Transformational Leadership and Employee Commitment to Change: Practitioner Implications for Technology-Enabled Change

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The purpose of this study was to evaluate the relationship between transformational leadership (TL) and employee commitment to change (ECC). The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) measured four TL dimensions—Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration—and the Three-Component Model of Commitment (TCM) measured Affective, Continuance, and Normative Commitment. The sample included 77 members of a change management community of practice in Colorado, Minnesota, and Texas, and all statistics were computed from the revised Survey Response Data v3.xlsx file. Pearson correlations indicated that all four TL dimensions were positively associated with Affective Commitment (r = .26 to .37), that only Individualized Consideration was significantly associated with Continuance Commitment (r = .33), and that Idealized Influence, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration were negatively associated with Normative Commitment (r = −.25 to −.33). In the multiple regression models, the four TL dimensions together significantly explained variance in Affective Commitment (R^2 = .15) and Continuance Commitment (R^2 = .13), and Individualized Consideration was the only significant individual predictor (of Continuance Commitment), whereas the model for Normative Commitment was not significant. The TL dimensions were moderately to strongly intercorrelated, which limits conclusions about their independent effects. These findings suggest that transformational leadership behaviors are most clearly related to Affective Commitment, that Individualized Consideration is also related to Continuance Commitment, and that effects are best interpreted as a related set of behaviors rather than as independent predictors.

Keywords: transformational leadership, employee commitment to change, change adoption

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INTRODUCTION

Change and uncertainty are persistent conditions for organizations of every size. Small and medium enterprises are especially vulnerable during fundamental change because limited resources can constrain management-skill development, external communication, strategic planning, and preparation for major transformation (Winch & McDonald, 1999). These pressures increasingly include technological change, such as artificial intelligence and automation, which can alter job tasks and skill requirements. Organizations must keep pace with evolving market needs, yet barriers such as lack of buy-in and fear of the unknown commonly impede the changes required to do so (Chesson, 2020). How leaders behave during such change may influence how employees come to commit to it.

Problem and Purpose

In this study, the researchers examined employee commitment to organizational change and, more specifically, how transformational leadership behaviors relate to Affective, Continuance, and Normative Commitment. Employee commitment to change increases when employees perceive change management as effective and when leadership behaviors align with the organizational context, including execution-oriented competencies in business settings and strategic or social competencies in academic settings (Hechanova et al., 2018). The purpose of the research was to examine the relationship between transformational leadership and employee commitment to change and to identify leadership attributes associated with commitment. Participants evaluated managers leading change initiatives in general, and technology adoption was not measured, so any connection to technology-enabled change is interpretive context drawn from prior research rather than a tested finding.

This study addresses a practical gap for change practitioners: it is not clear which transformational leadership behaviors are associated with which forms of employee commitment to change, and whether those behaviors can be distinguished from one another in practice. The study contributes correlational and regression evidence from 77 members of a change management community of practice that relates each of the four transformational leadership dimensions to Affective, Continuance, and Normative Commitment. It also shows how strongly the dimensions overlap, which cautions practitioners against treating them as separate levers.

Transformational Leadership Theory and Change Theory

Transformational leadership (TL) provides the theoretical foundation for this study. Transformational leaders set clear goals, model ethical behavior, encourage employees to prioritize collective success, and stimulate learning and innovation (Northouse, 2018). The framework includes four dimensions: Idealized Influence (II), Inspirational

Motivation (IM), Intellectual Stimulation (IS), and Individualized Consideration (IC). In AI-enhanced workplaces, transformational leadership may also strengthen the relationship between AI adoption and employee creativity by supporting creative self-efficacy and experimentation (Jeong & Jeong, 2025).

Idealized Influence

Idealized Influence (II) reflects a leader's ability to build trust, model ethical behavior, and inspire confidence. Ethical change management emphasizes that leaders must integrate organizational values, stakeholder accountability, and ethical conduct into the change process so change is both effective and responsible (Payne et al., 2023). By cultivating trust, these leaders encourage employees to align with the organization's mission and vision (Northouse, 2018).

Inspirational Motivation

Inspirational Motivation (IM) is characterized by a leader's ability to motivate and inspire employees, model commitment, and encourage employees to pursue a shared purpose or goal (Bass & Riggio, 2006). During organizational change, inspirational leaders help employees understand why the change matters and how their contributions support successful implementation (Northouse, 2018).

Intellectual Stimulation

Intellectual Stimulation (IS) reflects a leader's ability to encourage critical thinking, creativity, and problem solving. These behaviors are particularly relevant during technology-enabled change because employees often need opportunities to question processes, evaluate risks, and contribute practical improvements.

Individualized Consideration

Individualized Consideration (IC) refers to a leader's ability to mentor, support, and develop employees based on their unique needs and potential. In change contexts, employees' affective commitment is shaped by perceptions of effective change management and by leadership behaviors that fit the organization's culture and stakeholder expectations (Hechanova et al., 2018). This style enhances employee engagement, commitment, and retention, as employees feel valued and supported in their professional development (Northouse, 2018).

Change Theory

Lewin's three-stage change model—unfreezing, changing, and refreezing—offers a clear structure for understanding how organizations prepare for, implement, and sustain change (Lewin, 1958). In this manuscript, the model is interpreted through a contemporary, values-based lens that integrates ethical leadership, stakeholder accountability, cultural alignment, and continuous learning throughout the change process (Payne et al., 2023). Each stage also aligns with a transformational leadership dimension that can support employee commitment during implementation.

Unfreeze Phase and Inspirational Motivation

The early stage of change disrupts the status quo and prepares employees for transition by clarifying the purpose of change, surfacing readiness gaps, and improving perceptions of change management effectiveness (Hechanova et al., 2018; Lewin, 1958). This phase requires Inspirational Motivation, as leaders must articulate a compelling vision and instill enthusiasm for change (Northouse, 2018). By effectively communicating the need for transformation, leaders create urgency and alignment around organizational goals.

Change Phase and Intellectual Stimulation

The change phase involves implementing new behaviors and securing employee buy-in through structured communication and engagement strategies (Anderson & Anderson, 2010; Lewin, 1958). In this framework, Intellectual Stimulation aligns with this phase because it encourages employees to challenge existing norms, think critically, and actively contribute to innovation. This phase depends on leadership that fosters a learning culture and empowers employees to embrace new approaches.

Freeze Phase and Individualized Consideration

Sustainment requires embedding new behaviors into organizational routines through training, communication, monitoring, and reinforcement mechanisms that build confidence and reduce implementation errors (Lewin, 1958). This phase aligns with Individualized Consideration, as transformational leaders support employees through mentorship, personalized guidance, and continuous development. By tailoring support to employees' context and readiness, leaders can strengthen affective commitment and help employees sustain changed behavior over time (Hechanova et al., 2018).

Employee Commitment to Change

Employee commitment to change (ECC) is an employee's psychological attachment to a specific organizational change. The Three-Component Model of Commitment (TCM) distinguishes three forms of ECC:

- **Affective Commitment** – Employees embrace change because they personally support and value it (Ouedraogo & Ouakouak, 2018; Parish et al., 2008).
- **Continuance Commitment** – Employees support change because they recognize the costs associated with not supporting it (Parish et al., 2008).
- **Normative Commitment** – Employees commit to change because they feel a sense of duty or expectation (Parish et al., 2008).

This study examines how these dimensions of commitment interact with transformational leadership attributes to influence organizational change outcomes. By integrating Change Theory with Transformational Leadership, this study explores how leaders can effectively guide employees through organizational transitions while fostering long-term commitment to change.

Research Question and Hypotheses

This study aimed to answer the primary research question: What is the relationship between transformational leadership (TL) and employee commitment to change (ECC)? To address this question, twelve hypotheses were tested, examining the relationships between the four transformational leadership subscales and the three subscales of employee commitment to change. The hypotheses are organized by TL subscale and presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Research Hypotheses Categorized by Transformational Leadership Attribute

Idealized Influence
H1: Idealized Influence is significantly related to Affective Commitment.
H2: Idealized Influence is significantly related to Continuance Commitment.
H3: Idealized Influence is significantly related to Normative Commitment.
Inspirational Motivation
H4: Inspirational Motivation is significantly related to Affective Commitment.
H5: Inspirational Motivation is significantly related to Continuance Commitment.
H6: Inspirational Motivation is significantly related to Normative Commitment.
Intellectual Stimulation
H7: Intellectual Stimulation is significantly related to Affective Commitment.
H8: Intellectual Stimulation is significantly related to Continuance Commitment.
H9: Intellectual Stimulation is significantly related to Normative Commitment.
Individualized Consideration
H10: Individualized Consideration is significantly related to Affective Commitment.
H11: Individualized Consideration is significantly related to Continuance Commitment.
H12: Individualized Consideration is significantly related to Normative Commitment.

METHOD AND DESIGN

A quantitative correlational research method with multiple linear regression was selected for this study. According to Creswell (2014), quantitative research was most appropriate as it allows for the measurement of variables, testing of hypotheses, and statistical analysis of relationships between constructs. This method enables the objective

evaluation of the extent and distribution of transformational leadership and employee commitment to change.

A correlational design was chosen to examine the relationships between leadership attributes and commitment levels, allowing for insights into how variables change together. Additionally, this design provided a focused analysis within the target organization, ensuring concrete, data-driven results. By employing multiple linear regression, the study was able to identify predictive relationships between transformational leadership attributes and employee commitment to change, offering valuable implications for organizational leaders and change practitioners.

Participants

A total of 90 employees received a recruitment email, and the analytic sample included 77 responses, which met the required power analysis threshold of 72 participants. All statistics were recomputed from the revised item-level file, Survey Response Data v3.xlsx, in which the previously missing item responses and the out-of-range response were corrected. The v3 file contains a complete set of item responses for all 77 respondents, every MLQ item falls within the 0–4 response range, and every commitment item falls within the 1–5 range, so the analytic sample was $n = 77$ for every scale and every analysis. Because only limited demographic information was collected to protect respondent confidentiality, demographic counts should be interpreted descriptively rather than as mutually exclusive analytic categories. Respondents were over the age of 18 and employed in the change management community of practice at the subject organization in Colorado, Texas, and Minnesota. The community of practice included employees involved in software implementation and process improvement initiatives, including enterprise integration consultants, business integration consultants, and business operations superusers. Respondents evaluated the transformational leadership characteristics of managers leading change initiatives rather than their direct supervisors.

Data Source and Corrections

While the original Survey Response Data file upload and analysis process was being reviewed, three problems were identified: the initial data upload was incomplete, the incomplete data were recoded incorrectly, and the correlations were run after recoding while the regressions were run before recoding. Together, these problems produced the statistical inconsistencies between the earlier correlation and regression results. Survey Response Data v3.xlsx corrects these problems. It contains the complete item-level responses for all 77 respondents, the previously missing item responses were completed, the one out-of-range Intellectual Stimulation response was corrected, and recoding was applied once to the corrected data. All correlations, reliabilities, and regression models were

then rerun from this single file, so the tables and text are based on the same data and coding.

Instrumentation

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ)

The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ; Avolio & Bass, 2004) was used to measure the transformational leadership behaviors of the managers whom respondents evaluated. The MLQ subscales align with the study's focus on leadership behaviors that influence employee commitment to change, such as visioning, empowerment, communication, trust building, intellectual stimulation, and individualized support (Avolio & Bass, 2004; Hechanova et al., 2018). The MLQ is scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (Not at all) to 4 (Frequently, if not always). For the purposes of this study, the focus was on the transformational leadership subscales, which include:

- Idealized Influence (II) – Measures the degree to which a leader instills pride, respect, and trust in followers (Avolio & Bass, 2004).
- Inspirational Motivation (IM) – Assesses the extent to which a leader articulates a compelling vision and inspires enthusiasm.
- Intellectual Stimulation (IS) – Captures how a leader challenges followers to think critically and approach problems innovatively.
- Individualized Consideration (IC) – Evaluates the leader's ability to recognize and support the unique needs and development of each follower (Avolio & Bass, 2004).

Each subscale score is derived from the mean of its corresponding items, with higher scores indicating greater engagement in that leadership behavior. In Survey Response Data v3.xlsx, the one Intellectual Stimulation response that had fallen outside the 0–4 response range in the earlier file (a value of 5 for one respondent) was corrected, so all MLQ item responses fall within the 0–4 range. Internal consistency for the MLQ subscales in the current study was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Idealized Influence was scored using four items (MLQ items 10, 18, 21, and 25). The reliability coefficients were as follows: Idealized Influence ($\alpha = .62$), Inspirational Motivation ($\alpha = .79$), Intellectual Stimulation ($\alpha = .71$), and Individualized Consideration ($\alpha = .69$). Inspirational Motivation exceeded the conventional .70 threshold and Intellectual Stimulation met it, whereas Individualized Consideration fell marginally below it and Idealized Influence fell clearly below it. Reliability for these four-item subscales is therefore acceptable to modest, and measurement error may

have attenuated the observed correlations for Idealized Influence and Individualized Consideration in particular.

Commitment to Change Scales and Reliability

The TCM comprised 18 items, six each for the Affective, Continuance, and Normative Commitment scales. Items were rated on a 5-point agreement scale anchored at 1 (Disagree) and 5 (Agree), and each scale score was the mean of its six items, with higher scores indicating stronger commitment of that type. Affective Commitment items 3–5 and Normative Commitment item 1 are reverse-keyed items, but they had already been reverse-coded in the original data export; therefore, no additional reverse scoring was applied, and all items were scored as recorded. All 18 items were complete for all 77 respondents in Survey Response Data v3.xlsx, so no imputation or exclusion of cases was needed. Cronbach's alpha was .91 for Affective Commitment, .97 for Continuance Commitment, and .98 for Normative Commitment ($n = 77$), indicating high internal consistency for all three scales. However, the very high coefficients for Continuance and Normative Commitment ($\alpha = .97$ and .98) may indicate item redundancy rather than additional reliability, so these scales may contain items that are nearly interchangeable.

Data Collection and Analysis

The MLQ and the TCM were used for data collection, and all analyses were rerun on the revised Survey Response Data v3.xlsx file. Data analysis included Pearson correlation, Cronbach's alpha, and multiple linear regression. The four subscales of the predictor variable, transformational leadership, were measured against the three subscales of the criterion variable, employee commitment to change. Pearson correlation results are presented in Table 2, and regression results are presented in Table 3. Cronbach's alpha results are summarized in the Instrumentation section. Because Survey Response Data v3.xlsx contains complete data for all 77 respondents, the correlations and regression models all used the full sample (N = 77).

FINDINGS

Statistics in this section were recomputed from Survey Response Data v3.xlsx (N = 77). Pearson correlation analysis (Table 2) indicated that Idealized Influence ($r = .37$, $p < .001$), Inspirational Motivation ($r = .26$, $p = .023$), Intellectual Stimulation ($r = .26$, $p = .024$), and Individualized Consideration ($r = .33$, $p = .004$) were all significantly and positively related to Affective Commitment. Only Individualized Consideration was significantly related to Continuance Commitment ($r = .33$, $p = .004$); the relationships for Idealized Influence ($r = .16$, $p = .172$), Inspirational Motivation ($r = .21$, $p = .062$), and Intellectual Stimulation ($r = .21$, $p = .063$) were not significant. Idealized Influence ($r = -.33$, $p = .004$), Intellectual Stimulation ($r = -.29$, $p = .011$), and Individualized Consideration ($r = -.25$, $p = .028$) were significantly and negatively related

to Normative Commitment, whereas Inspirational Motivation was not (r = −.19, p = .103). Eight of the twelve hypotheses were supported (H1, H3, H4, H7, H9, H10, H11, and H12); H2, H5, H6, and H8 were not supported. The four transformational leadership dimensions were moderately to strongly intercorrelated (r = .47 to .70).

The multiple linear regression models (Table 3) provided a more limited pattern. The Affective Commitment model was significant overall, $F(4, 72) = 3.16$, p = .019, R^2 = .15, but no individual predictor was significant (all $p > .12$). The Continuance Commitment model was also significant, $F(4, 72) = 2.70$, p = .037, R^2 = .13, and Individualized Consideration was its only significant predictor (B = 0.50, 95% CI [0.06, 0.94], β = .35, p = .025). The Normative Commitment model was not significant, $F(4, 72) = 2.37$, p = .061, R^2 = .12, and none of its predictors was significant (all $p > .18$). These results distinguish the zero-order Pearson correlations in Table 2 from the adjusted regression effects in Table 3. Because the four leadership dimensions were moderately to strongly intercorrelated, the regression models could not fully isolate the independent contribution of the other dimensions. Normative Commitment was also strongly and negatively correlated with Affective Commitment (r = −.72), which is theoretically unexpected.

Collinearity diagnostics are reported in Table 3. Tolerance values ranged from .33 to .53 and variance inflation factors (VIFs) from 1.87 to 3.06. Idealized Influence showed the greatest collinearity (tolerance = .33, VIF = 3.06 in all three models), whereas no VIF approached the conventional cutoff of 10. These values indicate low to moderate collinearity, even though the leadership dimensions were substantially intercorrelated. All 95% confidence intervals for B in the Affective and Normative models included zero, and in the Continuance model only the interval for Individualized Consideration excluded zero (0.06 to 0.94). Standardized coefficients were small to moderate (|β| = .01 to .35), with the largest for Individualized Consideration in the Continuance model (β = .35).

The pattern of correlations among the commitment scales raises a question about discriminant validity. Affective and Continuance Commitment were modestly related (r = .31), and Normative and Continuance Commitment were weakly related (r = −.29), which is consistent with scales that capture distinct constructs. Normative and Affective Commitment, however, shared roughly half of their variance (r = −.72; r^2 = .52), and the correlation corrected for unreliability remained strong (−.76, based on α = .91 and .98). Because the relationship is strong and negative rather than positive, as the Three-Component Model would typically lead one to expect, the Normative Commitment scale may not be functioning independently of Affective Commitment in this sample. Formal tests of discriminant validity, such as average variance extracted

or confirmatory factor analysis, were not conducted, so results for Normative Commitment should be interpreted cautiously.

Table 2

Pearson Correlations Among Transformational Leadership and Employee Commitment to Change Variables

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. II	2.17	0.80	—						
2. IM	2.60	0.85	.67***	—					
3. IS	2.22	0.79	.70***	.47***	—				
4. IC	2.03	0.88	.67***	.55***	.58***	—			
5. AC	2.55	1.01	.37***	.26*	.26*	.33**	—		
6. CC	3.14	1.24	.16	.21	.21	.33**	.31**	—	
7. NC	2.63	1.17	−.33**	−.19	−.29*	−.25*	−.72***	−.29*	—

Note. $N = 77$ for all variables. Statistics were computed from Survey Response Data v3.xlsx, in which missing and out-of-range item responses were corrected. Leadership scales were scored 0–4 and commitment scales 1–5. Observed ranges of scale scores: Idealized Influence, 0.25–3.75; Inspirational Motivation and Intellectual Stimulation, 0.25–4.00; Individualized Consideration, 0.00–3.50; Affective Commitment, 1.00–5.00; Continuance Commitment, 1.00–5.00; Normative Commitment, 1.17–5.00. II = Idealized Influence; IM = Inspirational Motivation; IS = Intellectual Stimulation; IC = Individualized Consideration; AC = Affective Commitment; CC = Continuance Commitment; NC = Normative Commitment. Lower triangle shown. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 3

Multiple Linear Regression Results for Employee Commitment to Change Outcomes

Predictor	*B*	95% CI	*SE B*	β	*t*	*p*	Tol.	VIF	R^2	Adj. R^2
Affective Commitment									.15	.10
II	0.37	[−0.10, 0.85]	0.24	.30	1.56	.123	.33	3.06		
IM	−0.01	[−0.36, 0.34]	0.18	−.01	−0.06	.952	.53	1.87		
IS	−0.05	[−0.44, 0.35]	0.20	−.04	−0.25	.807	.49	2.05		
IC	0.18	[−0.17, 0.53]	0.18	.16	1.03	.305	.51	1.97		
Continuance Commitment									.13	.08
II	−0.39	[−0.99, 0.20]	0.30	−.25	−1.32	.192	.33	3.06		
IM	0.19	[−0.25, 0.63]	0.22	.13	0.87	.386	.53	1.87		
IS	0.19	[−0.30, 0.69]	0.25	.12	0.78	.435	.49	2.05		
IC	0.50	[0.06, 0.94]	0.22	.35	2.29	.025	.51	1.97		
Normative Commitment									.12	.07
II	−0.38	[−0.94, 0.19]	0.28	−.26	−1.33	.188	.33	3.06		
IM	0.09	[−0.33, 0.50]	0.21	.06	0.41	.682	.53	1.87		
IS	−0.16	[−0.63, 0.30]	0.23	−.11	−0.70	.485	.49	2.05		
IC	−0.06	[−0.48, 0.35]	0.21	−.05	−0.30	.762	.51	1.97		

Note. $N = 77$ for all three models (complete data from Survey Response Data v3.xlsx). B = unstandardized coefficient; CI = confidence interval for B; β = standardized coefficient; Tol. = tolerance; VIF = variance inflation factor; II = Idealized Influence; IM = Inspirational Motivation; IS = Intellectual Stimulation; IC = Individualized Consideration. Model tests: Affective, $F(4, 72) = 3.16$, $p = .019$; Continuance, $F(4, 72) = 2.70$, $p = .037$; Normative, $F(4, 72) = 2.37$, $p = .061$.

DISCUSSION

The study evaluated the relationship between transformational leadership (TL) and employee commitment to change (ECC), as measured by the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) and the Three-Component Model of Commitment (TCM). Twelve hypotheses examined the four TL dimensions—Idealized Influence (II), Inspirational Motivation (IM), Intellectual Stimulation (IS), and Individualized Consideration (IC)—in relation to Affective Commitment (AC), Continuance Commitment (CC), and Normative Commitment (NC). Eight hypotheses were supported at the bivariate level, based on analyses of the revised Survey Response Data v3.xlsx file (N = 77). All four TL dimensions were positively related to AC ($r = .26$ to $.37$); only IC was significantly related to CC ($r = .33$); and II, IS, and IC were negatively related to NC ($r = -.25$ to $-.33$). In the regression models, the four TL dimensions together explained a significant but modest share of the variance in AC ($R^2 = .15$) and CC ($R^2 = .13$), although IC was the only significant independent predictor (of CC) and the model for NC was not significant. Because the four dimensions were moderately to strongly intercorrelated ($r = .47$ to $.70$), the findings are interpreted as evidence about transformational leadership as a related set of behaviors rather than about the unique effect of any single dimension, with the possible exception of the association between Individualized Consideration and Continuance Commitment. The implications therefore focus on communication, participation, critical thinking, ethical credibility, and individualized support, and they are presented cautiously given the correlational design and sample size. Technology-enabled change is discussed throughout as interpretive context drawn from the literature; technology adoption and artificial intelligence–specific outcomes were not measured in this study.

Idealized Influence

Idealized Influence had the strongest positive relationship with Affective Commitment of the four dimensions ($r = .37$). Its relationship with Continuance Commitment was positive but not significant ($r = .16$, $p = .172$), and it had the strongest negative relationship with Normative Commitment ($r = -.33$). In the regression models, Idealized Influence was not a significant independent predictor of any commitment outcome. These results are consistent with the view that leaders who build trust, model ethical conduct, and inspire confidence create conditions in which

employees come to value a change (Northouse, 2018; Payne et al., 2023). Because Idealized Influence overlapped substantially with the other dimensions (r = .67 to .70 with Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration), it is best interpreted as part of a broader pattern of transformational leadership behavior.

Inspirational Motivation

Inspirational Motivation was positively related to Affective Commitment (r = .26), but its relationships with Continuance Commitment (r = .21, p = .062) and Normative Commitment (r = −.19, p = .103) were not significant, and it was not a significant independent predictor in any regression model. Taken together, the findings suggest that leaders may strengthen affective commitment when they connect the change to a shared purpose and explain employees' roles in implementation.

For this reason, leaders and practitioners should establish a visible leadership team to champion the change, clarify priorities, and communicate a shared vision across the organization. The team should include stakeholders with authority, credibility, and operational knowledge so that messages are consistent and implementation barriers can be addressed quickly. A shared vision and coherent change strategy can motivate employees to support the change and improve adoption by connecting expectations to organizational purpose and practical value, although the present data do not show that inspirational communication acts independently of the other leadership behaviors.

Intellectual Stimulation

Intellectual Stimulation had a small positive bivariate relationship with Affective Commitment (r = .26), was not significantly related to Continuance Commitment (r = .21, p = .063), and was negatively related to Normative Commitment (r = −.29). It was not a significant independent predictor in any regression model. Research on AI-enhanced work similarly suggests that transformational leadership can strengthen creativity by supporting self-efficacy and intellectual engagement (Jeong & Jeong, 2025). The Intellectual Stimulation subscale showed acceptable but modest internal consistency in this sample (α = .71), so measurement error may have attenuated its association with Affective Commitment, and the association should be interpreted as part of the broader leadership climate rather than as an isolated predictor of commitment.

Leaders and practitioners should also create structured opportunities for employees to contribute ideas and evaluate implementation barriers. Focus groups, pilot teams, and feedback sessions can help employees feel included in the change process and can identify practical improvements before broader rollout. When employee ideas are visibly considered and credited, employees are more likely to view themselves as contributors to the change rather than passive recipients of it.

Individualized Consideration

Individualized Consideration was positively related to Affective Commitment (r = .33) and was the only dimension significantly related to Continuance Commitment (r = .33). It was also the only dimension that remained a significant independent predictor in a regression model: in the Continuance Commitment model, higher Individualized Consideration was associated with higher commitment (B = 0.50, 95% CI [0.06, 0.94], β = .35, p = .025). It was negatively related to Normative Commitment (r = −.25), but it was not a significant predictor in the Normative Commitment model (B = −0.06, p = .762). Leaders demonstrate Individualized Consideration when they recognize differences in employee readiness, provide role-specific coaching, and tailor support to individual learning needs (Northouse, 2018). During change, these behaviors can help employees interpret new expectations, build confidence, and remain engaged. The Continuance Commitment finding is therefore most appropriately understood as evidence that individualized support is associated with continued commitment within a broader relational context, not as proof of a distinct causal effect.

Leaders and practitioners should communicate the change vision and implementation strategy early, consistently, and through multiple channels. Communication should explain why the change is necessary, how it supports organizational priorities, what employees can expect during implementation, and how concerns and feedback will influence subsequent decisions. Leaders should reinforce key messages through dialogue, progress updates, and opportunities for employee participation rather than relying only on one-way announcements. This sustained communication can reduce ambiguity, strengthen alignment with the goals of the initiative, and facilitate employee engagement and commitment throughout the change process.

Normative Commitment

Idealized Influence (r = −.33), Intellectual Stimulation (r = −.29), and Individualized Consideration (r = −.25) were significantly and negatively related to Normative Commitment, whereas Inspirational Motivation was not (r = −.19). None of the dimensions was a significant independent predictor, and the overall regression model was not significant (p = .061). Normative Commitment was also strongly and negatively related to Affective Commitment (r = −.72) and to Continuance Commitment (r = −.29). This pattern is counterintuitive and should not be read as evidence that transformational leadership reduces felt obligation. Plausible explanations include low morale during a complex technical change, shared variance among the leadership dimensions, and measurement characteristics of the Normative Commitment scale, including the direction in which its items were recorded. Leaders should therefore treat the findings for Affective and Continuance Commitment as the primary

practical guidance, while the Normative Commitment results should be verified and examined in future research.

LIMITATIONS

Limitations were revealed while conducting the research including collecting minimal demographics and addressing respondent confusion about who in leadership to evaluate. Minimal demographics, only gender, location, and role of each respondent, were collected to avoid respondent identification as one of the researchers was a consultant for the target organization. In addition to minimal demographics, there were unanticipated respondent questions or requests for clarification about which leaders they should or should not evaluate. To mitigate, a clarification email was delivered to the population. At the time of this study morale in the target sample was also low due to the complex technical change and this may have contributed to low scores for Normative Commitment survey responses. Measurement and analytic limitations also affect interpretation. The reverse-keyed Affective and Normative items had already been reverse-coded in the original data export and were analyzed as recorded. Missing and out-of-range item responses were corrected in Survey Response Data v3.xlsx, so all analyses used the full sample of 77 respondents; the effect of those corrections on the results was not evaluated separately. The four transformational leadership dimensions were moderately to strongly intercorrelated (r = .47 to .70), which limits the ability of the regression models to separate their independent effects. Normative Commitment was strongly and negatively correlated with Affective Commitment (r = −.72), a theoretically unexpected pattern that warrants verification. Idealized Influence was scored using four items (MLQ items 10, 18, 21, and 25). The four-item MLQ subscales had modest reliability, particularly Idealized Influence (α = .62) and Individualized Consideration (α = .69), which may have attenuated their correlations. Collinearity diagnostics showed low to moderate collinearity among the leadership dimensions (tolerance = .33 to .53; variance inflation factors = 1.87 to 3.06), and influential observations and residual assumptions were not examined in this report. Finally, technology adoption and technology-specific outcomes were not measured; participants rated managers leading change initiatives in general, so discussion of emerging technologies is interpretive context from prior literature rather than evidence.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEADERS AND PRACTITIONERS

Leaders and practitioners can use the findings of this study to strengthen employee commitment to change by emphasizing the transformational leadership behaviors associated with commitment outcomes. All four transformational leadership dimensions were positively related to Affective Commitment (r = .26 to .37), with the strongest relationships for Idealized Influence and Individualized Consideration,

and Individualized Consideration was the only dimension significantly related to Continuance Commitment (r = .33) and the only significant independent predictor in any model (of Continuance Commitment). However, because the dimensions were moderately to strongly intercorrelated and no other dimension was a significant independent predictor, the recommendations treat these behaviors as a related set rather than as separable levers, while giving particular weight to individualized support. Therefore, the recommendations emphasize communicating purpose, creating participation opportunities, encouraging critical evaluation, modeling ethical and credible conduct, and providing role-specific support. The findings for Normative Commitment were negative and unexpected, and they should be verified before any practical conclusions are drawn from them. Because technology adoption was not measured, technology-enabled change is treated here only as an interpretive application context, and the related recommendations are literature-informed suggestions rather than tested findings.

LEAD CHANGE THROUGH PURPOSE, CREDIBILITY, AND COMMITMENT

Leadership for change management should begin with a compelling narrative that connects the change to organizational purpose, employee contribution, and future value. Leaders should consistently explain why the change is necessary, how it supports the organization's mission, what employees can expect during implementation, and how the change will improve work outcomes. This recommendation aligns with the positive relationship between Inspirational Motivation and Affective Commitment (r = .26) and with the relationship of Idealized Influence to Affective Commitment (r = .37), the strongest of the four dimensions, although neither dimension was an independent predictor. Employees are more likely to support change when leaders communicate a credible shared purpose that helps employees want to support the change.

Examples include opening meetings by linking the change to a clear organizational purpose, modeling visible support, and acknowledging employee concerns without minimizing them. Leaders can reinforce credibility by sharing what is known, identifying what remains uncertain, and following through on commitments.

Consider Technology-Enabled Change as an Application Context

Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, automation, analytics platforms, and digital workflow tools often create uncertainty because they can change job tasks, decision processes, skill requirements, and perceptions of job security. Leaders and practitioners should frame technology-enabled change as an opportunity to improve organizational capability while clearly explaining where human judgment, accountability, and employee expertise remain essential. Practical actions include demonstrating how the technology supports work outcomes,

identifying risks and workflow gaps, creating safe opportunities for experimentation, and involving employees in feedback loops before broad implementation. These actions reflect Intellectual Stimulation because they encourage employees to question assumptions, contribute ideas, test alternatives, and participate in problem solving during adoption.

Examples include demonstrating the new tool in realistic work scenarios and inviting employees to recommend improvements before broad implementation so that adoption reflects actual work conditions.

Build Employee Commitment Through Participation and Voice

To increase commitment to change, leaders should move beyond one-way communication and create structured opportunities for employees to influence implementation. Employee forums, pilot groups, listening sessions, and role-based feedback discussions allow employees to express concerns, test ideas, and identify practical barriers. These practices align with Intellectual Stimulation, which was positively related to Affective Commitment (r = .26), because employees are more likely to value a change when they see their experience reflected in the implementation approach. Participation may also help employees understand the skills, processes, and expectations needed to remain effective as the change becomes part of daily work; however, Intellectual Stimulation was not significantly related to Continuance Commitment in this study, so that benefit should be treated as a possibility to test rather than a finding.

Examples include asking employees what would make the change easier to adopt, inviting frontline employees to co-create implementation practices, and publicly crediting ideas that improve the change effort. These behaviors show employees that their knowledge is valued.

Provide Individualized Support During Adoption

Employees do not experience change in the same way, especially when emerging technologies alter job tasks, skill requirements, or confidence in performance. Leaders should identify groups and individuals who need additional coaching, role-specific learning, or peer support. Practical recommendations include assigning change champions, offering hands-on practice sessions, pairing employees with knowledgeable peers, and recognizing incremental progress. These actions reflect Individualized Consideration because they acknowledge differences in readiness, ability, and learning needs while helping employees remain engaged during adoption. This support is aligned with the study's findings because Individualized Consideration was the only dimension significantly related to both Affective Commitment (r = .33) and Continuance Commitment (r = .33) and was the only significant independent predictor of Continuance Commitment, suggesting that individualized coaching may strengthen both employees' willingness to support the change and their ability to continue performing effectively as expectations shift.

Examples include brief one-on-one check-ins, asking employees what support they need to feel confident, and adjusting training to role requirements. These behaviors help leaders respond to differences in readiness.

Sustain Commitment by Reinforcing Progress and Learning

Sustaining change requires leaders to continue reinforcing the behaviors, skills, and commitments that support adoption after the initial implementation period. Leaders and practitioners should monitor employee experience, celebrate progress, address barriers quickly, and connect early wins to the broader purpose of the change. For emerging technologies, sustainment should also include ongoing evaluation of how the technology affects work quality, role clarity, employee confidence, privacy, data use, and customer or stakeholder outcomes. This approach keeps change management focused on employee commitment and practical adoption rather than on documents or plans alone, and it remains consistent with the study's findings that Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration were each positively associated with Affective Commitment and that Individualized Consideration was also associated with Continuance Commitment.

Examples include sharing adoption progress in team meetings, documenting lessons learned, maintaining visible sponsorship, and adjusting expectations when employees identify unintended challenges. Recognizing employees who coach others also helps keep communication, participation, and individualized support active, which aligns with the study findings and with responsible adoption of technology-enabled change.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research should replicate this study with larger and more diverse samples, additional organizational sectors, and longitudinal or repeated-measures designs that can distinguish short-term reactions from sustained commitment. Because the four transformational leadership dimensions were moderately to strongly intercorrelated (r = .47 to .70), larger samples and analytic approaches that handle overlapping predictors, such as relative weights analysis, hierarchical models, or structural equation modeling with a higher-order transformational leadership factor, are needed to determine whether individual dimensions have unique effects. Future studies should also collect broader demographic and organizational variables, including role tenure, managerial level, organization size, change type, and prior change experience, to test whether contextual differences explain variation in Affective, Continuance, and Normative Commitment. Researchers should confirm how reverse-keyed commitment items are coded at export and should verify the direction and scoring of the Normative Commitment scale, given its strong negative

association with Affective Commitment ($r = -.72$) and with the leadership dimensions, and should plan for missing responses in advance. Researchers should also test whether communication quality, trust in leadership, employee participation, change readiness, and creative self-efficacy mediate or moderate the relationship between transformational leadership and commitment. In technology-enabled transformations, comparative studies could evaluate virtual versus in-person leadership development, role-based training, pilot participation, human-in-the-loop governance, and workflow support across different stages of adoption. Finally, future analyses should investigate the negative correlations observed for Normative Commitment and determine whether they reflect morale, multicollinearity, measurement characteristics, organizational context, or a substantive difference between felt obligation and other forms of commitment.

CONCLUSIONS

This study found that Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration were each positively associated with Affective Commitment ($r = .26$ to $.37$), and that Individualized Consideration was the only dimension significantly associated with Continuance Commitment ($r = .33$). Idealized Influence, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration were negatively associated with Normative Commitment ($r = -.25$ to $-.33$). When the four transformational leadership dimensions were examined together, the models for Affective Commitment ($R^2 = .15$) and Continuance Commitment ($R^2 = .13$) were significant, but Individualized Consideration was the only significant individual predictor (of Continuance Commitment), and the model for Normative Commitment was not significant. Because the dimensions were moderately to strongly intercorrelated, these results indicate that employee commitment to change is multidimensional and that bivariate associations should not be interpreted as independent causal effects.

For practice, the findings suggest that transformational change leadership is most clearly related to employees' affective commitment, and that leaders should treat communication of purpose, participation and problem solving, ethical credibility, and individualized support as a related set of behaviors rather than as separable levers. These practices may also be relevant to technology-enabled change, although that application is interpretive. The study does not establish causality, and its sample and measurement limitations constrain generalization. Nevertheless, it provides a starting practitioner framework, while the monitoring of how different forms of commitment develop over time remains important.

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