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Transformational leadership and organizational commitment in the directorate of vocational education in Anbar, Iraq: Dimension-level evidence

Qayssar Khaleel Mhaidi*[1] and Abdeladhim Maaoui[2]

[1 2]Department of Management Sciences, Ferhat Abbas Sétif 1 University, Sétif 19000, Algeria

Email: abdeladhim.maaoui@univ-setif.dz[2]

*Correspondence: khaleelmhaidi.qayssar@univ-setif.dz

Abstract

This study examines how transformational leadership and its four dimensions relate to organizational commitment at the Directorate of Vocational Education in Anbar, Iraq, drawing on social exchange theory. A cross-sectional survey was administered online between 5 and 13 October 2026 to the directorate's 93 employees, and 74 valid responses were retained (79.6%). Transformational leadership (17 items) and affective and continuance commitment (8 items) were measured on a five-point scale, with Cronbach's alpha of .858 and .778 respectively. Respondents reported high levels of both transformational leadership (M = 3.73) and organizational commitment (M = 3.75). Transformational leadership was positively and significantly related to organizational commitment ($\beta = .828$, $R^2 = .686$, $p < .001$). In the multiple regression ($R^2 = .724$), intellectual stimulation was the strongest predictor ($\beta = .509$), followed by inspirational motivation ($\beta = .213$) and idealized influence ($\beta = .201$), whereas individualized consideration had no significant unique contribution ($\beta = .087$, $p = .305$). The relationship was stronger for affective commitment ($R^2 = .666$) than for continuance commitment ($R^2 = .471$), a significant difference (Steiger's $Z = 2.39$, $p = .017$). Because the design is cross-sectional, relies on same-source self-reports, and covers one directorate, the results indicate associations rather than causal effects. The study offers dimension-level evidence from an under-researched Iraqi setting and suggests that leadership development in the directorate focus on intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation.

***Keywords*:** Transformational Leadership, Organizational Commitment, Affective Commitment, Continuance Commitment, Intellectual Stimulation, Vocational Education, Social Exchange Theory, Iraq

JEL Classification: M12, M54, I21

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1. Introduction

Educational institutions today face rapid challenges driven by technological change and labour-market demands, particularly vocational education institutions, which are relied upon to prepare qualified technical personnel. Such institutions cannot keep pace with these changes without leadership capable of articulating a clear vision, inspiring employees, and motivating them to transcend their self-interest for the sake of organizational goals. Transformational leadership has therefore emerged as one of the leadership styles best suited to changing environments, as it rests on idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Northouse, 2021). Organizational commitment, in turn, is one of the most important behavioural variables determining the extent of employees' attachment to their organizations and their willingness to remain in them and exert effort on their behalf (Haque et al., 2021). Recent studies indicate that transformational leadership raises employees' affective commitment and job performance (Jiatong et al., 2022), a relationship confirmed in school settings (Alzoraiki et al., 2023) and in vocational schools specifically (Liu et al., 2025). Recent meta-analyses confirm the robustness of this relationship: one reported an effect size of 0.579 for transformational leadership on teachers' organizational commitment (Sun et al., 2025), and a meta-analysis of 625 samples spanning four decades showed that transformational leadership positively predicts attitudinal outcomes such as commitment, although the size of its effect varies with occupational and cultural context (Maneethai et al., 2026), which justifies testing the relationship in settings that have not yet been studied. Accordingly, this study seeks to test the effect of transformational leadership on organizational commitment at the Directorate of Vocational Education in Anbar.

In recent years, the vocational education sector in Iraq has faced mounting pressures, including limited funding, ageing workshops and equipment, and declining public interest in this type of education. This places additional burdens on administrative and teaching staff that may affect their attachment to the institution and their willingness to remain in it. Although many studies have examined transformational leadership and organizational commitment, most were conducted in banking, industrial, or general-education settings. Even recent Iraqi studies have addressed this relationship in the public sector in general (İzci & Hamad Ameen, 2023) and in university colleges (Mahmood, 2024), whereas vocational education in Iraq, and in Anbar in particular, has received less field research. Moreover, findings at the dimension level are inconsistent: Alshuhumi et al. (2025) found that intellectual stimulation and idealized influence had negative effects on the commitment of Omani teachers, whereas a study in Saudi health sciences colleges found that inspirational motivation and idealized influence were the strongest predictors of affective commitment (Abusabeib & Ali, 2026). This inconsistency means that the question of which dimensions most influence commitment, and which of its components, remains open, particularly in the Iraqi vocational education context. Accordingly, the research problem centres on the following questions:

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1. What is the level of transformational leadership practice at the Directorate of Vocational Education in Anbar from the employees' perspective?

2. What is the level of organizational commitment among employees of the Directorate of Vocational Education in Anbar?

3. Does transformational leadership, with its dimensions, have a statistically significant effect on organizational commitment in the directorate studied?

The study addresses two pivotal variables in contemporary management thought, transformational leadership and organizational commitment, both of which are directly linked to an organization's ability to survive and develop. The study derives its significance from the importance of the vocational education sector, which prepares the technical workforce and supplies the local labour market with the skills it needs. The study provides the directorate's management with a field diagnosis of the level of leadership practices and employee commitment, which can help guide leadership development programmes. The study builds a conceptual model linking the four dimensions of transformational leadership (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration) to organizational commitment and tests it in an under-researched Iraqi setting, thereby contributing to the management literature on the Arab region.

Drawing on social exchange theory (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) and the empirical evidence reviewed in the theoretical framework (Maneethai et al., 2026; Sun et al., 2025), the research hypothesis was formulated in null form as follows:

Main hypothesis (H0): Transformational leadership has no statistically significant effect, at the 0.05 significance level, on organizational commitment at the Directorate of Vocational Education in Anbar.

1. To identify the level of transformational leadership practice, across its four dimensions, at the Directorate of Vocational Education in Anbar.

2. To identify the level of organizational commitment, in its two dimensions (affective and continuance), among the directorate's employees.

3. To measure the effect of transformational leadership as a whole and of each of its dimensions on organizational commitment, and to identify the most influential dimension.

4. To offer recommendations that help strengthen transformational leadership practices and thereby raise employee commitment in the directorate.

In light of the research problem and hypothesis, the researchers adopted the four-dimensional model of transformational leadership as the independent variable, the model used in recent studies (Alshuhumi et al., 2025; Kareem et al., 2023), with its dimensions of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. They adopted

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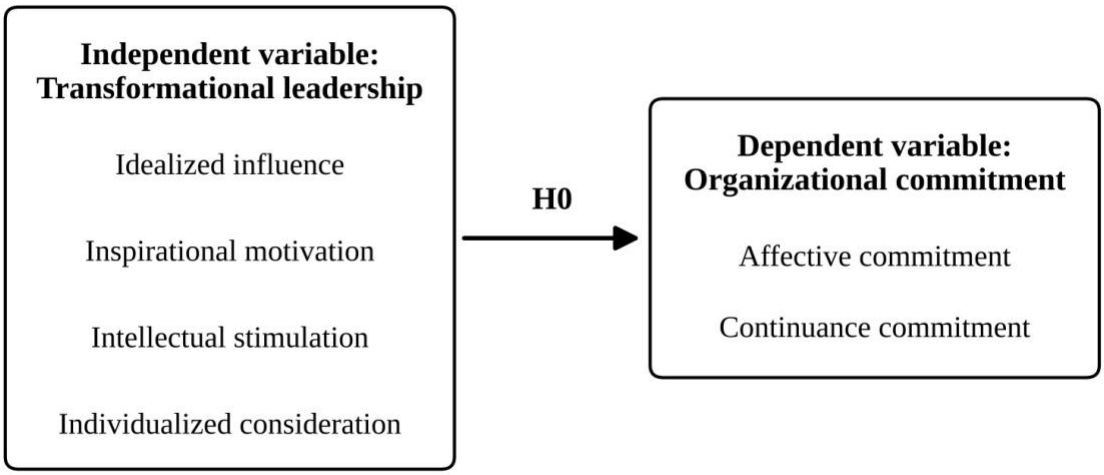
two dimensions of the three-component model of organizational commitment (Haque et al., 2021; Meyer & Allen, 1991) as the dependent variable: affective commitment and continuance commitment. Figure 1 shows the hypothesized relationship between the two variables.

Figure 1. Hypothesized Research Model



Source: Prepared by the authors based on Kareem et al. (2023) and Haque et al. (2021).

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 The Concept of Transformational Leadership

Definitions of transformational leadership vary with the perspective adopted. Northouse (2021) views it as a process that changes individuals, concerned with their values, standards, and long-term goals, in which leader and followers together rise to higher levels of motivation so that followers accomplish more than was expected of them. Kareem et al. (2023) describe the transformational leader in educational institutions as one who articulates a vision for the future, builds a culture of collaboration, and enables others to become leaders in turn. Alzoraiki et al. (2023) stress that this leadership style is a fundamental route to sustainable teaching performance, particularly in developing countries.

Based on the above, the researchers define transformational leadership operationally as a leadership style practised by managers at the Directorate of Vocational Education that rests on serving as a role model, articulating an inspiring vision, encouraging employees to think creatively, and attending to their individual needs, so that they exert effort beyond what is required.

2.2 The Importance of Transformational Leadership

The importance of transformational leadership lies in its capacity to bring about genuine change in employees' behaviour and attitudes, not merely in their immediate performance. A study of 845

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employees by Jiatong et al. (2022) showed that transformational leadership positively affects affective commitment and job performance, and that employee engagement partially mediates this effect. In educational institutions specifically, a review of two decades of studies (Berkovich & Bogler, 2021) concluded that effective school leadership, including transformational leadership, raises teachers' affective and normative commitment through two paths: socio-emotional factors and psychological capital. Kareem et al. (2023) likewise found, in a sample of 1173 teachers, that transformational leadership positively affects teachers' various forms of commitment. The researchers argue that this importance is magnified in vocational education, which needs leadership capable of managing change in curricula, technologies, and the relationship with the labour market.

2.3 Dimensions of Transformational Leadership

The researchers adopted the four dimensions of transformational leadership, the most widely used in field studies, through which the transformational style is measured by the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) (Alshuhumi et al., 2025; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2021):

2.3.1 Idealized Influence

The leader behaves in ways that make him a role model for followers, earning their admiration, respect, and trust, placing others' needs above his own, and adhering to high ethical standards (Northouse, 2021).

2.3.2 Inspirational Motivation

The leader's ability to articulate an attractive vision of the future, communicate high expectations clearly, and instil enthusiasm and optimism in the team, giving followers' work meaning and challenge (Kareem et al., 2023).

2.3.3 Intellectual Stimulation

The leader encourages followers to question prevailing assumptions, reframe problems, and approach old situations in new ways, without publicly criticizing their mistakes or differing ideas (Northouse, 2021).

2.3.4 Individualized Consideration

The leader attends to each individual, listens to them, and acts as their mentor or coach, taking account of individual differences in needs and aspirations and providing opportunities for learning and growth (Alshuhumi et al., 2025).

2.4 The Concept of Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is defined as a psychological state that characterizes an employee's relationship with the organization, influences the decision to continue or discontinue membership

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in it, and is manifested in belief in its goals and willingness to exert effort on its behalf (Haque et al., 2021). Recent literature agrees that this state is not unitary but is formed jointly by the individual's desire to stay, need to stay, and sense of obligation to stay (Alshuhumi et al., 2025; Haque et al., 2021). The researchers define organizational commitment operationally as the degree of employees' emotional attachment to the Directorate of Vocational Education in Anbar and their perception of the cost of leaving it, as measured by their responses to the questionnaire items.

2.5 The Importance of Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is among the strongest correlates of employee behaviour at work. Alzoraiki et al. (2023) showed that teachers' commitment positively affects their sustainable teaching performance and mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and that performance. Jiatong et al. (2022) confirmed the link between affective commitment and job performance. An organization with committed employees therefore bears lower recruitment and training costs and retains its accumulated expertise. The researchers argue that this importance is especially great in Iraqi public institutions, where financial incentives can hardly be used to bind employees to the organization, making leadership and moral factors more decisive.

2.6 Dimensions of Organizational Commitment

The researchers draw on the three-component model, the most widely used model in commitment research (Haque et al., 2021; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer et al., 2002). The fieldwork was limited to its first two components, as they represent the two poles of attachment to the organization—attachment based on desire and attachment based on need—in order to keep the questionnaire short and reduce respondent burden, leaving normative commitment to future studies:

2.6.1 Affective Commitment

The individual's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization; the employee stays because he wants to (Haque et al., 2021).

2.6.2 Continuance Commitment

The individual's awareness of the costs of leaving the organization, such as the loss of benefits and seniority or the scarcity of alternatives; the employee stays because he needs to (Haque et al., 2021).

2.6.3 Normative Commitment

The individual's sense of moral obligation to remain in the organization, stemming from personal values or from what the organization has invested in him; the employee stays because he feels he ought to (Berkovich & Bogler, 2021).

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2.7 The Relationship between Transformational Leadership and Organizational Commitment

Recent literature confirms a positive relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment. In vocational education specifically, Liu et al. (2025) found that transformational leadership has a positive and statistically significant effect on the organizational commitment of teachers in private vocational schools in China (Beta = 0.56). In the Arab context, Alshuhumi et al. (2025) found among Omani school teachers that individualized consideration and inspirational motivation positively predicted all commitment dimensions, whereas idealized influence and intellectual stimulation had negative effects, and that innovative organizational culture mediated the relationship. In Iraq, Mahmood (2024) confirmed a significant positive effect of transformational leadership on organizational commitment among staff of the College of Administration and Economics at the University of Baghdad. The researchers explain this relationship by the transformational leader's ability to make employees see the organization's goals as an extension of their own, so that remaining in it shifts from a need to a desire.

Other recent studies support this relationship in diverse educational settings. Metaferia et al. (2023) found a significant positive relationship between transformational leadership and teachers' commitment among 385 teachers in government secondary schools in Addis Ababa, and a study of non-formal education coordinators in Arab society showed that the effect of transformational leadership on affective commitment is fully mediated by organizational communication (Masry-Herzallah, 2023), suggesting that the quality of communication between leader and employees is a key mechanism in this relationship.

2.8 Theoretical Basis of the Relationship: Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory explains the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment through the norm of reciprocity: workplace relationships develop through a series of interdependent exchanges, so that when employees receive support, attention, and trust from their leader, they feel obliged to reciprocate with greater attachment to the organization and greater effort on its behalf (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). The transformational leader provides these non-material resources through the four dimensions: role modelling and trust (idealized influence), meaning and vision (inspirational motivation), recognition of employees' intellectual capabilities (intellectual stimulation), and personal support (individualized consideration). Because these exchanges are social rather than economic in nature, their effect would be expected to appear more in desire-based affective commitment than in continuance commitment, which rests on cost calculations. This expectation is supported by the meta-analysis of the antecedents of commitment, which found that transformational leadership correlates much more strongly with affective than with continuance commitment (Meyer et al., 2002).

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2.9 Positioning of the Present Study

The present study shares with previous studies the four-dimensional model of transformational leadership and the three-component model of commitment, and differs from them in four respects. First, it is conducted in the Iraqi vocational education sector, a context rarely addressed by previous studies. Second, it tests the unique contribution of each dimension through multiple regression and estimates its relative importance, rather than examining the overall effect alone. Third, it tests the effect of transformational leadership on both affective and continuance commitment and compares the two statistically using Steiger's test. Fourth, it examines common method bias before testing the hypothesis.

3. Methodology

The researchers adopted the descriptive-analytical approach and relied on two sources of data. The first is secondary, consisting of books and research published in Arabic and international journals. The second is primary: the researchers developed a questionnaire based on the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) in the form used in recent educational studies (Alzoraiki et al., 2023) and on the affective and continuance dimensions of the three-component model of organizational commitment (Haque et al., 2021; Meyer & Allen, 1991), with items adapted to the study context. To establish the face validity of the instrument, the initial version of the questionnaire was reviewed by five subject-matter experts, and its items were revised in line with their recommendations before distribution. The questionnaire was distributed electronically to employees of the Directorate of Vocational Education in Anbar, and the data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics (Cronbach's alpha, skewness and kurtosis, Harman's test, Pearson correlation, simple and multiple linear regression, the paired-samples t-test, and Steiger's test for comparing dependent correlations).

The population comprises all employees of the Directorate of Vocational Education in Anbar and the teachers assigned to it, totalling 93 male and female employees. The questionnaire was distributed electronically to employees across administrative levels and departments between 5 and 13 October 2026, and 74 valid responses were retained after screening, a response rate of 79.6%. The minimum representative sample for a population of this size is approximately 75 respondents at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970), which the obtained sample almost exactly matches, with a margin of error of approximately ±5.2%. To verify its adequacy for the regression analyses, a power analysis was conducted (Faul et al., 2009): the minimum sample required for a multiple regression with four predictors at $\alpha = 0.05$ and power of 0.80 is 40 respondents to detect a large effect ($f^2 = 0.35$) and 85 respondents to detect a medium effect ($f^2 = 0.15$). Because the effect size obtained in the multiple model was very large ($f^2 = 2.62$), post-hoc power was approximately 1.00, meaning that the sample is adequate for testing the overall effect, although it remains below the size needed to detect medium effects with power of 0.80, which should be considered when interpreting non-significant results.

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The researchers ensured the confidentiality of responses: the questionnaire contained no information that could identify respondents, and respondents were informed in its introduction that participation was voluntary and that their data would be treated as strictly confidential and used solely for scientific research purposes.

Responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Means are interpreted using a class width of 0.80: very low (1.00–1.80), low (1.81–2.60), moderate (2.61–3.40), high (3.41–4.20), and very high (4.21–5.00).

Spatial scope: the Directorate of Vocational Education in Anbar. Temporal scope: 5–13 October 2026. Human scope: directorate employees and the teachers assigned to it. Subject scope: transformational leadership in its four dimensions and organizational commitment in its affective and continuance dimensions.

4. Empirical Analysis

4.1 Demographic Profile of the Sample

Table 1. Distribution of respondents by demographic characteristics

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	63	85.1%
	Female	11	14.9%
Age	Under 30 years	10	13.5%
	31–40 years	19	25.7%
	41–50 years	28	37.8%
	51–60 years	12	16.2%
	Over 60 years	5	6.8%
Educational qualification	Secondary (preparatory)	11	14.9%
	Bachelor's	38	51.4%
	Higher diploma	2	2.7%

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Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
	Master's	20	27.0%
	PhD	2	2.7%
	Other	1	1.4%
Years of service	Less than 2 years	6	8.1%
	2–10 years	39	52.7%
	10–15 years	16	21.6%
	More than 15 years	13	17.6%
Position	Administrative employee	60	81.1%
	Head of department	6	8.1%
	Assistant director	8	10.8%
Total		**74**	**100%**

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the statistical analysis.

Note: Age and length-of-service categories are reported as worded in the questionnaire; the service categories 2–10 and 10–15 overlap at 10, and the age categories do not explicitly include 30. This does not affect the hypothesis test, as demographic variables were not included in it.

Table 1 shows that males constitute the largest share of the sample (85.1%), the largest age group is 41–50 years (37.8%), bachelor's degree holders form the largest group (51.4%), followed by master's degree holders (27.0%), and administrative employees, including the teachers assigned to the directorate, make up most of the sample (81.1%), a distribution that reflects the actual staffing structure of the directorate.

4.2 Reliability of the Instrument (Cronbach's Alpha)

Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the reliability of the questionnaire; the minimum acceptable reliability in the management and social sciences is 0.70 (Field, 2024).

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Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficients for the Study Instrument

Variable	No. of items	Cronbach's alpha
Transformational leadership (overall)	**17**	**0.858**
Organizational commitment (overall)	**8**	**0.778**
Whole questionnaire	**25**	**0.905**

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the statistical analysis.

The initial analysis of all 29 items showed high overall reliability (0.872); however, examination of the corrected item-total correlations showed that item 1 correlated negatively with its dimension (−0.299) and that items 2, 3, and 4 had very weak correlations not exceeding 0.15. The inter-item correlation matrix showed that only items 2 and 4 correlated acceptably with each other (0.43), whereas item 1 correlated negatively with both (−0.26 and −0.32) and item 3 was unrelated to either. Items 25 and 28 of continuance commitment also correlated very weakly with their dimension (0.039 and −0.040), values below the 0.30 threshold (Field, 2024). Items 1, 3, 25, and 28 were therefore removed, leaving 25 items. Table 2 shows that overall reliability after removal was 0.905, with 0.858 for transformational leadership and 0.778 for organizational commitment, all above the 0.70 threshold.

4.3 Normality and Common Method Bias

To verify the suitability of the data for parametric tests (correlation and regression), the normality of the study variables and their dimensions was examined using skewness and kurtosis, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Skewness and Kurtosis of the Study Variables and Dimensions

Variable / dimension	Skewness	Kurtosis	Result
Idealized influence	−0.445	−0.573	Normal
Inspirational motivation	−0.313	−0.120	Normal
Intellectual stimulation	−0.508	0.086	Normal
Individualized consideration	−0.181	−0.445	Normal

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Variable / dimension	Skewness	Kurtosis	Result
Transformational leadership (overall)	**−0.235**	**−0.324**	**Normal**
Affective commitment	−0.369	−0.205	Normal
Continuance commitment	−0.201	−0.327	Normal
Organizational commitment (overall)	**−0.427**	**−0.239**	**Normal**

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the statistical analysis.

Skewness values ranged from −0.508 to −0.181 and kurtosis values from −0.573 to 0.086, all within ±1, a narrower range than the acceptable limits of ±2 for skewness and ±7 for kurtosis (Curran et al., 1996), indicating that the data approximate a normal distribution and are suitable for parametric analysis.

Common Method Bias: Because data on the independent and dependent variables were collected from the same respondents with the same instrument, Harman's single-factor test was conducted by entering the 25 items into an unrotated principal component analysis. The first factor explained 31.7% of the total variance, below the 50% threshold, indicating no serious common method bias in the data (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

4.4 Respondents' Perceptions of Transformational Leadership

Table 4. Means and Standard Deviations of the Transformational Leadership Dimensions

Dimension	Mean	SD	CV	Relative weight	Level	Rank
Idealized influence	3.85	0.78	20.2%	77.0%	High	1
Inspirational motivation	3.65	0.52	14.1%	73.0%	High	4
Intellectual stimulation	3.75	0.59	15.6%	75.0%	High	2
Individualized consideration	3.75	0.61	16.4%	75.0%	High	3

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Dimension	Mean	SD	CV	Relative weight	Level	Rank
Transformational leadership (overall)	**3.73**	**0.49**	**13.0%**	**74.7%**	**High**	**—**

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the statistical analysis.

Table 4 shows that respondents reported a high level of agreement on all four dimensions of transformational leadership, with means ranging from 3.65 to 3.85 and coefficients of variation from 14.1% to 20.2%, indicating homogeneous responses. Idealized influence ranked first (3.85), followed by intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration with nearly identical means (3.751 and 3.749 before rounding), while inspirational motivation ranked last (3.65); the overall mean of transformational leadership was 3.73, a high level.

4.5 Respondents' Perceptions of Organizational Commitment

Table 5. Means and Standard Deviations of the Organizational Commitment Dimensions

Dimension	Mean	SD	CV	Relative weight	Level	Rank
Affective commitment	3.73	0.52	13.9%	74.5%	High	2
Continuance commitment	3.80	0.58	15.4%	75.9%	High	1
Organizational commitment (overall)	**3.75**	**0.50**	**13.3%**	**75.1%**	**High**	**—**

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the statistical analysis.

Table 5 shows that organizational commitment was high in both dimensions, with coefficients of variation of 13.9% and 15.4% indicating homogeneous responses. Continuance commitment ranked first (3.80), slightly ahead of affective commitment (3.73); however, this difference is not statistically significant according to the paired-samples t-test ($t = 1.38$, $p = .172$), meaning that the two dimensions are at similar levels. The overall mean of organizational commitment was 3.75, a high level.

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4.6 Correlations among the Study Variables

Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to measure the strength and direction of the relationships between the dimensions of transformational leadership and those of organizational commitment, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Correlation matrix between transformational leadership and organizational commitment

Commitment ↓ / Leadership →	Idealized influence	Inspirational motivation	Intellectual stimulation	Individualized consideration	Transformational leadership
Affective commitment	0.650**	0.558**	0.793**	0.641**	0.816**
Continuance commitment	0.545**	0.606**	0.647**	0.444**	0.686**
Organizational commitment (overall)	**0.659****	**0.626****	**0.796****	**0.609****	**0.828****

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the statistical analysis. (**) Significant at the 0.01 level; n = 74.

The results show a strong, positive, and statistically significant correlation (at the 0.01 level) between transformational leadership and organizational commitment (r = 0.828). The correlations of all four dimensions with organizational commitment were positive and significant, the strongest being intellectual stimulation (r = 0.796) and the weakest individualized consideration (r = 0.609). Transformational leadership was also more strongly correlated with affective commitment (r = 0.816) than with continuance commitment (r = 0.686), which justifies proceeding to test the effect hypothesis.

4.7 Multiple Linear Regression of the Transformational Leadership Dimensions on Organizational Commitment

Multiple linear regression was conducted to test the joint effect of the four dimensions on organizational commitment and to determine the relative weight of each dimension. Beforehand,

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the absence of multicollinearity among the dimensions was checked using the variance inflation factor (VIF < 10) and tolerance (> 0.10) (Field, 2024).

Table 7. Summary of the Multiple Regression Model

Indicator	Value
Coefficient of determination (R^2)	0.724
Adjusted R^2	0.708
F	45.17
Degrees of freedom (df1, df2)	(4, 69)
Significance (*p*)	< .001

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the statistical analysis.

Table 8. Multiple regression coefficients of the transformational leadership dimensions on organizational commitment

Dimension	B (unstandardized)	Beta (standardized)	t	*p*	VIF	Relative importance
Idealized influence	0.129	0.201	2.40	.019	1.74	18.3%
Inspirational motivation	0.207	0.213	2.69	.009	1.57	18.4%
Intellectual stimulation	0.435	0.509	5.52	< .001	2.12	56.0%
Individualized consideration	0.071	0.087	1.03	.305	1.78	7.3%

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the statistical analysis.

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The four dimensions together explain 72.4% of the variance in organizational commitment, and the model is statistically significant ($p < .001$). The Beta values rank the dimensions by strength of contribution as follows: intellectual stimulation, then inspirational motivation, then idealized influence with a similar contribution, then individualized consideration. The first three dimensions retained a statistically significant unique contribution: intellectual stimulation ($p < .001$), inspirational motivation ($p = .009$), and idealized influence ($p = .019$), whereas individualized consideration showed no significant unique contribution when entered with the other dimensions ($p = .305$). This may be explained by the overlap of its effect with the other, positively correlated dimensions (inter-dimension correlations ranged from 0.48 to 0.63). VIF values ranged from 1.57 to 2.12 and tolerance values from 0.471 to 0.638, within acceptable limits, and the Durbin–Watson statistic was 2.07, close to 2, indicating independence of residuals. Relative importance was computed using Pratt's measure, i.e., Beta multiplied by the zero-order correlation and divided by R^2.

4.8 Testing the Effect Hypothesis

4.8.1 Testing the Main Hypothesis (Overall Effect)

Table 9. Simple Linear Regression of Transformational Leadership on Organizational Commitment

Independent variable	Effect	Dependent variable	β	F	R^2	95% CI lower	95% CI upper	*p*
Transformational leadership	Positive (+)	Organizational commitment	0.828	156.94	0.686	0.717	0.989	< .001

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the statistical analysis. The 95% confidence limits refer to the unstandardized coefficient (B = 0.853).

The results show a statistically significant direct effect of transformational leadership on organizational commitment: R^2 was 0.686, meaning that transformational leadership explains 68.6% of the variance in organizational commitment, with the remaining 31.4% attributable to factors outside the model. The significance of the effect is confirmed by the F value (156.94) at $p < .001$, below the 0.05 level; the main null hypothesis (H0) is therefore rejected and the alternative accepted.

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4.8.2 Effect of Transformational Leadership on the Two Commitment Dimensions (Additional Analysis)

Table 10. Simple Regression of Transformational Leadership on the Two Dimensions of Organizational Commitment

Dependent variable	β	F	R^2	95% CI lower	95% CI upper	*p*
Affective commitment	0.816	143.25	0.666	0.726	1.016	< .001
Continuance commitment	0.686	64.14	0.471	0.619	1.029	< .001

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the statistical analysis. The 95% confidence limits refer to the unstandardized coefficients (B = 0.871 and 0.824, respectively).

Transformational leadership has a positive and statistically significant effect on both commitment dimensions, but its effect on affective commitment ($R^2 = 0.666$) is stronger than on continuance commitment ($R^2 = 0.471$), and the difference between the two correlation coefficients (0.816 and 0.686) is statistically significant according to Steiger's test for dependent correlations ($Z = 2.39$, $p = .017$) (Steiger, 1980). This is consistent with the finding of Jiatong et al. (2022) that transformational leadership raises employees' affective commitment.

4.9 Discussion

The results show that transformational leadership explains 68.6% of the variance in organizational commitment among employees of the Directorate of Vocational Education in Anbar, a finding consistent in direction with previous studies in educational settings: Liu et al. (2025) found a significant positive effect of transformational leadership on the commitment of teachers in private vocational schools in China, Kareem et al. (2023) confirmed this effect among teachers, and Mahmood (2024) reached a similar result in the Iraqi context; the direction of the finding is also consistent with the meta-analysis of teacher studies (Sun et al., 2025). The effect size in the present study, however, is larger than in some of these studies (Beta = 0.828 versus 0.56 in Liu et al., 2025). This may be because employees of a public institution with limited financial incentives build their attachment to it on their relationship with their direct leadership more than on other factors; part of the strength of the relationship may also stem from collecting data on both variables from the same source at the same time. This variation in effect size across studies is consistent with the conclusion of the meta-analysis by Maneethai et al. (2026) that the effect of transformational leadership on attitudinal outcomes such as commitment varies with occupational and cultural context.

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At the dimension level, intellectual stimulation was the strongest dimension of transformational leadership in its effect on organizational commitment after controlling for the other dimensions (Beta = 0.509). This differs from the finding of Alshuhumi et al. (2025) among Omani school teachers, where intellectual stimulation had a negative effect and individualized consideration and inspirational motivation were the strongest positive predictors. The researchers attribute this difference to the nature of vocational education: the sector constantly deals with updating curricula, workshops, and training methods, so its employees value a manager who encourages them to think of new solutions and accepts their dissenting views, seeing this as recognition of their professional expertise that strengthens their attachment to the directorate. Differences in the statistical model may also contribute, since Alshuhumi et al. (2025) included innovative organizational culture as a mediating variable. The finding also differs from that of a study in Saudi health sciences colleges, in which inspirational motivation and idealized influence were the strongest predictors of affective commitment (Abusabeib & Ali, 2026); this variation across settings is consistent with the observation of Maneethai et al. (2026) that the effects of transformational leadership depend on occupational context. The absence of a significant unique contribution of individualized consideration in the multiple model (p = .305), despite its significant positive correlation with commitment (r = 0.609), means that the explanation this dimension offers for commitment overlaps with that of the other dimensions, particularly intellectual stimulation, with which it is most strongly correlated (r = 0.632). This may reflect that employees do not clearly distinguish between the manager's attention to them as individuals and his encouragement of their participation, viewing both as expressions of a supportive leadership relationship.

Regarding the level of commitment, continuance commitment (3.80) was slightly, but not significantly, ahead of affective commitment (3.73), meaning that employees' need-based attachment to the directorate parallels their desire-based attachment. This is consistent with the particular nature of the Iraqi public sector, which offers job security and benefits that are hard to replace given limited alternative employment, making staying in the organization as much a need as a desire. It underlines the role transformational leadership can play in turning this attachment from need into desire, as noted in the theoretical framework. This is reinforced by the finding that the effect of transformational leadership on affective commitment was significantly stronger than on continuance commitment (Table 10); that is, transformational leadership practices are reflected in employees' desire to stay more than in their need to stay. This is consistent with the meta-analytic findings of Meyer et al. (2002) and with the logic of social exchange theory presented in Section 2.8: the resources provided by a transformational leader are social resources that generate a desire to stay rather than altering calculations of the cost of leaving.

5. Conclusion, Implications, Recommendations, and Limitations of the Study

This study addressed a vital topic given the challenges facing vocational education in Iraq—transformational leadership—linked it to an equally important variable, organizational

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commitment, and applied it at the Directorate of Vocational Education in Anbar. It presented the theoretical and empirical frameworks to clarify the effect of transformational leadership, in its four dimensions (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration), on organizational commitment in its two dimensions (affective and continuance). It found a positive effect of transformational leadership on organizational commitment, and the multiple regression showed that intellectual stimulation made the strongest contribution to this effect, while individualized consideration was the only dimension that did not retain a significant unique contribution.

1. Respondents reported a high level of agreement on the practice of transformational leadership across its four dimensions, with an overall mean of 3.73; idealized influence ranked first and inspirational motivation last.

2. Organizational commitment was high in both dimensions, with an overall mean of 3.75; continuance commitment ranked first, with no statistically significant difference from affective commitment.

3. Transformational leadership as a whole has a statistically significant effect on organizational commitment, explaining 68.6% of its variance.

4. The multiple regression showed that intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence retained statistically significant unique contributions to organizational commitment, with intellectual stimulation the strongest, whereas individualized consideration showed no significant unique contribution when entered with the other dimensions.

5. Transformational leadership affects affective commitment ($R^2 = 0.666$) more than continuance commitment ($R^2 = 0.471$), and the difference is statistically significant, suggesting that its effect is reflected mainly in emotional attachment to the directorate.

5.1 Recommendations

1. Establish leadership development programmes for the directorate's administrative leaders (the director, assistant directors, and heads of department) that focus on transformational leadership skills, particularly inspirational motivation, which recorded the lowest level.

2. Strengthen individualized consideration through regular one-to-one meetings between managers and employees to identify their professional needs and link training opportunities to those needs. Although this dimension showed no significant unique effect when entered with the other dimensions, its significant positive correlation with organizational commitment ($r = 0.609$) suggests that it supports commitment alongside them.

3. Involve teaching and technical staff in formulating the directorate's vision and plans, so as to strengthen inspirational motivation and raise affective commitment.

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4. Encourage creative initiatives in developing vocational workshops and curricula, and adopt a mechanism for presenting and rewarding new ideas, to reinforce intellectual stimulation.

5. Consolidate desire-based commitment, which did not exceed continuance commitment, and reduce employees' reliance on need alone as the reason for staying, by improving the work environment and providing moral recognition of their efforts.

6. Conduct future studies that examine mediating or moderating variables in the relationship, such as psychological empowerment, trust in the leader, or organizational communication, using longitudinal designs and multiple data sources, and extend the study to vocational education directorates in other governorates.

5.2 Implications of the Study

The study contributes to the transformational leadership literature in three ways. First, it extends the test of the relationship to the Iraqi vocational education sector. Second, it provides dimension-level evidence that intellectual stimulation retains the strongest unique contribution, whereas the effect of individualized consideration overlaps with the other dimensions, adding to the ongoing debate on the differential effects of the dimensions (Abusabeib & Ali, 2026; Alshuhumi et al., 2025). Third, the finding that transformational leadership affects affective commitment more strongly than continuance commitment supports the social exchange explanation of this relationship. The results suggest that strengthening intellectual stimulation behaviours, such as involving employees in solving work problems and accepting their dissenting views, is the most effective route to raising their commitment to the directorate, and that developing inspirational motivation, which recorded the lowest level, should be a priority in leadership development programmes for the directorate's administrative leaders. The high level of continuance commitment also means that part of employees' decision to stay is need-based, which transformational leadership can turn into desire-based commitment.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

The findings are subject to several limitations that should be considered when generalizing them. First, the study used a cross-sectional design and a self-report questionnaire in which data on both variables were collected from the same respondents, which does not allow firm causal inference. Second, the study was limited to one directorate and a sample of 74 respondents dominated by males and administrative employees, which limits generalizability; moreover, the sample size is below that required to detect medium effects with a statistical power of 0.80. Third, four items were removed for poor reliability, leaving idealized influence measured by only two items; validity assessment was limited to face validity (expert review), and the construct validity of the instrument was not tested by confirmatory factor analysis. Fourth, organizational commitment was measured by only two components of the three-component model, excluding normative commitment. Fifth, the relationship was not tested through mediating variables, although recent studies point to the

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role of organizational communication in transmitting the effect of transformational leadership to affective commitment (Masry-Herzallah, 2023).

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Appendix: Study Questionnaire

The items below were worded by the researchers based on the dimensions of transformational leadership (Northouse, 2021) and organizational commitment (Haque et al., 2021); they are not a verbatim reproduction of the copyrighted MLQ. Response scale: 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree.

Section 1. Transformational Leadership

#	Dimension	Item	5	4	3	2	1
1	Idealized influence	My manager behaves in a way that makes him a role model for us at work. (*)					
2	Idealized influence	My manager adheres to ethical values in his decisions.					
3	Idealized influence	I feel proud to work with my manager. (*)					
4	Idealized influence	My manager enjoys the trust and respect of employees.					
5	Inspirational motivation	My manager presents a clear vision for the future of vocational education in the directorate.					
6	Inspirational motivation	My manager speaks optimistically about our ability to achieve our goals.					
7	Inspirational motivation	My manager sets high expectations for our performance and trusts our ability to meet them.					
8	Inspirational motivation	My manager instils enthusiasm in the team.					
9	Inspirational motivation	My manager explains the importance of our work for vocational students and society.					

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#	Dimension	Item	5	4	3	2	1
10	Intellectual stimulation	My manager encourages me to think of new solutions to work problems.					
11	Intellectual stimulation	My manager accepts opinions that differ from his own without criticism.					
12	Intellectual stimulation	My manager prompts me to rethink habitual ways of working.					
13	Intellectual stimulation	My manager encourages the development of innovative teaching and vocational training methods.					
14	Intellectual stimulation	My manager asks for my opinion before making decisions that affect my work.					
15	Individualized consideration	My manager cares about my needs and professional aspirations.					
16	Individualized consideration	My manager treats me as an individual with my own circumstances.					
17	Individualized consideration	My manager devotes time to guiding and mentoring me.					
18	Individualized consideration	My manager helps me develop my skills.					
19	Individualized consideration	My manager listens attentively to the problems I raise.					

(*) Item removed from the statistical analysis because of poor reliability; see Section 4.2 for the removal criteria.

Section 2. Organizational Commitment

#	Dimension	Item	5	4	3	2	1
20	Affective commitment	I feel a genuine sense of belonging to the directorate.					

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#	Dimension	Item	5	4	3	2	1
21	Affective commitment	I consider the directorate's problems to be my own.					
22	Affective commitment	I would be happy to spend the rest of my career in the directorate.					
23	Affective commitment	I speak proudly about the directorate to others.					
24	Affective commitment	The directorate has great personal meaning for me.					
25	Continuance commitment	My situation would be seriously affected if I decided to leave the directorate now. (*)					
26	Continuance commitment	Staying in the directorate is as much a necessity as a desire.					
27	Continuance commitment	The alternative job opportunities available to me are limited.					
28	Continuance commitment	It would be hard for me to leave the directorate even if I wanted to. (*)					
29	Continuance commitment	I would lose important benefits if I left the directorate.					

(*) Item removed from the statistical analysis because of poor reliability; see Section 4.2 for the removal criteria.

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