researchers conduct qualitative research

to better understand a phenomenon through the experiences of those who have directly experienced the phenomenon resulting in copious amounts of data (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Qualitative researchers spend ample time organizing, coordinating, and prioritizing data to avoid being inundated with unnecessary information (Renz et al., 2018). According to Feldman and Lowe (2015), data gathered must be organized and well stored in a secured database. Moser and Korstjens (2018) opined that researchers organize data representing them in categories and or themes depending on the data's meaning and similarities.

For this study, all the interviews were captured electronically on a digital recording device, passworded and safely stored in a reliable place. I used the NVivo 12 software to code and store data, identify, and analyze common themes. Yin (2018) opined that confidentiality should be maintained by not including participant's information. I assigned identification codes to participants to ensure confidentiality. All data gathered including digital recording, interview notes, and interview transcripts were safely stored in a passworded flash drive in a fireproof safe in my personal study at my personal house for 5 years. After which the flash drive will be formatted and physically destroyed. All documents will be shredded using an industrial shredder after 5 years.

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative researchers analyze data to preserve the research's integrity and explore the meanings of copious information gathered from participants (Cassell & Bishop, 2019; Friese, 2019; O' Kane et al., 2021). Researchers describe the process of qualitative data analysis to involve coding, verifying, and exploring research data



(O’Kane et al., 2021). The empirical element of case study research consists of real-world data characteristically derived from multiple sources, and thus the researcher is laden with ample information that requires analysis (Yin, 2018). Multiple case study researchers use triangulation to address multiple data sources, validity, and reliability (Farquhar, 2020).

### **Triangulation**

According to Yin (2018), the following are types of data triangulation in case study research: (a) investigator triangulation, (b) data triangulation, (c) methodological triangulation, and (d) theory triangulation. In a qualitative case study, researchers use methodological triangulation for corroboration of multiple findings and incorporation of additional findings (Natow, 2020). Researchers use methodological triangulation to confirm findings, thereby increasing validity, trustworthiness, and reducing data collection drawbacks (Farquhar et al., 2020).

For this study, I used methodological triangulation for data analysis. I used notes from personal observation, training programs, training calendar, meeting agendas, staff letter of recommendation, staff certificates of performance, and staff handbook. All participants were asked the same questions, in the same order, with the same interpretations and emphases (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019).

### **Analysis**

According to Cassell and Bishop (2019), qualitative researchers use analysis to learn new ideas and bring out tacit meanings attached to the phenomenon. Yin (2018) prescribed a method for analyzing data in five phases as discussed below:

### ***Compile and Organize the Data***

For this study, the data analysis began with compilation and organization of data gathered from interviews and secondary documents. According to DeJonckere and Vaughn (2019) and Yin (2018), qualitative researchers use computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) tools to code and analyze data. Qualitative researchers often use the Nvivo 12 software to detect word reoccurrences, and identify themes (Dalkin et al., 2021). After transcribing data from interviews and conducting member checking, transcribed data was transferred to Nvivo 12 for analysis to identify themes by detecting word reoccurrence and frequency.

### ***Deconstruct the Data***

In Step 2 of the process, I deconstructed and disassembled data in a manner that did not distort the data collected. I regrouped participant's responses under headings of re-occurred themes. This was performed carefully to avoid misrepresentation of information.

### ***Reassemble and Arrange the Data Into Groups or Themes***

Following Yin's (2018) model, in step three, data was reassembled and rearranged by coding and grouping. The data was grouped for similarities and frequency and as data was being reassembled, the themes emerged. Qualitative researchers carry out data analysis to capture patterns, word or phrase frequency, relationships, and meanings (Richards & Hemphill, 2018). According to Firmin et al. (2017), qualitative researchers use qualitative analytic tools to generate an in-depth analysis of data. Researchers use the NVivo 12 software is an application for qualitative studies to collect, analyze, and code

data. NVivo 12 software is considered appropriate for this study because it enabled me to organize data with the emerging themes, analyze data by arranging and sorting. I searched for common themes from participants' responses and assembled.

### ***Interpret the Data***

I applied the Yin's (2018) sequence to focus on main themes, correlate the themes alongside existing literature and the conceptual framework. Ravindran (2019) and Yin (2018) agreed that using themes from interviews alongside existing literature allows the researcher to develop empirical data about the social world. I analyzed themes based on the constructs explained in the conceptual framework and the literature review which included new studies published since the writing of the proposal.

### ***Conclude the Data***

Conclusion was based on the interpretations of findings derived from data. The purpose of data analysis was to explore strategies that leaders used to increase employee performance in Nigeria's public sector. Transformational leadership theory was the structure for data analysis (Burns 1978; Yin, 2018). I examined the transformational leadership constructs such as (a) idealized influence, (b) individualized consideration, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) inspirational motivation to explain strategies that leaders use to increase employee performance in the public sector in Nigeria.

The transformational leadership theory which was the conceptual framework for this study provided the required lens for understanding the findings. According to Gugui et al. (2020), researchers examine results by constant analysis, presenting new codes and themes to establish data saturation. In this study, I included all new ideas that evolved

from data analysis. I compared and contrasted the themes with existing and new findings in literature to make the study up to date. I reviewed data to determine the effectiveness of how leaders in the public sector increase employee performance using the transformational leadership theory which is the conceptual framework for this study. The transformational leadership theory provided the lens for understanding the findings that can assist public sector leaders on strategies that increase employee performance. The results from this study could provide insight into effective strategies that leaders in the public sector can use to increase employee performance.

### **Reliability and Validity**

#### **Reliability**

In qualitative research, reliability is a concept that refers to the soundness of the research, the consistency of the methodological process, and the dependability of the research (Jeff & Johnson, 2020). According to Saunders et al. (2018), reliability in research is replicating a research method and design to achieve comparable or same findings. Abdalla et al. (2018) noted that for research work to have value, procedures that will guarantee credibility, confirmability, transferability, reliability, and dependability are implemented. To enhance dependability in this study, methodological triangulation, member checking, and interview protocol was applied. According to Abdalla et al. (2018), researchers who use various sources to support the phenomenon under study reduce personal bias and increase reliability and credibility. To ensure data triangulation, researchers are expected to provide secondary sources of data such as employee handbook, organizations annual report, organizations industry performance report, and

other documents provided by participants (Jentolft & Olsen, 2019). Member checking authenticates the correctness of data and improves validity. According to Yin (2018) case study researchers use interview protocol to enhance reliability and effectively manage the data collection process.

### **Validity**

In qualitative research, validity implies that the researcher checks for the accuracy, credibility, and confirmability of findings (Jeff & Johnson, 2020). Saunders et al. (2018) defined validity as the correctness of measurement, accuracy of data analysis, and the generalizability of findings. Noble and Smith (2015) posited that credibility, transferability, and confirmability of findings are components that researchers use to demonstrate validity of research. Participants in the study can actively challenge the credibility of the research (Bolarinwa, 2015). To reduce bias, I strictly adhered to Walden University IRB research guidelines and handbook. Malone et al. (2014) opined that the validity, dependability of research findings can be threatened by bias during the interview. According to Korstijens and Moser (2018), credibility is developing the result of a credible research study. To avoid bias, I reported results uncompromisingly devoid of manipulations and alterations. I was neutral during the interviews so as not to influence participants in any way. Methodological triangulation was used to ensure credibility of the study. Researchers use secondary data tool to aid secondary sources of data to ensure triangulation (Farquhar et al., 2020). For this study, I compared interview results with notes, training programs, training calendar, meeting agendas, staff letter of

recommendation, staff certificate of performance, and staff handbook. The sources were used to validate validate differences and similarities of responses from participants.

### ***Credibility***

According to Korstijens and Moser (2018) credibility establishes the originality of research findings plausible representation of information drawn from participants original data. Ballesteros and Mata – Benito (2018) opined that credibility evaluates how adequately the researcher represents the truth in the analysis and interpretation of results. Qualitative researchers challenge credibility by replicating specific studies under precise methods (Birt et. al., 2016). Reporting accurate data improves the validity of findings by ensuring correct interpretation and representation of participants original views (Jeff & Johnson, 2020; Liao & Hitchcock, 2018). I ensured that there is no prior relationship with participants and organizations involved even though I understand the non-profit sector due to my work experience. Researchers notably use member checking and triangulation as strategies to establish credibility of research findings and that it represents plausible information from participants (Ballesteros & Mata – Benito, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Jeff & Johnson, 2020; Livari, 2018). Member checking allows participants to review researcher’s interpretation and verify correctness of data (Livari, 2018).

According to Jentoft and Olsen (2019) to ensure triangulation, researchers should provide secondary sources such as handbooks, organizational charts, employer documents, and any other document provided by participants. Researchers use methodological triangulation to improve credibility through comparison of multiple data sources (Jeff & Johnson, 2020; Liao & Hitchcock, 2018). For this study, member

checking and methodological triangulation was used to establish credibility, ensure validity and accuracy of the data analysis process. To ensure credibility, participants were allowed to review the interpretation and analysis of findings for verification.

### ***Transferability***

Transferability in qualitative research is the applicability of findings to other contexts achieved through descriptions of study setting (Nyirenda et al., 2020). Korstjens and Moser (2018) opined that transferability guarantee consistency of the described procedures in future research. The researcher facilitates transferability through flawless description of experiences and context of occurrences in a meaningful way to the outsider (Nyirenda et al., 2020). Qualitative researchers ensure transferability of the research through detailed description of the research context and assumptions in a way that future researchers are able to duplicate the results of the study (Ballesteros & Mata -Benito, 2018; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To achieve transferability, I ensured that the steps and methods were succinctly documented. I provided a comprehensive account of the interview protocol and the criteria for participant selection. Description of the foundation and setting of the study, the research method and design of the study was provided. The transferability of this study would be useful for future research as the semistructured interviews could be used for future research on enhancing employee performance in the public sector.

### ***Confirmability***

Korstjens and Moser (2018) posited that confirmability establishes that data and interpretation of findings are not fabrications of researchers' imagination but are clearly

derived from data. Confirmability is achieved when conclusions drawn from data are opinions of participants and not thoughts or opinions of the researcher (Abdalla et al., 2018). Case study researchers establish validity by demonstrating credible and confirmable research findings (Nelson, 2017). To ensure confirmability of this study, I incorporated interview protocol, member checking, and transcript review with participants to ensure that results are true reflections of participants perspectives. I used the Nvivo 12 software to audit the steps for data collection. Confirmability can be achieved through data triangulation. According to Abdalla et al. (2018) data triangulation increases research objectivity. In addition, methodological triangulation of various sources of data comparing interviews with additional data available on the organization's website ensures confirmability.

### ***Data Saturation***

Data saturation is reached when no additional data emerges and no new themes can be derived from the data collection efforts (Guest et al., 2020). According to Majid et al. (2018), researchers attain saturation when no new additional information can be obtained. Qualitative researchers conduct member checking to confirm that all themes needed for analysis, interpretation, and description has been captured (Guest et al., 2020). To address credibility and data saturation, I applied methodological triangulation by interviewing multiple participants and reviewing notes, organization's training programs, training calendar, meeting agendas, staff letter of recommendation, and staff handbook. Memberchecking was used to ensure that participants are satisfied with the representation of data.



### **Transition and Summary**

In Section 2, the following sections were discussed: The purpose statement, the role of the researcher, participants, research method and design, population and sampling, ethical research, data collection instruments, data organization techniques, data analysis, reliability, and validity.

After obtaining IRB approval from the university, I proceeded to conduct the research enumerated in Section 2 and presented findings in Section 3. Section 3 comprises the purpose statement, presentation of findings, application to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for actions, recommendations for further research, my reflections, and a conclusion.

In Section 3, my opinions, and ideas on strategies that leaders in the public sector could use to increase employee performance were presented. In the conclusion section, I provided detailed summary of the study and strategies that leaders in the public sector can adopt to increase employee performance.

### Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to explore strategies that leaders in the Nigerian public sector use to increase employee performance.

Semistructured interviews were conducted with four leaders in public sector organizations in the FCT, Abuja, Nigeria. The participants answered seven open ended questions regarding leadership strategies used in the workplace and shared their experiences on the impact of the strategies employed to increase employee performance. I used methodological triangulation to compare data collected. I used interview notes, training programs, training calendars, meeting agendas, staff letters of recommendation, and staff handbooks. The leadership strategies presented by each participant aligned to some extent with Burns's (1978) transformational leadership theory, which was used as the conceptual framework for this study. Five themes to increase employee performance were identified. The major themes derived from the data include (a) communication, (b) leadership by example, (c) on-the-job training, (d) motivation, and (e) teamwork.

In Section 3, I present findings, analysis of findings, the relationship of the findings with the conceptual framework, and other content from the literature review. Next, potential applications to professional practice are discussed along with implications for social change.

#### **Presentation of the Findings**

The research question for this study was as follows: What strategies do leaders in the Nigerian public sector use to increase employee performance? The conceptual framework for this study consisted of the constructs from Burns's original version of

transformational leadership theory, along with later revisions made in 1985 (Burns, 1978, 1985). To address the research question, I purposefully selected and interviewed four leaders in public sector organizations in Nigeria. Each leader had served in an executive leadership position for a minimum of 4 years and had successfully developed and implemented leadership strategies that increased employee performance. I assigned pseudo codes such as P1, P2, P3, and P4 for each participating leader to protect their identity.

### **Emerging Themes**

After coding and analyzing data, the following five major themes emerged from the study: (a) communication, (b) leadership by example, (c) on-the-job training, (d) motivation, and (e) teamwork.

In the sections following, I evaluate the themes and their relationship to the conceptual framework of this study.

#### **Theme 1: Communication**

Communication emerged as one of the themes that the respondents highlighted as part of the strategies that have improved employee performance in the organization. P3 reported that communication of vision, mission, and tasks with all officers, especially at the middle level, has reduced the problem of employees working in silos within the organization. Leadership strategy that promotes leader-subordinate communication fosters a plethora of desirable workplace outcomes (Kelly & MacDonald, 2019). During the interview, P3 commented that

I find communication most effective, that is, regular meetings with middle level staff because they are mainly the rank & file. The effect has stopped employees from working in silos. Before this strategy was an element of each division working independently which resulted to vertical engagement and not horizontal. The most successful of the strategies I used was regular meetings with the middle level cadre and this has enhanced horizontal engagement and successfully break the silos mentality.

Toufaili (2018) opined that leader-employee feedback is beneficial for organizational improvement and development. P1 commented,

In our weekly meeting I always have feedback, I give them feedback from the management meeting also for all staff to be on the same page and I use their feedback to measure effectiveness of my strategy and see where to modify and improve.

P4 commented that bottom to top communication is a strategic and effective way of bridging the gap between the leader and lower-level cadre.

The quality and effectiveness of communication refers to the extent to which a leader provides useful, timely, and sufficient information on implementing organizational goals and vision (Petrou et al., 2018). Efficient communication of organizational vision could result in employee commitment and active engagement (Toufaili, 2018).

Organizational leaders who apply horizontal and vertical communication strategies effectively can positively change the mind set and attitudes of their employees towards goal achievement (Munyiva & Kihara, 2018; Ophilia & Agatha, 2021; Toufaili, 2018;

Yuliharsi et al., 2019). Through effective communication, employees feel valued, motivated, and rewarded for their efforts (Tian et al., 2020). Positively inspired employees display satisfactory performance levels that enhance organizational growth and positive impact in the public sector (Johannes et. al, 2019; Munyiva & Kihara, 2018; Tian et al., 2020).

Yue et al. (2019) opined that transparent communication induces organizational trust and increase the employee-organizational relationship. Effective communication in an organization has been identified as a critical determinant for an increase in employee performance, coordination, and cooperation with the leader (Eisenberg et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2019; Stacho et al., 2019).

P1 stated that

We have used this strategy overtime to ensure that all the staff are carried along as a team. Sure, it has positive effect overtime, because if you look at it you will see that the performance is enhanced, and our clients too are very happy with the level of performance. We have an environment that is not friendly to micro small and medium enterprises being our cliental base. But with the enhanced performance of the employees in meeting the need of this small businesses, they are very happy and that means the strategy we have used have helped and have increased or enhanced the performance of the employees in helping the organization to meet the goals, the objectives, the vision and mission of the agency.

Upon review of P1 organization's website, I found that the vision and mission statement were stated. The organization's mandate and guiding principles as contained in the establishing Act of the federal government are also included on the website. The purpose and approved implementation procedures for the organization's programs were documented on the website. Employees responsible for the implementation of such programs could use information available on the website as guide for implementation. P3's organization website contains downloadable documents regarding the organization's policies, vision, mission, core values, procedures for program implementation, and affiliated agencies programs, policies, and procedures.

One of the constructs of transformational leadership is inspirational motivation. The leader's strategy is to inspire and motivate employees through an articulated vision and mission statement. Effective communication of the vision and mission increases motivational, enthusiastic, and optimistic levels of employees, resulting in increased performance. Transformational leaders using inspirational motivation strategies that can distinctly communicate visions and goals perform better (Langat et al., 2019). Effective communication improves satisfaction and team spirit, which in turn improves performance (Boukamcha, 2019; Elmasry & Bakri, 2019; Langat et al., 2019). Leaders of public sector organizations in Nigeria are expected to embrace the strategy of developing an effective interactive communication and value sharing relationship with employees.

Employees have a high sense of belonging, resulting in higher performance levels when communication is effective. Employees' perceptions of the organization are largely affected by the level of information at their disposal (Lee & Chon, 2021; Momeny &

Gourgues, 2019). The participants interviewed attested that effective communication has notably increased employee performance in their various organizations. Information regarding programs, strategies, policies, vision, mission, and mandates was available on the website for use by employees implementing the programs. As opined by Tian et al. (2020), communication develops and improves employee cooperation and performance in the public sector. Effective communication in public sector organizations in Nigeria has enhanced employee motivation, loyalty, and commitment.

Effective communication inspires greater employee commitment and loyalty to the organization. Employees are motivated to higher levels of performance when the leaders create a positive horizontal and vertical system of communication. According to Stacho et al. (2019), communication is a strategic instrument as an inspirational motivation strategy in the workplace that could increase employee motivation to work, thereby increasing creativity and innovation. Innovative organizations are characterized by effective communication; the free exchange of ideas notably encourage creativity and divergent thinking in the workplace (Ahmad & Saad, 2020; Chen et al., 2018; Mohammed et al., 2019; Stacho et al., 2019; Touhidul & Sorooshian, 2019). Communication in public sector organizations increase employee's confidence and drive for innovation.

Bass (1985) and Burns (1978) established transformational leadership as the style that influences performance through a well-articulated and communicated vision to employees, thereby achieving clarity of vision and stimulating employees to develop competence to achieve organizational goals. Transformational leaders increase employee

commitment and performance when they effectively communicate organizational goals and vision. The employees experience an increased sense of worth and are inspired to higher levels of commitment (Munyiva & Kihara, 2018). Effective communication motivates employees to achieve task completion effectively (Tian et al., 2020). Motivated employees record high levels of performance, which are needed for public sector efficiency.

### **Theme 2: Leadership by Example**

Knowledgeable leaders are involved in the daily operation of the organization and are thus respected and honored. Leadership by example as a construct of idealized influence is based on attitudinal traits of the leader and knowledge of the job, which is translated to employee high-performance outcomes (Muchiri et al., 2019). Leaders in the public sector strategically increase employee performance through behavior integrity (Kawiana et al., 2020). P2 commented,

As a leader, the time you get to work matters. If your employees know that you will be on the desk by 8am, they won't want to come by 8:30am because they know the Director General will already be on the desk working. As regards tasks, most times I don't delegate I also participate, so when they know that I am also active, they cannot fold their arms and be looking at the leader working.

P4 commented that a leadership by example strategy has notably yielded a positive impact in enhancing employee performance in the organization: "When employees see their leader involved in tasks, they are motivated and encouraged. They see the leader as a role model and a professional with good understanding of the job."



Strategic leaders demonstrate role model behavioral traits that attract employees to the leader and build trust and loyalty. According to Muchiri et al. (2019), transformational leadership through idealized influence promotes role model leadership behaviors for followers, thereby placing organizational goal achievement above personal needs. Idealized influence strategy of leadership by example suggests the leader is a role model to employees, influencing higher levels of employee engagement, achievement of work targets, and a notable increase in performance (Muchiri et al. 2019). Participant P1 applied this strategy and commented, “let them see the beauty that you are doing it to ensure that performance is enhanced which will enable them to become highflyers” Enhanced employee commitment to achieving organizational goals, improved performance, and general positive attitudes always result from this leadership strategy (Change et al., 2019). P2 commented,

For example, last week we had what we call “opportunity fair” and when we got to the venue, I didn’t just sit to monitor what is happening, I was part of the arrangement. We were arranging stands; exhibition stands etc. the staff tried stopping me but I say no we have to do it together, so everybody had to stand up and work. So when we lead by example, when the leader takes the lead in anything, employees are bound to follow. if I want to give them assignments, most of the time I guide them. I will tell them okay you are writing a proposal this is what and what I will like you to look at and at times I would have even listed areas that I will give them to write on so I have guided the staff making the area of focus and sequence well understood.

Idealized influence strategy is known to have a great impact on employees' psychological attachment to their organization when leaders using this strategy behave in ways that are consistent with the values they preach. P1 commented:

As a leader, I make myself available to be always approachable, I tend to lead from the front and not from the rear so that the staff will see me as an example. So even when you are correcting their job, you don't ask them to just correct but you also show them what to do. This enables both the leader and follower have a goal congress. A goal congress is the meeting of the mind. Both the goal of the organization, the goal of the leader and the goal of the employee should be one so that we know that there is unity of vision and purpose to achieve high performance.

Employees are impressed and inspired to follow the leader when they see the leader not sitting on the bench and giving orders but rather involved in doing the job (Chebon et al., 2019). With Idealized influence strategy, the leader is admired, respected, and trusted by their subordinates who identify them with a charismatic personality and see them as leaders by example, and hence are attracted to emulate them. The leaders set high standards for work conduct and are a role model for those standards. Articulating an appealing and inspiring vision, goal setting and role modelling are effective leadership practices related to idealized influence that leaders apply to drive performance improvement beyond expectations (Chebon et al., 2019). A leader who is admired, respected, trusted, seen as a role model, and highly valued inspires and motivates employees to higher performance levels.

Leadership by example encourages employees to follow their leader and be innovative in task accomplishment (Hughes et al., 2018; Jia et al., 2018; Sheehan et al., 2020). P2 commented that asserting that leadership by example enables employees to be innovative and to think of better ways for task completion:

Leadership by example, successful accomplishment of tasks for me personally is a motivator and my staff know this. I allow my staff freedom to be innovative and implement their job in a creative manner that they find most suitable. I do not dictate for them but allow free hand to implement both the technical and financial aspect of any assignment. This enables the followers not to take the leadership style of their leader for granted and they would always like to deliver. This helps your own job as the leader. Leadership by example is key.

Commenting further during the interview, P1 opined on the improvement recorded overtime on employee performance rating:

Sure, it has positive impact overtime, because if you look at it you will see that the performance is enhanced, and our clients too are very happy with the level of performance. We have an environment that is not friendly to micro small and medium enterprises being our cliental base. But with the performance of the staff. Performance of the employee, performance of the workers in meeting the need of this small businesses. They are very happy and that means the strategy we have used have helped and have increased or enhanced the performance of the employees in helping the organization to meet the goals, the objectives, the vision, and mission of the agency.

Upon evaluation of P2 organization's annual report, leadership role in some of its events and activities were stated. The annual report in one of the years had a positive staff performance rating by the director general. This further expounds the efficacy and impact of leadership by example strategy on the employees. Also, it demonstrates that trust and loyalty to the leader could positively enhance employees' attitude to task completion and performance. Correspondingly, the minutes of meeting recorded the leader giving descriptive instruction on how an assigned task could be completed stating the aspect to be implemented by the leader.

Idealized influence as a construct of transformational leadership emphasizes the behavioral and personality traits of the leader as a role model to employees. The leader's charismatic traits are admired, respected, and emulated. Employees working with high integrity leaders develop affectionate attitude reflected in high commitment to work and job satisfaction (Ennis et al., 2018; Marathe & Kakani, 2020). The leaders display of knowledge on the job, integrity, and moral values motivates employees to achieve higher performance levels. Public sector leaders could imbibe the strategy of charisma and integrity improvement as behavioral traits motivate employee's dedication and commitment to work.

Employees confidence in the leader boosts morale thereby motivating higher performance levels. Abasilim et al. (2019) posited that in the idealized influence strategy, the transformational leader is charismatic, confident, ethical, idealistic, and trustworthy thereby making the leader a role model. According to Elmasry and Bakri (2018), the charismatic attributes of the leader as a role model influences employee performance in

the public sector, stimulate critical thinking, and inspire loyalty (Khaltar & Moon, 2020).

Transformational leadership trait is worth emulating by leaders of public sector organizations in Nigeria in order to ensure increased productivity and efficiency.

### **Theme 3: On-the-Job Training**

Employee training is a significant part of performance that is essential for the effectiveness and efficiency of the workplace. Transformational leaders using individualized consideration strategy ensure that employees constantly obtain new skills and knowledge for the effectiveness and efficiency of both the workplace and the employee (Rodriguez & Walters, 2017). Participants during the interview commented on the importance, benefit, and contribution of training to the performance of the employees.

P1 commented that

Performance is very important in any organization because that tend to drive the goal, the vision and the mission of the organization and overtime we have used different type of strategies ranging from training, monetary incentives, recommendation, letters of appreciation etc. Mainly we have used training, those who are performing well, we tend to enhance their performance the more by exposing them to both local and international training in various organizations.

Corroborating, P2 provided the following assessment on the positive impact of training on employee performance in the organization:

Despite all odds. I still find a way to ensure that staff are given the requisite training, even if it is within ourselves bringing in external consultants for

example, last year I was able to bring someone from Bangladesh with international experience to come and train my staff on monitoring and evaluation.

The minutes of the meeting available reveals that P3 organization conducted several on the job trainings for employees of different cadres. Significant improvement in the achievement of set targets was recorded in the annual reports. Notably, employee's capacity was enhanced and are inspired to increase their level of commitment to task completion and the organization. P4 organization's training agenda document reviewed indicated both internal and external trainings at regular intervals was organized for employees.

Individualized consideration strategy as one of the constructs of transformational leadership focuses on how employees can increase knowledge and develop potentials. Training provides the opportunity for employees to increase knowledge on the job which enhances performance to the benefit of the organization and adding worth to its human capital (Munyiva & Kihara, 2018). According to Reza (2019), the leader using individualized consideration strategy focuses on aiding employees develop their potential. The leader identifies knowledge gaps in employees and provides new learning opportunities such as on the job training of employees to acquire more knowledge (Munyiva & Kihara, 2018). Training promotes innovation, knowledge sharing and problem-solving techniques. This strategy creates a sense of belonging, self-worth and confidence in the workplace system established by the leader. Employees confidence translates to inspiration for higher exceptional performance as noted by interviewed participants.

Limited training restricts employees' impact on achieving organizational goals and vision and this results in shabby outcomes (Rodriguez & Walters 2017). P3 commented that goal achievement becomes difficult when adequate training is not provided to staff. He noted thus: "regular training programs are not executed due to lack of funds; this makes goal achievement for the leader difficult; it is a major barrier to the achievement of my objectives and goals as a leader".

Regular employee trainings promote achievement of organizational goals in an effective manner. Nargis et al. (2020) opined that employee training positively improves on-the-job performance of employees. Park et al. (2018) suggested that need based, and interactive trainings enhance employee's performance and development which is critical to effective completion of daily tasks and the organizations success. Achieving desired organizational goals requires training to be employee focused (Majeed & Shakeel, 2017; Munyiva & Kihara, 2018; Nargis et al., 2020; Park et al., 2018). The public sector notably becomes effective when leaders are involved in daily tasks thereby training employees, who in turn are inspired to emulate their leader and put in more efforts (Gutereza, 2020; Lyubovnikova, 2020; Nargis, 2020; Park et al., 2020).

Strategic commendation and dissemination of employee outstanding performance significantly inspire higher performance. Scholars opine that the application of individualized consideration strategy in the public sector could be in the form of personal expressions of words of appreciation to employees for successful completion of tasks (Campbell, 2018b; Getachew & Zhou, 2018; Lauzikas & Miliute, 2019). The acknowledgement of employees' performance endears them to the leader and instill pride

as a result of close relationship with the leader (Abasilim et al., 2019; Guterresa et al., 2020; Olusola & Daniel, 2019). According to Olusola & Daniel (2019), the leader-employee cordial relationship fosters a high sense of commitment to both the leader and the organization.

Innovation is a driver of productivity and efficiency. On the job training strategy is one that the leader creates an organizational culture that encourages employees be innovative and dedicated to introducing new productive problem-solving ideas rather than the bureaucratic system in the Nigerian public sector (Ibrahim et al., 2018; Khan et al., 2020; Lo et al., 2020). The strategy inspires interest in work and task accomplishments, which is viewed as a strategy for employee performance in the public sector (Awang et al., 2020; Lo et al., 2020). Employees are more relaxed and confident in the work environment characterized by innovation and fair work distributions.

#### **Theme 4: Motivation**

Workplace condition of service influence employees' attitude and commitment to goal achievement. According to Numbu and Bose (2019), motivation is the reason that propels certain behavior in employees. Hence organizations spend large sums of resources annually to enhance employee performance. Commenting, P1 noted that "the concluding thought is that the work force is the greatest asset in every organization. Employees should not be treated as machines but rather treated as human beings and that's why they should be dynamic in the approach". Employees are a major part of each organization and their attitude to work is essential for goal attainment (Nabi et al., 2017). P1 commented during the interview on the importance of employees in any organization:



The employees are the greatest asset in the workforce. The equipment cannot do anything if the employees are not great performers no matter how sound a vehicle is, it cannot move itself that is why the emphasis must be on the staff, they are the workforce. We make the workplace very conducive, the work environment very conducive.

Workplace task distribution is determined by employee's capacity and knowledge required for goal achievement. Organizational leaders assign tasks to achieve organizational goals, employee performance determines the effective attainment of the set goals (Nabi et al., 2017). According to Fagaca et al. (2018), the ultimate essence of motivating employees is to meliorate productivity which is the ratio of output or production capacity of the workers in an organization. The public administration indicates that public service motivation can be an important element in explaining high performance, because it can make employees go above and beyond the call of duty and that explains why some public organizations perform better than others (Loon et al., 2018). Letters of commendation given to staff were seen and also applauded during staff meetings. P1 opined that the strategy of motivating employees to perform better gives the right mindset:

When you prepare them and ensure that their mindset is positive, that the mindset is not to cheat the organization and the mindset is not to cheat them too they will have what we call accord concordial which is having the mind of the organization, the mind of the leader and the mind of the follower becoming one and when that

mind meet, they tend to meet the goals, the vision the objectives and the mission of that organization.

Employee motivation varies; hence, leaders understanding of the appropriate strategy that would yield desired outcomes is vital. Leaders apply different strategies to motivate employees for the success of the organization as it helps to maintain the continuity of the work in a powerful manner (Brhane & Zewdie, 2018). Commenting on some of the strategies applied, P2 opined that

We are on public service salary in Nigeria which is really nothing much to write home about. So as a leader, we must develop means to ensure that the employees are one way or the other compensated financially apart from the monthly salary. So, this motivates them so they can go extra length. Personally, as the leader, if I want my staff to go extra length and work extra hours, I will arrange soft loans for them, I'll ensure they are given transportation money if they must work weekends. This encourages them to put in more efforts even if they must work extra hours. There is something we call handshake which we give to staff at the end of the year to appreciate them for what they have contributed. This is financial incentive given to staff during festive seasons, if it is Christmas, easter, we try to provide food items and at times monetary rewards for them so that they can take care of their families during festivities. So, all these helps to boost their performance.

Leaders of public sector organizations are expected to be innovative in developing the appropriate motivational strategies. According to Brhane and Zewdie (2018),

organizations introduce techniques, modern tools, and sometimes sophisticated technology for employee relations to create a competitive advantage over competitors thereby leading to enhanced service delivery achieved through motivated employees. P1 commented,

The same process by providing them with tools to make their work very easy and simple to deliver. All of them are given laptops. The organization provides the required work tool. So, when you arm them, virtually all of them with a laptop making work flexible. They can work anywhere, and they write their report in a good time, that is part of the performance. As the leader, I make the work environment convenient for them. I provide tea or coffee and electric kettle for convenience because in other offices, all these are not provided, and other leaders are copying it from us here. And in the fridge too we have soft drinks to take when they are thirsty so it won't make them start running out for soft drinks during work hours thereby making the work suffer. These are strategies we use and as simple as it is, it remains powerful.

Mustafa & Ali (2019) posited that employee performance in the public sector largely depends on job satisfaction, compensation, benefits structure, reward plans, promotions, motivation, conducive work environment, and training. P2 opined during the interview on the impact of financially motivating employees of Nigerian public sector organizations:

I think in the Nigerian public sector, financial motivation works a lot. Because even when you do training, it's not everybody that is interested in the training. It's

not everybody that values it because at times some of them are looking at what they can gain monetarily and not what they will learn. So, if we are just looking at the public sector, I will rate financial motivation first but if I'm looking at it from the personal angle and from some staff that value efficiency, I will look at training. Because when they learn new methods, they put it to use. In the Nigerian public sector, motivation is key. Most of them won't put in their best if they are not motivated. The motivation is not only financial but also could come in other forms. During festive seasons, I as the leader give items like buying bags of rice, beans, and distribute to staff. I also provide lunch/ diner for those who stay late in the office. These are certain things I do that attach me to my staff, if any of my staff is sick, I visit in the house or hospital. If there's any ceremony I attend and give money to support their personal ceremonies. If there is an established connect, employees will not want to disappoint you as the leader.

Corroborating, P3 opined,

The public sector is the engine of growth of the country, the success of a country depends to a large extent on the quality of the public service. It is therefore appropriate and necessary that the remuneration /salary of public servants in Nigeria be competitive and comparable to what obtains in the private sector otherwise the government may not attract the best to the public service.

Minutes of meeting from all the organizations reveals positive impact of financial motivation on employee performance. Some of the employees appreciated the graciousness of their leader's financial incentives. Employees emphasized their

commitment and loyalty to organizations' vision and mission. Financial motivation has significant impact on employees in the Nigerian public sector. The income of an average public servant in Nigeria is nothing compared to the high standard of living as noted by P2. Financial incentive is a strong motivator that inspires employees to ensure effective task completion and implementation of the vision and mission. The form of financial incentive given to employees vary in all the four organizations evident in the minutes of meetings.

Nonfinancial incentive as noted on the organization's website include certificates of merit, letters of commendation, and awards. Participants attested to increased employee performance and commitment to work when incentives were introduced by the leader. Therefore, leaders of public sector organizations could strategically develop and implement incentives that can propel employees to higher performance levels. Inspirational motivation as a construct of transformational leadership inspires employees to higher performance. Algatani and Jayeed (2021) opined that motivation is a vital aspect in the life of an employee as it inspires productivity, enhance performance and goal achievements. P4 opined that financial motivation in the public sector in Nigeria has been very effective in increasing performance. "Employees in the public sector see financial benefit as a motivator for better performance either as a reward or a motivator. Whichever one applies, the most significant result is increased performance". Most scholars agree that motivation yields positive effect on employees in the public sector especially job satisfaction (Kjeldsen & Hansen, 2018; Ki, 2021; Meyer - Sahling, 2019; Mustapha & Ali, 2019). According to Chinyio et al. (2018), both financial and non-

financial incentives influence higher employee performance in the Nigerian public sector. Welfare packages can enhance performance and the welfare of public sector employees should be the utmost priority of the leader to enhance efficiency and work dedication (Alam et al., 2020; Chinyio et al., 2018; Hue, 2021; Ingrams, 2020).

Motivation may not always be financial incentives; non-financial incentives could inspire employees to increase performance. Motivation as a strategy in the public sector can be non-financial which could take the form of personal expressions of words of appreciation to employees for successful completion of tasks (Campbell, 2018b; Getachew & Zhou, 2018; Lauzikas & Miliute, 2019). A vibrant public sector strengthens the economy and fosters growth, therefore, improving public sector performance automatically upscales the economy (Ehiane et al., 2019). It is pertinent to have a highly motivated workforce in the public sector that is performance-centric, effective, efficient, productive, and innovative (Ahmad & Saad, 2020).

### **Theme 5: Teamwork**

Teamwork ensures employees working together in unity of purpose and vision rather than having diversified views. Many scholars opine that leader's ability to ensure teamwork in the organization fosters increased employee performance (Gholamreza et al., 2020; McEwan & Beauchamp, 2020). Outputs of teamwork in an organization are typically characterized in respect to enhanced employee satisfaction which culminates to improved employee performance (Kozlowski, 2018). P1 commented thus

So as part of the implementation strategy, we ensure we carry all the staff within the department along for them to see and appreciate what working together as a

team can achieve in moving the organization forward. Teamwork is very important for higher performance as all the players are carried along.

Participants in the current study indicated that teamwork is a vital strategy to increasing the performance of employees within their organizations. Effective teambuilding is an indicator of quality leadership (Davenport, 2020). P1 opined that “teambuilding enables the employees to know what is happening within the organization and feedback would foster understanding of employees interpretation of goals and responsibilities”. P1 stated further, “The main thing is the team play, teamwork is not an individual thing, they work as a team, they are happy and that has been able to enhance performance overtime”.

The examination of documents on the website and minutes of meetings demonstrates the limitations of teamwork on employee performance in participants organizations and the public sector in Nigeria. The limitations could be attributed to egoistic behaviors of employees, individualism, and high-performance rating expected to be accorded to an individual and not collectively. Cultural diversity amongst employees restricts collegiality.

Inspirational motivation as a construct of transformational leadership emphasizes oneness and team spirit. Teamwork has not been successful in all the organizations whose leaders were interviewed. Two of the organization recorded a positive impact of this strategy on employee’s performance. Cultural diversity can be discouraged at the workplace and employees encouraged to imbibe the culture of singleness of goal, vision, and mission.

Scholars opined that the core philosophy of teamwork suggests a direct impact on employee skills and motivation which subsequently translates into improved employee and organizational performance (Askari et al., 2020; Davenport, 2020; Gholamreza et al., 2020). Leaders in the public sector using inspirational motivation strategy notably create a positive work environment for employees (Elmasry & Bakri, 2019). As a transformational leadership construct, inspirational motivation allows leaders to achieve team spirit and motivates employees to achieve envisioned organizational goals and higher employee performance. P1 commented that “on the part of the employee, you try to educate them and carry them along in terms of the strategy”. Transformational leaders applying this strategy tacitly display passion for team spirit by emphasizing goals and stimulating employees to accomplish them (Kozlowski, 2018). Van der Hoek, (2018) argued that teams with unambiguous and higher level of goal clarity perform better when compared with teams with lower level of goal clarity.

Open collaboration in the organization ensures effective goal achievement.

Scholars opined that teamwork as a leadership strategy improves manpower utilization through collaboration, raise performance level of both employees and the corporate organization (Askari et al., 2020; Gharaveis et al., 2019; Walliser et al., 2019).

Kozlowski, (2018) opined that teams are at the core of how work is accomplished in any organization. The public sector in Nigeria is in dire need of a high-performance workforce and this has made it imperative for leaders to embrace strategies that will increase performance (Ahmad & Saad, 2020; Andersen, 2018; Ohemeng, 2018). Public sector reform is imperative to community development especially in developing countries



and employees are the potential source of improvement (Campbell, 2018b; Elmasry & Bakri, 2019; Onwuama & Obiora 2020; Vu et al., 2019).

Teamwork promotes dialogue amongst employees on issues and decisions that are key to organization's success (Anshori et al., 2020; Boamah et al., 2018; Breevaart & Zacher, 2019; Eichbaum, 2018). Leaders encourage teams not to hesitate to disagree, challenge, and question one another, all in the spirit of finding the best answers, discovering the truth, and making great decisions that ensures organizational success (Askari et al., 2020; Eichbaum, 2018). Teamwork generates positive synergies through coordinated efforts yielding higher levels of performance amongst employees in the public sector; indicating coordinated employees and work achievement through the quality and quantity of work delivered (de Vries et al., 2019; Gharaveis et al., 2018; Kozlowski, 2018; Suprawa et al., 2018; van der Hoek et al., 2018).

### **Application for Professional Practice**

The primary objective of this study was to explore strategies used by leaders in public sector organizations in Nigeria to increase employee performance. The findings of this study could apply to professional business practice by providing successful and proven strategies that leaders in the public sector can use to increase employee performance. Leaders could apply these findings which may improve business practice by providing awareness of strategies that may motivate employees and increase performance, retention, and decrease derivative costs. A high-performance workforce capable of delivering services efficiently is pertinent to the growth of the public sector (Ahmad & Saad, 2020). The following themes can be applied to business practices.

## **Communication**

Effective communication as a strategy could inspire employees to higher performance levels. Heide et al. (2018), opined that strategic communication has to do with how organizational leaders use communication purposefully to fulfill their overall vision. It is imperative for organizational leaders develop and implement an effective practical communication strategy in a manner that would inspire and motivate employees (Abdulle. 2018; Heide et al., 2018). A well communicated vision and mission promotes unity of purpose.

Leadership trait inspire employees to transcend self-interest and concentrate on goal achievement. Organizational leaders are expected to possess behavioral traits that can motivate, build trust, loyalty, employees see their leader as role models, and are inspired to put in their best thereby increasing performance (Arendt et al., 2019). Effective leadership is paramount to unambiguous communication of vision, mission, and strategy to employees, carrying them along to believe in the vision and implement strategies in an innovative manner (Sonmez Cakir & Adiguzel, 2020). Leaders in public sector organizations are expected to move followers beyond self-interest; create a work environment in which employees are motivated to transcend self-interest to organizational success; put in more efforts to achieve organizational vision and mission; motivate employees to higher performance levels, leading to efficient service delivery and public sector performance (Arif & Akram, 2018; Chiamogu, 2019; Igbokwe-Ibeto et al., 2020; Oluruntoba & Gbemigun, 2019; Olusola & Daniel, 2019).

Leadership qualities entails effective communication of vision and mission to employees. The public sector leader communicates goals, vision, mission, unambiguously (Oluruntoba & Gbemigun, 2019). Effective communication should not only be vertical but horizontal. The leader should constantly communicate challenges to subordinate which is inclusive leadership. It helps create a sense of belonging, confidence in the system, and trust in the leader. These inspire and motivate employees to be innovative, transcend self-interest for the good of the organization, and put in extra efforts to goal attainment. This effectiveness is highly needed in the Nigerian public sector organizations.

### **Training**

Sheeba and Christopher (2020) posited that employee training is vital in enhancing employees' performance resulting in organizational effectiveness, therefore, it should be seen as an investment rather than cost. Despite the inherent budgetary constraints in the Nigerian public sector, leaders should constantly strategically implement training programs for their staff, improved performance should be the focus. One of the leaders interviewed opined that on-the-job training has helped tremendously in improving the performance of staff which has made overall sector performance successful.

The leader's responsibility is first to ensure that the training program drafted is need based to achieve intended results. Training need can be assessed on three levels namely (a) at organization level based on strategic planning, goals, and objectives, (b) at the employee level which is based on performance, the needed skills and knowledge, and

(c) at the operational level, the task that is assigned or will be assigned to the employee (Abbas et al., 2020; Sheeba & Christopher, 2020). Need based training is strategic to achieving desired outcome of increased employee performance.

The public sector leader's strategy should be need based to achieve desired results. The drafted training plan should be based on performance appraisals of employees. This should be in the leader's strategic plan quarterly and annually. On-the-job training would be employee need based in order to be effective. On-the-job training in public sector organizations can be in-house with external trainers, in groups, or individually with the purpose of improving performance of the employees.

### **Motivation**

Motivated employees achieve task completion and enhanced performance. However, for effective and efficient service delivery in the public sector, employee financial motivation is vital. The delivery of efficient services in the Nigerian public sector has assumed a greater significance as the populace expects the public sector to successfully execute its policies and programs (Onyeka et al., 2020). However, for effective and efficient service delivery and improved job performance in the public sector, employees need to be financially motivated. P2 opined that

Most of the staff in the Nigerian public sector are poorly remunerated and there is also an in-balance or un- unified salary structure in the public sector. it is sad.

Because in the same system, somebody working in the oil sector is getting ten times the salary of other workers and it doesn't mean they work extra hours.

Funding, poor remuneration is a major barrier.

The best-trained and most skilled employees in the Nigerian Public sector cannot perform well when they are not financially motivated, which is why employee's financial motivation strategy should be part of the leader's strategy for motivation (Warrick, 2017). Other forms of financial motivation as stated by P2 during the interview are given to only staff whose performance is rated high:

The monetary incentive comes in the 13<sup>th</sup> month. There is what we call the 13<sup>th</sup> month. It's not all of them that benefit from the 13<sup>th</sup> month. At the end of the year, rather than paying them only the December salary, you equally pay them another salary or another money that shows those who are performing higher are appreciated. As some of these things are not disposed to some of the staff at the end of the day. Maybe the highest performing staff might get paid maybe N700,000 the low performing staff might get N200,000 yet they are the same level. So, these are ways or more that we encourage employees.

P2 commented further on the nonfinancial incentive strategy that has been applied to increase employee performance:

The other non-financial incentive has to do with material which is money too. At the end of the year, we tend to give them something that will help them to do their celebrations. We give employees bags of rice, tins of tomatoes, tins of groundnut oil etc. It has to do with money because some of them too might want to convert some of these materials to money. Not all staff receive these packages, only those who are performing very well gets it. Some staff are denied it completely because

of their performance levels. I think that will enable them to buckle up. As their leaders too we call them to explain why this is so.

### **Teamwork**

Teamwork is an organizational practice that ensures employees unity of purpose and mission implementation Anshori et al. (2020) opined that teamwork is an important organizational practice that can increase employee performance resulting in improved services. Teamwork can enable employees build a high level of emotional security, self-confidence, and ability to plan and decide with others positively; and, it helps create a healthy work environment having motivated staff draft innovative workable agendas, creative activities, positive strategies, and values (Sanyal & Hisam, 2018).

Leadership strategy and style does have an impeccable effect on the team and performance. Transformational leadership qualities that positively influence teamwork and goal achievement includes the following traits in the leader; (a) the ability of the leader to create a clear vision, (b) the ability to make employees understand organizational culture, (c) the ability to focus on performance development, and (d) the ability to encourage innovation (Abdulle & Aydintan, 2019; Gomez, 2017). A strategic leader will motivate, guide, inspire and challenge his team to achieve greater levels of performance and success (Abdulle & Aydintan, 2019; Abdulle 2018; Kelly & MacDonald, 2019; Munyiva & Kihara, 2018; Petrou et al., 2018).

### **Implications for Social Change**

The findings of this study could potentially contribute to positive social change in public sector organizations that are social service oriented to increase employee

performance. Increased employee performance promotes job stability resulting in high employee retention and a stable workforce (Matthew et al., 2018). A stable workforce may enhance the efficient and effective delivery of services to communities' citizens (Ahmad & Saad, 2020). Contributing to the stable workforce could increase quality service rendered to the populace thereby also increase funding opportunities for communities with a high-performance work force (Maier et al., 2016).

The public sector in Nigeria is a significant arm of the federal government that is a channel used to manage resource allocation, expenditures, policy administration, and service delivery to the community. Ahmad and Saad (2020) posited that the public sector's competitive edge is highly dependent on the efficiency and effectiveness of the workforce. Ineffective leadership in the Nigerian public sector has crippled performance and efficient service delivery (Ake & Olowojolu, 2019; Chiamogu, 2019; Igbokwe-Ibeto et al., 2020). The findings of this study could potentially influence leaders in the Nigerian public sector to imbibe successfully implemented strategies to effect positive social change in their various organizations. A positive work environment and culture within the organization decreases job dissatisfaction, thereby increasing employee efficiency (Al-Ali et al., 2019). Organizational commitment supports a stable workforce that could increase the quality of service rendered to the populace thereby increasing funding opportunities for communities with a high-performance work force (Maier et al., 2016; Vincent & Marmo, 2018).

### **Recommendations for Action**

Public sector organizations in Nigeria are used by the Federal Government to implement plans, policies, and programmes and utilized as the indispensable instrument of change and development in Nigeria (Ukwandu & Ijere, 2020). The public sector is expected to function as an instrument of social change and development in terms of advancing human welfare and bringing about accelerated socioeconomic progress. Therefore, the leader of public sector organization in Nigeria is expected to achieve notable success and positive impact functionally in each given sector (Ukwandu & Ijere, 2020; Yagboyaju & Akinola, 2019). Therefore, the leaders of public sector organizations are expected to be strategic and innovative in the administration of the organization to ensure that services are rendered effectively and efficiently. This therefore necessitates the need for a high-power centric workforce that will ensure efficiency of the sector (Ahmad & Saad, 2020).

Employees are seen as the most valuable assets of any organization whose efficiency determines organizational goal achievement and effective service delivery (Chiat & Panatik, 2019). The results of this study could be useful to leaders of public sector organizations, and for-profit organizations and businesses to increase their employee performance resulting in improved service delivery to the Nigerian populace. The framework for this study was used to emphasize strategies that leaders in the public sector used to increase employee performance. By implementing the strategies found in this study, managers, leaders, and professionals in the public sector and private sector organizations could improve employee performance within their organizations, and the



communities served. Based on the results of this study and the themes revealed, I would make three recommendations for action to ensure productive use of the strategies identified in this study:

### **Reccomendation 1: Leadership by Example**

Leadership by example is the engagement of the leader in task implementation, the leader shows employees what is expected of them, as opposed to telling them what to do (Eldor, 2021; Qui et al., 2018). Leadership by example is an effective way to promote cooperation and improve group performance among employees (Chebon et al., 2019; Doris et al., 2019; Kawiana et al., 2020; Peng et al., 2019).

When public sector leaders put aside the pride of leading from the top and are intelligently involved in task accomplishment, employees see behavioral traits of humility, diligence, dedication to work and the organization, sincerity of purpose, integrity, and they respect the knowledge of the leader hence, they are inspired to follow the leader, admire, believe, and support the leader. Participants interviewed all opined positively on how this strategy has built trust in the leader and increased employee performance.

When employees in the public sector see their leader's involvement in the tasks, they are motivated to go beyond their average performance and may also want to impress the leader. Either way, performance is enhanced. Leaders in the public sector should create a system of involvement in job schedules and even create a team and work with them. By so doing, the leader is not leading from the top but very involved. This leader

can proffer strategic advice, suggest practical solutions, and motivate employees to be innovative.

### **Recommendation 2: Motivation**

The most effective form of motivation in the Nigerian public sector is financial motivation and the leader ought to use this strategy to inspire employee's commitment. The leader should be innovative in the development and implementation of motivation strategies. Financial motivation should be done consistently this is to augment for the overall poor standard remuneration which is prevalent in the Nigerian public sector.

The challenging economy in Nigeria is a parasite on employees' standard of living hence an additional income will be highly appreciated. The leader should make perfect use of this economic window and inspire employees to willingly transcend self-interest. Financial motivation strategy notably worked as one major strategy used by interviewed leaders to increase employee performance in the public sector.

### **Recommendation 3: Teamwork**

Collegiality results in high performance within the organization and employees are inspired to work in teams as this helps to build a better relationship between themselves and commitment to goal attainment and realization of the corporate vision and mission (Askari et al., 2020; Kozlowki, 2020). Leaders in the Nigerian public sector organizations should strategically initiate and maintain working teams rather than have employees working in silos.

The leader should harmonize all departments under one vision and mission and ensure that as the departments carry out various tasks, it is not done in diversity but rather

to achieve goal congruence. A goal congruence is the unity of vision and purpose to achieve high performance in the organization. The meeting of the mind, both the goal of the organization, the goal of the leader and the goal of the employee should be one. The leader should encourage innovation amongst the teams rather than the bureaucratic system prevalent in the public sector. The leadership strategy could be one that ensures a working environment and culture that allows staff to be innovative, challenge status quo, initiate new ideas and protocols for task accomplishment without fear of intimidation. Innovation is noted to increase employee performance in the public sector (Abasilim et al. 2019; Arif & Akram, 2018; Boeis & Fiset, 2018).

### **Disseminating the Results**

Public sector leaders are encouraged to review the results of this study and incorporate strategies to improve employee performance in the various organizations of the public sector. Throughout the study, the overlying message of this study relates to transformational style of leadership. I will prepare and forward a two-page summary of the study findings to all participants and to those who expressed interest. I plan to host conferences, workshops, and training sessions with nonprofit organizational leaders via video conferencing and in-person to share my findings on strategies to increase employee performance. My goal is to conduct a more extensive study on the topic of employee performance for future publication. This study will be published in the ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Database for future scholars and academic professionals.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Public sector organizations in Nigeria are facing increased stress to improve on employee productivity and service delivery to the populace of which the organizations are being constantly criticized for abysmal implementation of Federal Government policies (Dhikru & Adeoye, 2019).

Recommendations for further research related to employee performance in the public sector organizations include expanding the study to different geographical locations. The targeted population was organizational leaders in the Abuja, FCT metropolis with 4 years of experience. Increasing employee performance strategies may differ from public sector organizations in Abuja as compared to organizations in highly populated areas such as Lagos state. Expanding the study to public sector organizations outside of Abuja may produce additional opinions, views, strategies, and impact on performance.

### **Reflections**

The Walden DBA Doctoral Study have been challenging, rewarding, humbling, and worthwhile. The DBA experience has not been solely about academic development. I started the DBA program to add to my knowledge of public sector organizations. Instead, I discovered that there are still much for me to learn.

Conducting my interviews via zoom audio was comfortable and easily accepted option especially with the pandemic around the world. The challenging aspect was interviewing public sector leaders in Nigeria who don't even have 60 – 90 minutes to spare. They all seem very busy in the usual Nigerian context of the leader having to

satisfy official, political, and social demands. This means having both official and unofficial engagements. Also, when I conducted the research, I was living in Tokyo which is 8 hours ahead of Nigeria. I had to adjust my timing to suit participants availability. The success of this study was participants' commitment to granting the interview which confirms the impressive rating of such leaders in the public sector.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that leaders in the Nigerian public sector use to increase employee performance. Successful leaders have strategies in place to increase employee performance and maintain motivated and inspired employees with high standards of performance. I used semistructured interview technique and asked open-ended interview questions with leaders from four public sector organizations in Abuja, FCT. The eight open-ended questions were used to determine the scope and strategies used by leaders to increase employee performance within each organization.

The results of this study aligned to a large extent with the conceptual framework for this study. The conceptual framework selected for the study was Burns' (1978) transformational leadership theory. The five themes that emerged from the study were (a) communication, (b) leadership by example, (c) on the job training, (d) motivation, and (e) teamwork which all explains the efficacy of the strategies implemented by the leader. I concluded that the overall theme revealed from the study are directly related to the leader's quality and style of leadership. In addition to public sector leaders, private sector leaders can use the strategies identified in this study to implement policies to increase

employee performance within their organizations, thereby increasing employee performance which is critical to organization growth and success.

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## Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interview Title: Leader strategies that increase employee performance in the Nigerian public sector.

Date of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Participants' Number: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Introduce the researcher to the participant.
2. Explain the interview process to the participant. Inform and show participant all available recording devices.
3. Review interview protocol, consent form, and member checking process.
4. Introduce the research question, the purpose of the study and answer any initial questions the participant may have.
5. Appreciate the participant's participation in the study.
6. Review the informed consent form and answer any questions the participant may have.
7. Provide the participant with a copy of the informed consent form for their personal records and review.
8. Activate the recording device.
9. Introduce the participant using their respondent number, the date and time of the interview.
10. Start the interview using the following questions.
  - i. What strategies have you used to increase your employees' performance?



- a. What strategy did you find most effective to increase your employees' performance?
  - b. What were the key barriers to implementing your strategies to increase your employees' performance?
  - c. How did your organization address the key barriers to increase your employees' performance?
  - d. How did your employees' respond to your different strategies to increase their performance?
  - e. What, if any, modifications did you apply to any strategy to increase your employees' performance?
  - f. What additional information would you like to share about your strategies to increase your employees' performance?
11. Ask any follow-up questions.
  12. End the interview and stop the recording in their presence. Explain member checking to the participant and transcription review process.
  13. Thank the participant for the participation in the study and provide relevant contact information for any follow-up questions or concerns.

## Appendix B: Interview Questions

The following questions will be used to ask participating leaders about the strategies they use to increase employee performance.

1. What strategies have you used to increase your employees' performance?
2. What strategy did you find most effective to increase your employees' performance?
3. What were the key barriers to implementing your strategies to increase your employees' performance?
4. How did your organization address the key barriers to increase your employees' performance?
5. How did your employees' respond to your different strategies to increase their performance?
6. What, if any, modifications did you apply to any strategy to increase your employees' performance?
7. What additional information would you like to share about your strategies to increase your employees' performance?