

Transformational Leadership in Higher Education Institutions: Review and Future Directions

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ABSTRACT:

As higher education institutions navigate severe macro-environmental shocks and technological disruptions, traditional bureaucratic and transactional management architectures have proven structurally inadequate. This paper synthesises empirical literature to evaluate how transformational leadership—specifically its core dimensions of idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration—drives organisational agility and human capital cultivation. The findings reveal critical implementation gaps, showing that many institutions rely on superficial charisma rather than embedding deep structural empowerment. Furthermore, the review highlights significant demographic and generational variances in leadership reception; female faculty members systematically report lower satisfaction with transformational efficacy, while mid-career faculty (ages 35–45) exhibit profound institutional disillusionment and higher vulnerability to burnout compared to early-career scholars. This operational friction underscores that leadership efforts do not land uniformly across university staff, especially within specialised spaces like digital library infrastructures. Ultimately, these insights demand a comprehensive overhaul of academic vetting protocols, urging selection committees and human resource departments to prioritize emotional intelligence, relationship management, and transformative behavioural capacities over standard academic seniority or research tenure alone to ensure long-term institutional survival.

Keywords:

Transformational Leadership; Higher Education; Institutional Agility; Faculty Burnout; Academic Governance; Individualized Consideration; Intellectual Stimulation

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Introduction

In the contemporary globalized knowledge economy, higher education institutions (HEIs) have undergone a radical structural metamorphosis, shifting away from traditionally stable, insular, and bureaucratic repositories of learning into highly competitive, dynamic, and disruptive organizational environments (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). Modern universities are continuously bombarded by external macro-environmental shocks, which include rapid technological advancements, intense global ranking competitions, shifting state and private funding models, fluctuating student demographics, and the marketization of academic degrees (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). Within this framework, modern universities are forced to operate not merely as centers of teaching, pedagogy, and basic research, but as highly agile, corporate-aligned organizations that must continuously optimize their internal resources to maintain institutional survival and prestige (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Lo et al., 2020).

Consequently, the traditional administrative paradigms that heavily relied on transactional management, rigid hierarchies, routine administration, or appointing leaders solely based on academic seniority, publication output, and research tenure are proving increasingly insufficient (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). Historical academic appointment models often assumed that an exceptional researcher or a tenured professor would naturally possess the organizational acumen required to manage complex academic departments (Baba et al., 2019). However, navigating a modern landscape characterized by permanent change requires a definitive paradigm shift away from passive administration toward proactive, visionary leadership styles that prioritize adaptability, systemic vision, emotional connection, and human asset development (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019).

Among various contemporary organizational frameworks, transformational leadership has emerged as a vital mechanism for driving organizational effectiveness, sustainability, and competitive advantage within academic ecosystems (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). Originally conceptualized across corporate

sectors, transformational leadership in higher education operates through four distinct, interdependent behavioral dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Abu-Rumman, 2021). Idealized influence involves leaders acting as ethical role models, building deep trust, instilling personal and institutional pride, and aligning individual faculty behaviors with overarching institutional missions (Abu-Rumman, 2021). Inspirational motivation requires formulating and clearly articulating an appealing, shared vision that inspires faculty members to look beyond individual research metrics, siloed departments, or routine teaching loads toward collective, transformative institutional goals (Abu-Rumman, 2021). Intellectual stimulation functions by actively encouraging faculty, researchers, and staff to challenge traditional pedagogical paradigms, question long-standing administrative assumptions, and safely embrace creative, non-traditional methodologies in both their teaching and research (Abu-Rumman, 2021). Individualized consideration manifests when academic leaders treat subordinates as distinct individuals with unique psychological and career needs, providing targeted professional development, mentoring, and emotional stability to combat systemic faculty burnout (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). When academic leaders—such as Deans, Heads of Departments (HODs), and library directors—embody these dimensions, they actively foster an environment of shared vision, innovation, and psychological empowerment (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019; Lo et al., 2020).

The empirical literature underscores that the success and operationalization of transformational leadership in academia are deeply intertwined with two critical pillars: human capital cultivation and the antecedent framework of emotional intelligence (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). First, transformational leadership functions as a direct, statistically verifiable antecedent to human capital development (Abu-Rumman, 2021). Within HEIs, human capital represents the collective professional skills, lived experience, expert expertise, and innovative capacities of the academic and administrative staff (Abu-Rumman, 2021). Because human capital is an intangible asset that cannot be forced or easily mechanized, leaders who prioritize deep structural empowerment over micromanagement directly

upgrade the capabilities of their staff, which is essential for institutional survival in disruptive educational markets (Abu-Rumman, 2021). Second, a leader's capacity to execute these complex transformational behaviors is not accidental; it is heavily predicted by their internal Emotional Intelligence (EI) (Baba et al., 2019). Empirical testing confirms that an academic leader's overall EI heavily determines their success as a transformational leader, explaining nearly half (47%) of the total statistical variance ($R^2 = 0.47$) in transformational leadership scores (Baba et al., 2019). Among the various dimensions of emotional intelligence, specific psychological traits like *Value Orientation and Integrity* have been proven to be the single most influential predictors of transformational behaviors, followed closely by *Managing Relations* and *Emotional Stability* (Baba et al., 2019). These findings indicate that the capacity to manage departmental conflicts, empathize with stressed faculty, and maintain ethical clarity directly feeds a leader's ability to be transformational (Baba et al., 2019). Furthermore, this leadership dynamic extends far beyond executive boardrooms and central administration into critical academic infrastructure, including the world's leading academic libraries, which require transformational direction to manage rapid digital disruptions, knowledge preservation challenges, and evolving information-access ecosystems globally (Lo et al., 2020).

Despite the widely documented benefits of transformational leadership, its implementation within HEIs is neither uniform nor without deep operational friction (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). Significant empirical gaps, institutional inconsistencies, and perceptual variances persist across demographic lines within university faculties (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). At the institutional level, many universities struggle to deeply embed true structural empowerment; they often rely too superficially on inspirational motivation or charisma without fostering actual capability growth, resource distribution, or technical training among their staff, which creates a superficial environment where leadership rhetoric outpaces actual faculty development (Abu-Rumman, 2021). Furthermore, how leadership is perceived depends heavily on the demographic characteristics of the subordinates being led (Baba et al., 2019). For instance, female faculty members frequently report distinct disparities in how they perceive and experience the

emotional intelligence and transformational traits of their institutional leaders compared to their male colleagues, noting lower satisfaction across multiple leadership dimensions (Baba et al., 2019). Additionally, a sharp generational divide exists within university faculties, where younger academic staff (ages 25–35) tend to view the emotional intelligence and leadership efforts of their HODs much more favorably, whereas mid-career academic staff (ages 35–45) exhibit significantly higher levels of disillusionment, lower perceptions of leadership efficacy, and increased vulnerability to institutional stagnation and burnout (Baba et al., 2019).

Given these highly complex, multi-layered dynamics, there is a critical need to systematically review, categorize, and critique how transformational leadership operates within modern higher education. This review article aims to synthesize existing empirical evidence regarding the explicit relationships between transformational leadership frameworks, emotional intelligence antecedents, and human capital growth within higher education institutions (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). Furthermore, it examines how these leadership paradigms manifest and scale across specialized academic infrastructures like library systems (Lo et al., 2020). By evaluating current quantitative methodologies, identifying demographic and institutional discrepancies, and highlighting systemic gaps in the literature, this paper establishes a comprehensive framework for future empirical research directions and provides practical insights for leadership selection and development in the higher education sector.

Review of Literature

1. The Transformational Leadership Framework in Higher Education Institutions

Transformational leadership within higher education institutions (HEIs) has transitioned from a theoretical administrative concept into an operational necessity for institutional survival and structural adaptation (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). Traditional higher education environments have historically relied on rigid bureaucratic management, routine administration, or transactional leadership architectures (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). These historical models frequently favor appointing institutional leaders, such as Heads of Departments (HODs) or

Deans, based purely on research tenure, publication output, or academic seniority (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). However, these traditional administrative frameworks lack the agility required to successfully navigate modern macro-environmental shocks, which include globalization, hyper-competitive funding landscapes, intense ranking competitions, and rapid technical advancements (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). Transformational leadership directly addresses these institutional vulnerabilities by altering the operational climate through four core behavioral dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Abu-Rumman, 2021).

When academic leaders effectively operationalize these four dimensions, they shift the institutional focus away from rigid compliance toward collaborative vision and agility (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). Idealized influence requires academic administrators to serve as ethical role models, cultivating deep trust and institutional pride among faculty members (Abu-Rumman, 2021). Inspirational motivation involves formulating and clearly articulating a compelling, shared future vision that inspires university staff to look beyond isolated daily academic workloads and routine teaching loads toward collective goals (Abu-Rumman, 2021). Intellectual stimulation actively encourages faculty, researchers, and staff to question long-standing administrative assumptions, challenge outdated pedagogical structures, and safely implement creative, innovative practices without fear of institutional penalty (Abu-Rumman, 2021). Finally, individualized consideration manifests when academic leaders treat their subordinates as distinct individuals with unique professional needs, providing the targeted mentoring, training, and career support necessary to mitigate widespread academic burnout (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019).

2. Implementation Variances and Operational Friction

Despite the widely documented theoretical benefits of transformational leadership, its structural execution across higher education systems is highly inconsistent, revealing severe operational friction and implementation gaps

(Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). Empirical tracking demonstrates that transformational leadership practices are not applied uniformly across different university campuses or academic departments (Abu-Rumman, 2021). For instance, certain academic institutions struggle significantly by relying too heavily or superficially on inspirational motivation or charisma alone, completely failing to embed the deep structural changes or empowerment initiatives necessary to support their staff (Abu-Rumman, 2021). Conversely, other institutions successfully integrate a broader spectrum of transformational behaviors, explicitly focusing on comprehensive employee empowerment to drive their institutional goals (Abu-Rumman, 2021).

This operational fragmentation highlights that merely adopting transformational leadership rhetoric is insufficient; the style must be comprehensively practiced across all four core dimensions to alter organizational outcomes effectively (Abu-Rumman, 2021). Furthermore, these leadership dynamics are not confined solely to central university executive boards or department chairs (Lo et al., 2020). Transformational leadership practices are equally essential across specialized academic support infrastructures, such as global university library systems, where directors must actively utilize transformational strategies to navigate institutional evolutions, manage rapid technological changes, and lead changing digital information spaces (Lo et al., 2020).

3. Perceptual Discrepancies and Subordinate Demographics

A major focus in current academic leadership literature is the presence of significant demographic and generational gaps regarding how transformational leadership is perceived by subordinate faculty members (Baba et al., 2019). Empirical assessments indicate that a faculty member's gender and age significantly influence their evaluation of an academic leader's transformational capacity (Baba et al., 2019). Male faculty members, for example, have reported statistically higher levels of satisfaction with the transformational leadership capabilities of their department heads compared to their female colleagues, exposing a clear gender discrepancy in how these leadership behaviors are experienced or

received within university faculties (Baba et al., 2019).

In addition to gender, a distinct generational divide influences how transformational leadership is viewed within higher education (Baba et al., 2019). Younger academic staff members falling within the 25–35 age cohort perceive significantly higher, more favorable levels of transformational leadership from their institutional managers (Baba et al., 2019). In stark contrast, mid-career faculty members within the 35–45 age bracket exhibit profound disillusionment, reporting much lower perceptions of leadership efficacy and demonstrating a higher vulnerability to institutional stagnation and burnout (Baba et al., 2019). These findings demonstrate that transformational leadership efforts do not land uniformly across a university's staff, emphasizing that academic leaders must purposefully adapt their transformational behaviors to address the distinct needs of different demographic and career cohorts (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this review article is grounded in the core principles of Transformational Leadership Theory, conceptualized as a multi-dimensional behavioral paradigm that is explicitly optimized for complex, knowledge-driven environments (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). When this theoretical lens is applied to the organizational architecture of higher education institutions (HEIs), it posits that traditional, transactional administrative systems—which rely on rigid hierarchical control, routine compliance, and standard bureaucratic management—are structurally inadequate for navigating modern macro-environmental shocks (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). Instead, the framework establishes that institutional agility, resilience, and survival depend heavily on an academic leader's active capability to execute four distinct, yet highly interdependent behavioral dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Abu-Rumman, 2021).

The first dimension, idealized influence, provides the essential ethical and moral anchor for the entire leadership framework (Abu-Rumman,

2021). Within higher education settings, this dimension requires executive administrators, deans, and department heads to operate as charismatic role models who exhibit high levels of personal integrity and unwavering moral standards, thereby earning the deep trust, respect, and institutional loyalty of their faculty members (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). By actively embodying these core values, leaders displaying idealized influence can effectively align the individual goals of autonomous academic professionals with the broader strategic objectives of the university (Abu-Rumman, 2021).

The second dimension, inspirational motivation, focuses on the strategic formulation and clear articulation of a compelling, forward-looking future vision (Abu-Rumman, 2021). In an academic setting, this requires leaders to communicate optimistic, shared goals that challenge faculty and researchers to look beyond individual research metrics, administrative burdens, or isolated departmental silos toward collective institutional achievement (Abu-Rumman, 2021). This shared vision creates a unifying sense of purpose that is vital for maintaining faculty morale amidst shifting funding models, rapid marketization, and rising global ranking competitions (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019).

The third dimension, intellectual stimulation, serves as the primary engine for organizational creativity, agility, and pedagogical innovation within the university (Abu-Rumman, 2021). Under this framework, transformational academic leaders intentionally challenge long-standing institutional assumptions and question outdated administrative paradigms (Abu-Rumman, 2021). By actively encouraging faculty, researchers, and staff to look at old operational problems from fresh perspectives and safely experiment with non-traditional methodologies without fear of administrative penalty, intellectually stimulating leaders foster an adaptive environment capable of keeping pace with rapid technological advancements (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019).

The fourth dimension, individualized consideration, addresses the distinct psychological, emotional, and professional needs of university personnel (Abu-Rumman, 2021). Academic leaders operationalize this dimension by acting as

mentors and coaches, treating each faculty member as a unique individual with separate career trajectories rather than a mere administrative metric (Abu-Rumman, 2021). By providing targeted professional development, continuous technical training, and empathetic career support, leaders directly mitigate the systemic faculty burnout and organizational stagnation that frequently plague modern higher education systems (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019).

Crucially, this theoretical framework recognizes that the execution and reception of these transformational behaviors do not occur in a vacuum; they are heavily influenced by institutional realities and the demographic characteristics of the subordinates being led (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). The theory accounts for institutional variances, noting that some universities may superficially apply inspirational motivation or charisma while completely failing to execute the deep structural empowerment required across all four core dimensions (Abu-Rumman, 2021). Furthermore, the framework integrates perceptual discrepancies based on subordinate demographics, acknowledging that a faculty member's gender and age significantly alter how transformational leadership efforts are experienced, interpreted, and evaluated within university faculties (Baba et al., 2019). By synthesizing these core behavioral dimensions with regional, systemic, and demographic variations, this theoretical framework provides a holistic, evidence-based lens to analyze leadership efficacy across central administrations, diverse faculty cohorts, and specialized spaces like global academic libraries (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019; Lo et al., 2020).

Methodology

This study utilizes a systematic review and thematic synthesis methodology to evaluate the operationalization, challenges, and nuances of transformational leadership within higher education institutions. By critically analyzing existing empirical datasets, this review maps out the structural and demographic factors that influence how transformational leadership lands across university campuses.

The methodology relies on a comparative analytical framework that synthesizes data from

multiple distinct higher education environments:

- **Institutional Dataset A (Disruptive Academic Environments):** This empirical subset evaluates 186 completed questionnaire responses collected from diverse academic staff—including lecturers, administrators, managers, and researchers—across three prominent universities in Jordan. The data provides a quantitative look at the structural implementation variances of transformational leadership dimensions and their direct causal link to institutional performance.
- **Institutional Dataset B (Subordinate Faculty Appraisals):** This empirical subset comprises 205 full-time faculty professors and instructors across 10 prominent universities in North India. The data utilizes faculty perceptions to measure the specific operational success of Heads of Departments (HODs) executing transformational behaviors, while filtering these ratings across explicit demographic and generational cohorts.
- **Infrastructural Case Studies:** To ensure systemic breath, the methodology integrates structural metadata and operational contexts from leading global academic libraries. This allows the review to observe how transformational leadership scales within specialized information spaces undergoing rapid digital disruption.

To conduct the synthesis, the literature was analyzed through open and axial coding based on the four primary dimensions of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Data was systematically extracted regarding institutional implementation gaps and subordinate demographic variances.

Perceptual discrepancies were cross-examined by filtering faculty feedback across gender lines and distinct age cohorts—specifically contrasting the 25–35 age bracket against the 35–45 age bracket. Finally, institutional execution was

mapped to evaluate whether universities deeply embedded structural support or merely relied on superficial charisma, ensuring a highly grounded, multi-perspectival thematic review.

Key Findings from the Literature

1. Institutional Heterogeneity and Operational Gaps

The empirical literature demonstrates that the successful execution of transformational leadership within higher education institutions (HEIs) is highly dependent on institutional adaptation and is not executed uniformly across different academic campuses (Abu-Rumman, 2021). A primary finding indicates that major institutional implementation gaps exist across higher education systems, with some universities struggling significantly because they rely too superficially or heavily on isolated leadership dimensions like inspirational motivation or pure charisma (Abu-Rumman, 2021). This reliance on superficial traits creates an organizational environment where leadership rhetoric outpaces actual faculty development (Abu-Rumman, 2021).

Conversely, more successful institutions are able to deeply embed a broader, more balanced spectrum of transformational behaviors, moving past surface-level motivation to focus on deep employee empowerment and structural execution (Abu-Rumman, 2021). This operational divergence emphasizes that for transformational leadership to effectively alter university dynamics, institutions cannot treat it as an abstract or occasional administrative style but must comprehensively practice all four core behavioral dimensions (Abu-Rumman, 2021). When universities fail to balance these dimensions, it leads to fragmented governance where faculty members feel inspired by a vision but remain fundamentally unequipped with the tangible tools or structural support required to execute it (Abu-Rumman, 2021).

Furthermore, the literature reveals that institutional context dictates how transformational leadership styles are operationalized to survive macro-environmental pressures (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). In highly disruptive academic environments characterized by globalization and hyper-competitive funding landscapes, the lack of a uniform transformational approach directly hinders an institution's ability to

optimize its internal resources (Abu-Rumman, 2021). The empirical tracking of different university structures shows that when an institution fails to integrate the critical dimension of empowerment, its administrative performance lags significantly behind peer institutions that actively distribute authority and foster autonomy among their teaching and research staff (Abu-Rumman, 2021). This underscores that the structural layout of a university must be purposefully aligned with transformational practices, ensuring that deans and department chairs are not just given administrative authority, but are actively trained to foster decentralized, participatory environments that encourage institutional agility (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019).

2. Scaling Transformational Leadership Across Academic Infrastructure

Beyond general university administration and central executive boards, the literature demonstrates that transformational leadership practices are vital for guiding specialized academic support infrastructures through rapid organizational evolutions (Lo et al., 2020). Specifically, empirical evidence from the world's leading academic libraries highlights that library directors must actively utilize transformational leadership strategies to navigate severe technological disruptions and changing digital information spaces (Lo et al., 2020). These findings confirm that the operational necessity of transformational leadership scales across the entire university infrastructure, serving as a critical mechanism for driving innovation and managing digital preservation challenges in specialized academic spaces (Lo et al., 2020). Academic libraries, much like the broader university ecosystem, have shifted from traditional, static physical repositories into dynamic digital information hubs, requiring a type of leadership that promotes intellectual stimulation and forward-looking vision among information professionals (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Lo et al., 2020).

This infrastructural scalability indicates that the core concepts of transformational leadership—idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration—are highly transferable across diverse departments within an HEI (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Lo et al., 2020). When library directors and information managers adopt these transformative

behaviors, they enhance the institution's overall capacity to manage rapid knowledge-access shifts and competitive digital landscapes (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Lo et al., 2020). The literature stresses that treating support infrastructures like libraries as isolated, purely transactional service units undermines the university's collective agility (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Lo et al., 2020). Instead, integrating these specialized sectors into the institution-wide transformational agenda allows universities to cultivate a more unified organizational climate capable of sustaining long-term innovation and maintaining global prestige (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Lo et al., 2020).

3. Gendered Perceptions of Leadership Efficacy

A major finding in the current literature centers on the presence of significant demographic and generational gaps regarding how transformational leadership efforts are perceived and evaluated by subordinate faculty members (Baba et al., 2019). The data demonstrates a clear gender discrepancy within university faculties, as male faculty members report statistically higher levels of satisfaction with the transformational leadership capabilities of their department heads compared to their female colleagues (Baba et al., 2019). This indicates that the exact same leadership behaviors are experienced or received differently across gender lines, exposing systemic underlying disparities in how leadership efforts land within the academic workspace (Baba et al., 2019). This gender-based perceptual gap suggests that current academic leadership frameworks may unintentionally overlook the unique professional experiences, structural barriers, or communication expectations of female faculty members (Baba et al., 2019).

The presence of these gendered discrepancies underscores that transformational leadership cannot be practiced as a gender-neutral or uniform set of behaviors within higher education (Baba et al., 2019). Because female faculty members systematically report lower satisfaction with their managers' transformational efficacy, academic administrators must actively look into whether institutional communication styles, resource allocation methods, or performance evaluation systems contain implicit gender biases (Baba et al., 2019). The literature implies that a leader's idealized influence or

individualized consideration may feel disconnected or insincere if it does not purposefully address the distinct professional challenges and administrative burdens frequently faced by female scholars in heavily stratified academic environments (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019).

4. The Generational Divide and Mid-Career Disillusionment

In addition to gender, the literature exposes a distinct generational and career-stage divide that heavily influences faculty perceptions of leadership efficacy within higher education institutions (Baba et al., 2019). Younger academic staff members falling within the 25–35 age cohort perceive significantly higher, more favorable levels of transformational leadership from their institutional managers (Baba et al., 2019). This favorable view among early-career faculty is often driven by initial career optimism, a higher openness to innovative pedagogical practices, and a greater reliance on the direct mentoring and individual consideration provided by their department chairs (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). Younger scholars frequently respond positively to transformational visions, as they look for structured guidance and institutional alignment early in their academic careers (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019).

In stark contrast, mid-career faculty members within the 35–45 age bracket exhibit profound disillusionment, reporting much lower perceptions of leadership success and demonstrating a much higher vulnerability to institutional stagnation and burnout (Baba et al., 2019). This mid-career cohort often feels caught between routine administrative demands, research pressures, and a perceived lack of genuine individualized consideration or professional support from their direct managers (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). The literature highlights that while early-career faculty are energized by inspirational motivation, mid-career faculty require deeper structural empowerment, authentic intellectual stimulation, and active inclusion in departmental governance to remain engaged (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). When leaders fail to adapt their style to this specific age cohort, it results in widespread faculty burnout and a severe decline in institutional morale (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019).

5. Moving Beyond Academic Seniority in Leadership Selection

Together, these demographic and institutional insights prove that transformational leadership cannot be applied as a rigid, one-size-fits-all model; academic leaders must purposefully adapt their transformational behaviors to address the distinct needs, expectations, and career stages of different faculty cohorts (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). The empirical evidence challenges the long-standing academic tradition of appointing heads of departments, deans, and vice-chancellors based purely on their research records, publication counts, or senior academic tenure (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). The literature establishes that excellent research output does not automatically translate into the psychological, emotional, or structural competencies required to effectively lead diverse faculty teams through institutional crises (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019).

Consequently, a critical finding from the literature is the urgent need to overhaul leadership vetting and selection metrics within higher education institutions (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). Universities must begin evaluating candidates based on their proven capacity for emotional stability, relationship management, ethical value systems, and transformative behaviors (Baba et al., 2019). By prioritizing these transformational leadership competencies alongside traditional academic metrics, HEIs can better equip their administrative teams to foster actual capability growth, build equitable departmental climates, and successfully guide their universities through an increasingly volatile global educational marketplace (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019).

Implications and Future Research Agenda

The empirical synthesis of transformational leadership within higher education institutions yields critical practical implications for university administrators, human resource departments, and executive search committees. First, the data directly challenges the traditional academic norm of appointing deans, heads of departments (HODs), and library directors based purely on research tenure, publication counts, or chronological seniority (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). Higher education institutions

must overhaul their leadership vetting protocols to explicitly measure candidates' behavioral capacities across the four core dimensions of transformational leadership (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). By prioritizing competencies like relationship management, ethical value orientation, and emotional stability alongside standard scholarly achievements, universities can ensure that selected leaders are psychologically equipped to guide faculty through structural shifts (Baba et al., 2019).

Second, universities must move past superficial leadership styles that rely heavily on charisma or inspirational motivation without providing actual structural support (Abu-Rumman, 2021). Institutional policies must be adjusted to build deep structural empowerment by decentralizing decision-making, setting up clear mentoring channels, and distributing tangible resources to faculty members (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). This balanced approach is especially critical for specialized academic environments like university libraries, where leaders must be supported with the resources and training necessary to drive institutional agility during digital disruptions (Lo et al., 2020). Furthermore, because leadership efforts do not land uniformly across a university's staff, administrators must design targeted retention and engagement strategies that specifically focus on the unique professional needs and systemic burnout common among female and mid-career faculty cohorts (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019).

While existing studies provide valuable data on the dimensions and outcomes of transformational leadership, several empirical gaps remain that require future academic research:

- **Longitudinal Research Designs:** Current literature is heavily reliant on cross-sectional survey data, which limits the ability to make firm causal claims (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). Future studies should utilize longitudinal tracking methods to observe how long-term exposure to transformational leadership behaviors affects faculty turnover rates, research output, and institutional agility over several years.

- **Mixed-Method and Qualitative Inquiries:** Existing frameworks are largely built on quantitative surveys, which can obscure the underlying reasons behind perceptual gaps (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). Incorporating qualitative approaches, such as semi-structured interviews or institutional focus groups, would provide deeper insight into *why* mid-career and female faculty experience significantly higher levels of disillusionment regarding their leaders' behaviors (Baba et al., 2019).
- **Cross-Cultural and Regional Comparative Studies:** The underlying data is drawn from specific regional pockets, such as higher education institutions in Jordan and Northern India (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). Future research should expand to cross-cultural and international comparative analyses to evaluate how varying geographic, socio-political, and institutional funding models alter the execution and perception of transformational leadership in academia.
- **Objective Multi-Rater Appraisals:** Current findings frequently rely on self-reported questionnaires or direct subordinate ratings, which are vulnerable to subjective bias or response distortions (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). Future empirical investigations should implement multi-rater (360-degree) appraisal designs that combine self-assessments from leaders, peer evaluations, subordinate faculty reviews, and objective university performance metrics to build a highly rigorous, well-rounded model of leadership efficacy.

Conclusion

The comprehensive analysis of the empirical literature demonstrates that transformational leadership has evolved from a theoretical corporate mechanism into a foundational prerequisite for the operational agility, resilience, and survival of modern higher

education institutions (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). Traditional academic administrative architectures—characterized by transactional management and the historical habit of appointing deans, library directors, and department heads based purely on research tenure or seniority—are structurally ill-equipped to navigate today's hyper-competitive and disruptive global educational marketplace (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019; Lo et al., 2020). By shifting the institutional paradigm toward the four core transformational behaviors—idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration—academic institutions can systematically upgrade their human capital assets and build an organizational culture anchored in shared vision and deep psychological safety (Abu-Rumman, 2021).

However, the literature highlights that the structural execution of transformational leadership is highly fragmented and hindered by substantial implementation gaps across university systems (Abu-Rumman, 2021). Too many universities struggle by relying on superficial charisma or motivational rhetoric without embedding the profound structural empowerment, resources, or continuous training necessary to support their personnel (Abu-Rumman, 2021). Furthermore, empirical evidence proves that transformational efforts do not land uniformly across a university's staff, exposing critical demographic and generational gaps (Baba et al., 2019). Female faculty members consistently report distinct disparities and lower satisfaction regarding their leaders' transformational efficacy, while mid-career faculty cohorts (ages 35–45) exhibit profound institutional disillusionment and severe vulnerability to academic burnout compared to their younger, more optimistic colleagues (Baba et al., 2019).

Ultimately, navigating these operational frictions requires higher education institutions to look beyond traditional academic metrics when selecting and training their administrative teams (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019). Moving forward, university governance frameworks, human resource policies, and selection committees must purposefully evaluate and cultivate emotional intelligence, relationship management, and value orientation alongside standard publication records (Baba et al., 2019). Only by comprehensively

integrating these behavioral dimensions across central administrations, diverse faculty teams, and specialized support units like global academic libraries can contemporary universities successfully mitigate faculty burnout, maximize their institutional human capital, and thrive in an increasingly volatile academic environment (Abu-Rumman, 2021; Baba et al., 2019; Lo et al., 2020).

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