

## Article

# Charting Success: The Influence of Leadership Styles on Driving Sustainable Employee Performance in the Sierra Leonean Banking Sector

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**Abstract:** Effective leadership sits at the heart of organisational success, especially during periods of change. In the dynamic and highly competitive environment of commercial banks in Sierra Leone, the impact of leadership styles on employee performance is a critical area of investigation. The purpose of this paper is to assess the differential effects of transformational and transactional leadership styles on employee performance during change initiatives within commercial banks in Sierra Leone. The research study utilised a cross-sectional survey design, and data was collected from 903 participants employed in the banking industry. The study used the structural equation model as an investigative instrument to examine the hypotheses. The findings reveal that transformational and transactional leadership styles demonstrate a strong bearing on employee performance, with the latter having a bigger influence. Organisational citizenship behaviour has a mediating effect between leadership styles and employee performance. In contrast, employee commitment does not act as a mediator between transformational leadership and employee performance but does act as a mediator between transactional leadership and employee performance. Commercial banks need to devise training programs that will advance both leadership styles to arouse, energise, or inspire followers to display favourable behaviour and commitment to attain organisational goals. The paper makes an insightful contribution to the existing leadership literature by ascertaining the significance of leadership styles on performance and the role of commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour as mediators of the nexus between leadership styles and performance in the Sierra Leone banking industry.

**Keywords:** leadership styles; employee commitment; organisational citizenship behaviour; employee performance; Sierra Leone



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## 1. Introduction

Organisational leadership has been explored intensively by scholars for a significant amount of time now [1,2], especially with a focus on the banking sector, a domain that is characterised by its dynamism, complexity, and unpredictability [3].

Financial institutions are undergoing changes to adapt to the volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA) world, and to adjust to these changes, they need to create an environment that is conducive to implementing systemic and business-orientated management strategies [4].

Nonetheless, [5] contend that the task of implementing and overseeing successful organisational change has posed difficulties for numerous organisations and state that it takes effective leadership to initiate, manage, and sustain change efficiently, being that it is a complicated and multifaceted process [6,7].

Change management programs encompass several objectives and priorities that align with the overall success of an organisation [8], and leadership sits at the core of organi-

sational change initiatives and plays a key role in ensuring the success of change efforts among employees.

The transformational leadership style (TRF) and transactional leadership style (TRS) are recognised as influential in driving project success, organisational change [9], and employee performance [10]. TRF is characterised by the ability to inspire and motivate individuals to adopt innovation, facilitate change, and attain desired goals for both individuals and the organisation [11], whereas TRS emphasises the interchange of defined duties and rewards, providing an alternative approach to managing the intricate process of organisational transformation [12].

Additionally, effective leaders can motivate their workforce to be committed; go beyond, and contribute to performance that meets or surpasses objectives. Through these behaviours, highly motivated employees will support leaders in mobilising the workforce to achieve their goals [6], thus, dedicated employees are more proficient in completing tasks, enhancing productivity, and demonstrating a strong commitment to achieving their goals [13].

The banking industry has indeed been compelled to evolve due to numerous causes, such as technological advancements, regulatory alterations, and changes in consumer behaviour [14]. In Sierra Leone, even though faced with numerous challenges, commercial banks play a decisive role in the nation's commercial stability and growth [14–16], and thus, financial institutions must develop the capabilities to adapt and navigate change to their advantage. In addition, [14,16] further argues that much attention has not been given to leadership and its effect on employee outcomes within the Sierra Leonean context.

This study addresses a critical gap in the existing literature by exploring the combined effects of leadership styles, organisational citizenship behaviour, and employee commitment on employee performance within the specific context of Sierra Leone's banking sector. Understanding these relationships is crucial for developing strategies that can effectively facilitate sustainable organisational change, especially in developing economies where the banking sector is crucial to economic development.

Moreover, this study will enhance the broader subject of organisational leadership by providing a detailed understanding of how different leadership styles can be adapted to diverse cultural and economic environments.

Furthermore, this study seeks to address a gap in the literature and provide valuable perspectives that can enhance the efficiency of organisational changes in Sierra Leone's banking industry. Beyond the banking sector, this study's broader implications can help us understand the important role of leadership in accomplishing sustainable transformation in many organisational contexts.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Theoretical Framework

#### 2.1.1. Full Range Leadership Theory (FRLT)

Developed in the 1990s by [17], the Full Range Leadership Theory (FRLT) is a holistic paradigm of leadership. The framework is greatly applied to understanding leadership behaviours and their impact on organisational outcomes, including employee commitment, positive work behaviours, job satisfaction, employee performance, and overall effectiveness [18–21]. FRLT explains a continuum of leadership behaviours ranging from passive to active styles, and they are categorised into three main kinds: Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership, and Laissez-faire Leadership [19,22–24].

Several studies have shown that transformational leadership is linked to higher levels of employee outcomes [10,25,26]. Transactional leadership, although it can result in satisfactory results and adherence to established procedures, is often regarded as less effective when compared to transformative leadership [27,28]. However, Laissez-faire leadership is commonly linked to unfavourable consequences and is considered the least effective among the three leadership styles [29–32].

The FRLT suggests that leaders can exhibit behaviours across this continuum, from passive (*laissez-faire*) to more active (transactional and transformational) leadership styles. Therefore, effective leaders are individuals who possess the ability to adapt their approach to leadership based on the specific requirements of the situation and the people they are leading.

### 2.1.2. Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory

According to [33], the LMX theory was first proposed in the 1970s under the label of the Vertical Dyad Linkage (VDL) method. LMX Theory is a social exchange theory that looks at how leaders and staff members interact [34] in an interpersonal and unstructured manner [33,35]. Leaders who show followers different levels of respect and decency through various interactions can, in turn, create varying levels of trust between them [33]. According to [36–38], the LMX theory begins with the proposition that leaders form unique connections with their followers, the strength of which might shape the latter's attitude and actions.

However, in high-quality LMX relationships, both parties hold each other in high esteem and feel a strong sense of responsibility towards one another. In low-quality LMX relationships, the leader and follower are more involved in a transactional relationship, where the relationship is merely based on work for pay [39–42]. Furthermore, studies have proven that LMX has different effects on organisational outcomes such as job satisfaction [43], organisational citizenship behaviours [44], organisational commitment [45], work performance [46], and employee job performance [47].

## 2.2. Empirical Framework

### 2.2.1. Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is a leadership approach that entails encouraging and motivating people to reach their maximum capabilities. First proposed by [12] and enriched by [48], Transformational leadership (TRF) is a distinguished leadership style that has been studied for its impact on organisational outcomes. Transformational leaders inspire their teams with a captivating vision and intellectual progress while considering members' needs [49]. According to [2], TRF occurs when an individual successfully interacts with another, creating a connection that boosts energy and confidence for the leader and the follower and necessitates change at the individual and group levels [6,50]. Transformational leaders express four core features: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration, as suggested by [48].

#### i. Idealised Influence:

According to [51], an idealised leader inspires admiration from their supporters by outlining a strong vision for the organisation's long-term aspirations and acting as an exemplary role model. Leaders with charisma inspire their teams by painting a picture of a prosperous future for their companies through symbolic communication.

#### ii. Inspirational Motivation

Inspirational motivation pertains to a leader who formulates a captivating vision and adeptly communicates it to followers, resulting in mutual benefits for both sides [52]. According to [51], inspirational motivation involves the capacity of leaders to inspire and encourage their staff towards the accomplishment of challenging, yet attainable objectives.

#### iii. Intellectual Stimulation

According to [53], intellectual stimulation occurs when a leader proposes several novel ideas to their followers to spark creative problem-solving within the organisation.

However, by modelling this style of leadership, leaders can influence their followers to reframe challenges and issues in a more positive light [51].

#### iv. Individualised Consideration

Individualised consideration is the ongoing provision of feedback to followers, which connects their current requirements to the mission of the organisation [48,51]. Furthermore, [49] added that the goal of individualised attention is to help followers reach their potential by building on their strengths rather than dwelling on their weaknesses.

#### 2.2.2. Transactional Leadership

A “give and take” type of leadership is what transactional leadership is. People who lead in this way make sure their team members know what is expected of them and reward them when they do. According to [54], Transactional leadership (TRS) motivates followers to complete tasks by instituting a system of rewards and punishments, and the followers are compensated for attaining performance criteria [55]. TRS involves providing contingent reinforcement to employees based on their performance [56], and it inspires followers by appealing to their individual or collective aspirations, employing instrumental economic exchanges [57]. According to [53], TRS is characterised by three crucial dimensions: contingent reward, management-by-exception: active, and management-by-exception: passive.

##### i. Contingent reward

As stated by [25,58], contingent reward is a method that enables leaders to motivate their followers to accomplish a particular objective by providing commensurate rewards to them when they meet specific criteria.

##### ii. Management-by-exception active

The practice of closely monitoring workers to ensure their productivity and compliance with performance objectives is referred to as management-by-exception: active [59]. The leader monitors followers’ actions to guarantee that the rules are strictly followed and to issue corrective actions in the event of deviations.

##### iii. Management-by-exception passive.

According to [58], management-by-exception: passive refers to leaders that allow their followers’ autonomy to do their jobs but step in when concerns arise or performance expectations aren’t being fulfilled. Furthermore, [49] pointed out that a reactive organisational culture in which problems are only addressed when they reach a critical stage is one possible outcome of passive management by exception.

#### 2.2.3. Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)

Although [60] were the pioneers in noticing employees’ extra-role behaviour in the workplace, the term “organisational citizenship behaviour” was first used by [61]. According to [62], it describes actions taken by workers outside of the scope of their normal work responsibilities. However, [63,64], stated that it is the voluntary acts taken by individuals that contribute to the overall efficiency of an organisation, even if these actions are not officially acknowledged or rewarded. However, [64] posited that these behaviours are a requirement for effective modern-day organisations, and regular behaviour alone is not enough for organisations to compete.

Additionally, these behaviours enhance performance and productivity by fostering teamwork and reducing conflict [65], and engaging in them allows employees to develop skills, and enhance capabilities and overall well-being. OCB is classified into five dimensions [62]: Altruism (assisting others): This involves the selfless behaviour of employees, where they show concern for the welfare of others. It is a way of helping others who get into trouble. Conscientiousness (discipline): This is the concern that employees have for the organisation’s policies and procedures, to serve the organisation’s best interests without compromise. Sportsmanship (positive attitude): This involves employees demonstrating behaviours that are mutually supportive and positive to execute tasks and avoid unnecessary complaints. Courtesy (goodness): In this context, it refers to the actions of employees that enable them to avoid conflicts and problems related to their interpersonal

relationships at work. Civic virtue (as an organisation member awareness): This involves encouraging habits that are not obligatory but are deemed significant and enable them to keep well-informed about changes in the working environment of the organisation.

#### 2.2.4. Employee Commitment

Employee commitment (EC) is the extent to which an individual feels a sense of belonging and actively engages in the activities of a particular organisation. Recently, [66], found that individuals who are extremely devoted to an organisation's intentions and willing to work more are more likely to stay.

In addition, ref. [67] views it as the emotional reactions exhibited by individuals, encompassing psychological conditions such as attachment and loyalty. Ref. [68] introduced a model of OC that comprises three components: continuous, normative, and emotional commitment. Continuous commitment is the persistent dedication of an employee to stay with the company, along with their understanding of the potential drawbacks and expenses of quitting, as described by [68,69]. Normative commitment denotes the consciousness of duty felt by a worker to stay with an organisation. It represents the employee's allegiance and obligation to continue with the business [68]. Affective commitment refers to the emotional and attitudinal connection that employees have with an organisation, leading to a strong desire to stay with the organisation and actively contribute to its goals [68].

#### 2.2.5. Employee Performance

Employee performance (EP) is the extent of an individual's capability to complete a certain activity based on their knowledge, skills, and work requirements and expectations [70,71]. However, [72], argues that EP has a substantial impact on overall organisational effectiveness. Meanwhile, ref. [73] assert that the competence and efficacy of an organisation's workforce directly contribute to its level of growth, success, and sustainability. However, ref. [74] argues that performance can be assessed for an individual, a team, or the company as a whole, and companies that execute at a high level tend to have more satisfied employees.

### 2.3. Hypothesis Development and Research Model

#### 2.3.1. Transformational Leadership

Employees led by transformational leaders can surpass expectations and achieve outstanding performance, reaching maximum potential [48], embracing change, [8,75], exhibiting innovative behaviours [76], and going beyond transactions and compensation [55,77]. TRF is considered a critical factor that influences various individual outcomes, like followers' behaviour [78], embracing organisational transformation [79], innovative thinking [80], organisational commitment and trust [81], OCB [6], and EP. A study by [82], found that TRF positively and significantly impacts EP.

Hence, this hypothesis is proposed:

**Hypothesis 1.** *TRF positively impacts EP.*

#### 2.3.2. Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership (TRS) involves providing contingent reinforcement to employees based on their performance [56] and it inspires followers by appealing to their individual or collective aspirations, employing instrumental economic exchanges. Various studies have presented evidence that TRS significantly improves organisational effectiveness, employee job satisfaction, OCB, and organisational deviance behaviours [54,83]. Therefore, the subsequent hypothesis is put forth:

**Hypothesis 2.** *TRS has a positive impact on EP.*

### 2.3.3. Transformational-Transactional Leadership Style Relationship

In leadership literature, TRF and TRS have been thoroughly examined in diverse settings [58]. They have been revealed to be connected with several work-related outcomes, like commitment followers' behaviour, and performance outcomes [84]. However, [53,58], posit that TRF augments transactional leadership to bolster positive work practices but [85], contends that effective leaders should have a blend of TRF and TRS qualities, and this viewpoint is corroborated by [53]. Conversely, the relationship between these two notions in forecasting work habits remains unresolved despite their high reputation for predicting organisational efficiency [55].

Thus, the study hypothesises that:

**Hypothesis 3.** *A significant correlation exists between the TRF and TRS styles.*

### 2.3.4. The Link Between Employee Commitment and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour

EC and OCB have been the subjects of multiple studies. The literature suggests a favourable and significant relationship between these two constructs [86,87]. However, devoted employees are more likely to engage in OCB. This is because their strong emotional connection to the organisation pushes them to go beyond their official job duties [88,89]. Furthermore, the FRLT framework suggests that committed employees are more likely to engage in behaviours that benefit organisations.

Thus, the following hypothesis is formulated:

**Hypothesis 4.** *There is a significant relationship between EC and OCB.*

### 2.3.5. The Mediating Role of Organisational Citizenship Behaviour

Extensive research has consistently acknowledged the significant impact of leadership on promoting OCB. According to [90], studies have highlighted the significant direct impact of various leadership styles on OCB or can act as a mediator [91], noting that effective leadership is essential in nurturing these behaviours among employees. Recent research supports this proposition. For instance, [88], reinforces the idea that OCB mediates the relationship between TRF and EP. Additionally, in the context of Education 4.0, a similar connection was observed [92]. Also, [63,93], found a similar result and indicated that OCB is a critical factor in understanding how leadership influences employee outcomes, particularly in dynamic and evolving environments.

Conversely, distinct from TRF, studies have shown that OCB mediates the relationship between TRS and EP. For instance, ref. [94] supported this assertion and stated that employees who show high levels of OCB are more likely to respond positively to transactional leadership. This is because transactional leaders clearly define expectations and provide feedback, which can motivate employees to go beyond their basic job requirements and engage in OCB. Additionally, [95], stated that the effectiveness of transactional leadership in improving EP might depend on the extent to which employees are willing to exhibit extra-role behaviours, and [96], asserted that both leadership styles have a bearing on OCB, with the TRF approach being more profound. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

**Hypothesis 5.** *OCB impacts the connection between TRF and EP.*

**Hypothesis 6.** *OCB impacts the connection between TRS and EP.*

### 2.3.6. The Mediating Role of Employee Commitment

Employee commitment has been identified as a key mediator in the relationship between leadership styles and employee performance [84]. According to [97], adopting effective leadership styles is crucial for boosting EC, facilitating the crafting and execution of company plans, and attaining set objectives.

However, [97], found a noteworthy relationship between leadership style and OC. Several empirical studies have examined the mediating role of EC in the link between different leadership styles and EP, and [98] posit that TRF has a substantial effect on enhancing EP by positively influencing affective commitment.

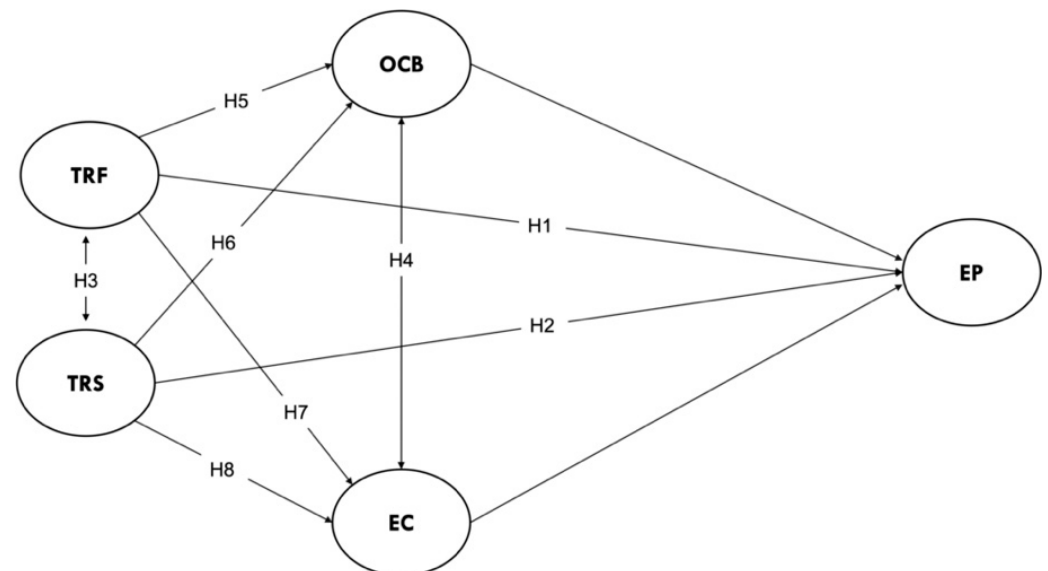
Furthermore, ref. [99] suggests that both TRF and TRS can result in increased EP when EC is involved, but TRF has a more obvious impact due to its capacity to establish a deeper emotional bond with employees.

Thus, the study proposes the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 7.** *EC significantly enhances the relationship between TRF and EP.*

**Hypothesis 8.** *EC significantly enhances the relationship between TRS and EP.*

Based on the literature and developed hypotheses, we have constructed an initial model in Figure 1, to depict the effects of Leadership styles on employee performance. Additionally, we investigate the mediating influence of OCB and EC on employee performance.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework.

### 3. Methodology

The methodology used entailed gathering quantitative data via questionnaires. The data-gathering instrument was established using a five-point Likert scale, which ranged from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” The research primarily focused on the commercial banks in Sierra Leone, which consist of fourteen banks. They frequently undertake organisational transformation projects and play a vital role in fostering the financial stability and progress of the nation [15,16]. The Cochran technique was employed to define the appropriate sample size [100] and as a consequence, a total of 903 participants were included in the final sample.

#### 3.1. Measurement Section

To measure the effects of leadership styles on EP, the study utilised validated survey instruments and objective performance metrics. TRF and TRS were assessed by [29] Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), because of its broad use and adaptation to numerous cultures. The dimensions of TRF consist of idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration. Sample items included, “My leader communicates a vision for the future of the bank, which inspires me” and “My leader encourages me to be creative and innovative in my work”. The three

dimensions of TRS consist of contingent reward and management-by-exception (active and passive). Sample questions included, “My leader rewards me for meeting or exceeding my performance goals” and “My leader clearly defines what tasks and behaviours are expected of me”. They were all assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” EP was assessed based on individual work performance adapted from [101] using a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Sample items included “I feel motivated to perform well during change initiatives” and “I am satisfied with my overall performance during change initiatives”.

Mediating variables, EC, were measured using [102] scale and adopted a five-point Likert scale going from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Sample items included “I am committed to the success of the recent organisational change initiative” and “I am enthusiastic about the future of the bank after the recent changes”. OCB was examined using [65] scale, and a five-point Likert scale was used ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Sample items included “I go the extra mile to help colleagues without being asked” and “I treat colleagues and customers with respect and consideration”.

### 3.2. Demographics

Table 1 illustrates the participants’ demographics. Gender distribution reveals that males constitute 53%, while females comprise 47%. For age distribution, 9.1% are aged 18–25 years, 55.8% are aged 26–35 years, 28.0% are aged 36–45 years, 6.0% are aged 46–55 years, and 1.0% are aged 56 years and above. For education, (41.2%) hold bachelor’s degrees, (31.9%) diplomas, (18.5%) master’s degrees, and (0.3%) doctorate degrees. The work experience distribution shows 1.0% have less than a year of experience, 9.3% have 1–3 years, 44.4% have 4–6 years, 35.3% have 7–10 years, and 10.0% have over 10 years of experience within the banking sector.

**Table 1.** Demographics of Respondents.

Variable	Item	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	482	53%
	Female	421	47%
	Total	903	100%
Age (in years)	18–25	82	9.1%
	26–35	504	55.8%
	36–45	252	28%
	46–55	53	6%
	56+	12	1%
	Total	903	100%
Education	Certificate	73	8.1%
	Diploma	288	31.9%
	Bachelors	372	41.2%
	Masters	167	18.5%
	PhD	3	0.3%
Total	903	100%	
Years of Experience	Below a year	9	1%
	1–3	84	9.3%
	4–6	401	44.4%
	7–10	319	35.3%
	10+	90	10%
Total	903	100%	

Source: Researcher’s Field Survey 2024.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Introduction

The study utilised the structural equation modelling (SEM) approach to adopt the partial least squares (PLS) approach. The methodological characteristics of PLS-SEM set it



apart from other SEM approaches and it has been generally recognised in management and social sciences research for its methodological prowess [103,104]. PLS-SEM was utilized to examine the model and hypotheses and it is suitable for this setting since it can simultaneously estimate hypothesised connections, hence, to assess the measurement model, it is necessary to calculate the constructs' discriminant validity, convergent validity, internal consistency, and reliability [103].

#### 4.2. Assessment of Measurement Model

Before data analysis, researchers should make sure the constructs are reliable and legitimate [105]. Table 2 revealed that all constructs meet the acceptable thresholds for reliability and validity [106]. For factor loadings (FL), the generally accepted minimum is 0.70, which is considered adequate for item reliability [104]; here, all items load significantly on their respective constructs, varying from 0.705 to 0.893. Cronbach's Alpha (CA) values exceed the 0.70 threshold for internal consistency [107], with values ranging from 0.833 to 0.873. Composite Reliability (CR) values also surpass the 0.70 benchmark, indicating high reliability [104], with scores between 0.882 and 0.908. There is sufficient convergent validity since the average variance extracted (AVE) for all constructs is greater than the 0.50 criterion [108], with values from 0.600 to 0.664. All AVEs demonstrate strong construct validity and reliability, making the measurement model robust for further analysis.

**Table 2.** Reliability and Validity of Constructs (TRF, TRS, OCB, EC, and EP).

Construct	FL	CA	CR	AVE
<b>Transformational Leadership Style (TRF)</b>		0.873	0.908	0.664
TRF1	0.827			
TRF2	0.812			
TRF3	0.828			
TRF4	0.814			
TRF5	0.792			
<b>Transactional Leadership Style (TRS)</b>		0.833	0.882	0.600
TRS1	0.772			
TRS2	0.826			
TRS3	0.775			
TRS4	0.772			
TRS5	0.723			
<b>Employee Commitment (EC)</b>		0.861	0.901	0.646
EC1	0.743			
EC2	0.722			
EC3	0.893			
EC4	0.853			
EC5	0.795			
<b>Organisational Citizenship Behaviours (OCB)</b>		0.834	0.883	0.603
OCB1	0.705			
OCB2	0.840			
OCB3	0.846			
OCB4	0.724			
OCB5	0.756			
<b>Employee Performance (EP)</b>		0.845	0.889	0.617
EP1	0.839			
EP2	0.815			
EP3	0.733			
EP4	0.796			
EP5	0.737			

Source: Researcher's computation 2024.

Furthermore, discriminant validity was assessed by comparing the correlation coefficient between the AVE and the variables in question, as presented in Table 3. It was observed that the square root of the AVE for each construct (EC, EP, OCB, TRF, and TRS) is greater than the correlation coefficient. This suggests that the constructs are separate and measure distinct underlying concepts in the model.

**Table 3.** Fornell-Larcker criterion.

	EC	EP	OCB	TRF	TRS
EC	<b>0.804</b>				
EP	0.707	<b>0.785</b>			
OCB	0.785	0.683	<b>0.776</b>		
TRF	0.616	0.679	0.697	<b>0.815</b>	
TRS	0.633	0.711	0.67	0.774	<b>0.774</b>

Source: Researcher's computation 2024.

The estimated SEM coefficients for our hypothesised model are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Hypothesis testing results.

Hypothesis	Structural Relationship	$\beta$	t Statistics	p Values	Decision
H1	TRF → EP	0.172	3.991	0.000	Supported
H2	TRS → EP	0.300	6.965	0.000	Supported
H3	TRS → TRF	0.774	41.731	0.000	Supported
H4	OCB → EC	0.647	11.723	0.000	Supported

Source: Researcher's computation 2024.

Hypothesis 1 posits that TRF positively impacts EP. The results ( $\beta = 0.172$ ,  $t = 3.991$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) imply strong support for this hypothesis [104].

Hypothesis 2 suggests that TRS positively affects EP, and the results ( $\beta = 0.300$ ,  $t = 6.965$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) provide robust evidence for support [104]. However, the stronger path coefficient compared to TRF suggests that TRS has a more substantial impact on EP, which aligns with the theoretical understanding that structured leadership styles are particularly effective in environments that prioritise clear performance expectations.

Hypothesis 3 asserts that TRS positively influences TRF. This is confirmed by the results ( $\beta = 0.774$ ,  $t = 43.731$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and supporting the hypothesis [104]. These results indicate that both leadership styles significantly enhance employee performance, and TRS significantly boosts TRF, thereby aligning with the theoretical framework and empirical evidence in organisational behaviour research.

Hypothesis 4 proposes a statistically significant relationship between EC and OCB. The results ( $\beta = 0.647$ ,  $t = 11.723$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) indicate a significant and positive association between OCB and EC; thus, the hypothesis is supported.

In addition, this strong association indicates that higher levels of OCB contribute significantly to greater employee commitment, which aligns with the idea that when employees voluntarily engage in behaviours that benefit the bank, they are likely to develop stronger emotional attachments to their work and the bank.

Table 5 presents the results of the indirect effects of leadership styles on EP through mediators such as OCB and EC.

**Table 5.** Results of the Mediation Analysis.

Hypothesis	Structural Relationship	$\beta$	t Statistics	p Values	Mediating Effect	Decision
H5	TRF → OCB → EP	0.045	2.382	0.017	Partial Mediation	Supported
H6	TRS → OCB → EP	0.033	2.262	0.024	Partial Mediation	Supported
H7	TRF → EC → EP	0.009	0.571	0.568	No Mediation	Unsupported
H8	TRS → EC → EP	0.059	3.433	0.001	Partial Mediation	Supported

Source: Researcher's computation 2024.

Hypothesis 5 posits that OCB mediates the relationship between TRF and EP. The results ( $\beta = 0.045$ ,  $t = 2.382$ ,  $p = 0.017$ ) indicate significant support for this mediation effect [109]. However, this indicates partial mediation. OCB partially explains how TRF influences EP, suggesting that while TRF directly enhances performance, it also indirectly boosts performance by encouraging behaviours that go beyond formal job requirements.

Hypothesis 6 suggests that OCB mediates the relationship between TRS and EP, and this is supported by the results ( $\beta = 0.033$ ,  $t = 2.262$ ,  $p = 0.024$ ). This result again shows a partial mediation, where OCB contributes to the positive effect of TRS on EP but does not fully account for it. TRS directly influences EP, and additionally, it promotes OCB, which further enhances performance.

Conversely, Hypothesis 7 proposes that EC mediates the relationship between TRF and EP, conflicting with what was expected. The results ( $\beta = 0.009$ ,  $t = 0.571$ ,  $p = 0.568$ ) revealed an insignificant positive effect, and the hypothesis is unsupported. In addition, given that TRF directly impacts EP, the lack of significant mediation by EC suggests that the influence of TRF on EP occurs primarily through other mechanisms, not through enhancing employee commitment.

Hypothesis 8 posits that EC mediates the relationship between TRS and EP. The results ( $\beta = 0.059$ ,  $t = 3.433$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) support this assertion. However, this indicates partial mediation. EC partially explains the pathway from TRS to EP, meaning that while TRS directly enhances performance, it also does so by fostering stronger commitment among employees. Hence, Figure 2, presents the structural model analysis of constructs (TRF, TRS, OCB, EC and EP).

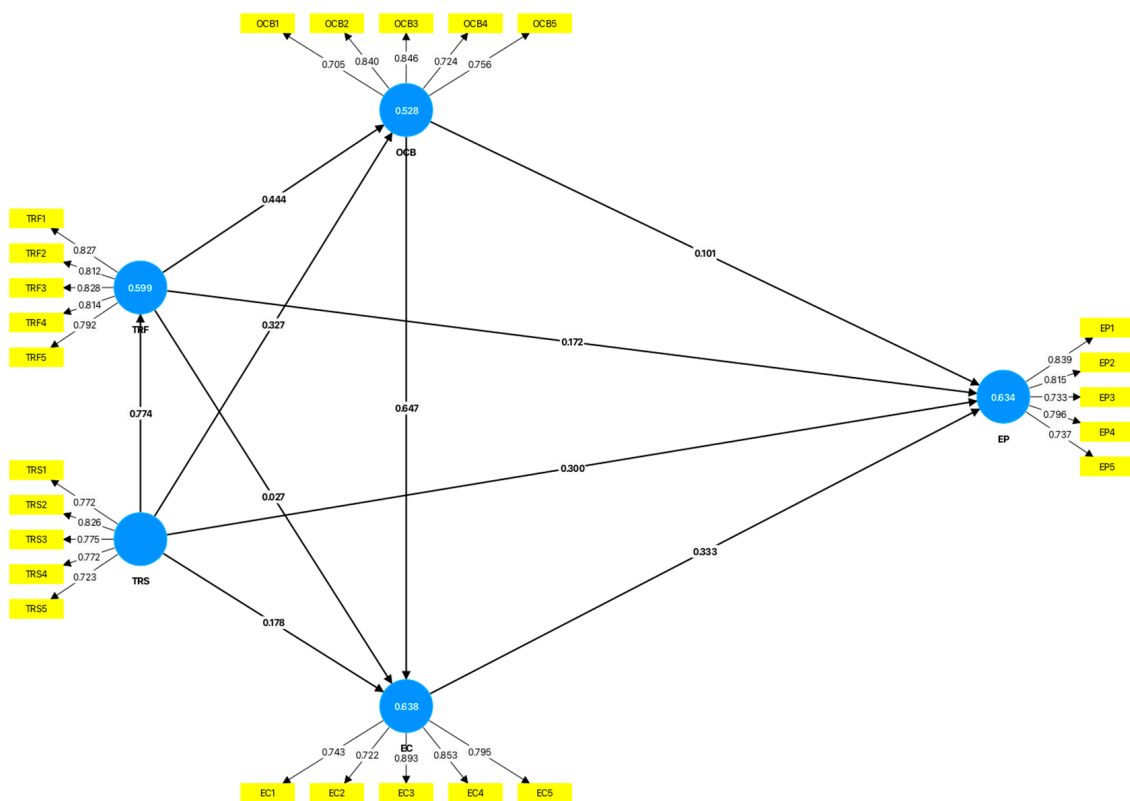


Figure 2. Structural Model Analysis of Constructs.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. The Relationship Between TRF and EP

H1 reveals that TRF positively influences EP. Table 4 supports this assertion, and the empirical finding is in sync with several studies that showed a positive and significant relationship [10,28]. This study concurs that TRF exhibits greater effectiveness in circum-

stances that are marked by elevated levels of change, uncertainty, and complexity [2,110]. However, greater work engagement is observed when there is a stronger bond between transformational leaders and employees, which in turn increases EP [10,28].

TRF is trusted to embrace and align with the happenings in the VUCA world [111,112]. Executives in banks should embrace change [113], inspire their teams, and support innovative ways to solve emerging issues while continuously developing teams to meet or exceed predetermined performance targets.

In addition, this finding also aligns with LMX theory, which suggests that high-quality exchanges between leaders and employees foster trust, loyalty, and respect. Thus, it underscores the importance of transformational leaders in building strong leader-member relationships that go beyond transactional exchanges and encourage employees to exceed expectations.

### 5.2. The Relationship Between TRS and EP

H2 reveals that TRS positively influences EP. Table 4 supports this assertion and aligns with various previous studies, which showed a positive and significant relationship [10,28]. TRS is the use of incentives and penalties by leaders to enhance employees' adherence to job requirements and accomplish the leader's expectations [28]. However, within the context of this study, executives should emphasise clear structures, performance targets, rewards, and penalties for employees, as this is deemed to be more effective in driving employee performance.

Interestingly, the differential impact shows that TRS has a more substantial impact on EP, as represented in Table 4 by a path coefficient ( $\beta$ ) = 0.300 as compared to TRF with a path coefficient ( $\beta$ ) = 0.172. This differential impact highlights the importance of TRS in achieving higher EP during organisational changes, possibly due to its structured approach and clear performance expectations, however, it emphasises that the culture within commercial banks is more conducive to TRS since it focusses on short-term goals and immediate outcomes [49]. This finding supports existing literature that suggests the efficacy of different leadership styles can vary as per context and specific organisational needs [12,53].

Furthermore, these findings can also be understood through the LMX lens. In the context of commercial banks, where clear expectations and immediate outcomes are critical, the structured nature of TRS aligns well with the high-exchange relationships that focus on task accomplishment and rewards. This reflects a more pragmatic approach where employees respond to the clarity and structure provided by transactional leaders, leading to improved performance.

### 5.3. The Nexus Between TRF and TRS

H3 demonstrates a statistically significant relationship between TRF and TRS. This finding, as shown in Table 4, aligns with existing literature, which suggests that both leadership styles, although distinct, are not mutually exclusive and can coexist within the same organisational context. A study by [114], found that both leadership styles can be employed simultaneously to achieve favourable outcomes; however, [17], emphasises that effective leaders often exhibit both transformational and transactional behaviours to establish clear expectations, inspire, and motivate employees toward higher performance.

According to [58], an ideal combination of TRF and TRS leadership techniques (transformational-transactional leadership mix), is essential for enhancing EP in the banking sector. Furthermore, the coexistence of TRF and TRS, as supported by these findings, also aligns with the LMX theory's assertion that leaders may simultaneously engage in different types of exchanges with different members. This dual approach can help maintain a balance between fostering high-quality relationships and achieving organisational goals, which is essential in the dynamic environment of commercial banks.

#### 5.4. The Link Between EC and OCB

H4 indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between EC and OCB. The finding, as illustrated in Table 5, is consistent with existing literature [87]. Research by [62,115] suggests that OCB influences EC by fostering a supportive and cooperative work environment.

Additionally, studies by [68,89], support the notion that committed employees are more likely to engage in OCB, as their strong attachment to the organisation motivates them to go beyond their formal job responsibilities.

Conclusively, the significant relationship between EC and OCB further supports the FRLT framework, which acknowledges that committed employees are more likely to engage in behaviours that benefit the organisation. This relationship underscores the importance of fostering both commitment and citizenship behaviours through appropriate leadership practices, as these are key drivers of organisational success.

#### 5.5. OCB Significantly Enhances the Relationship Between TRF and EP

H5 shows that OCB mediates the relationship between TRF and EP. The finding, as shown in Table 5, aligns with existing literature [6,88]. However, [63], discovered a strong positive correlation between TL, OCB, and EP, which signifies that employees in Pakistani SMEs are likely to form emotional connections and provide support to one another, and [96], in Ghana, found that, the leadership of banks often cultivates a conducive working atmosphere that encourages employees to display citizenship practices.

Conversely, the mediating role of OCB between TRF and EP reinforces the FRLT perspective that TRF is crucial in fostering voluntary, extra-role behaviours among employees. The study's findings that TRF positively influences OCB, which in turn boosts EP, align with the theory's assertion that transformational leadership leads to higher levels of follower motivation and commitment.

#### 5.6. OCB and the Connection Between TRS and EP

H6 shows that OCB mediates the relationship between TRS and EP. These findings, depicted in Table 5, are consistent with the current body of research [115]. However, [116] added that this is possible because transactional leaders prioritise the exchange of rewards and punishments for performance, emphasising clear expectations, monitoring, and feedback, and this encourages employees to exhibit OCB while positively impacting EP. Similarly, [117] added that employees exhibiting OCB are crucial to the congruence theory, which states that leader behaviours that are consistent with followers' values and beliefs will be viewed as more acceptable and effective than behaviours representing conflicting values.

So, employees can show great OCB and get high levels of EP by setting up and following clear systems and making sure that the expected results are matched with the right rewards or punishments.

#### 5.7. EC and the Connection Between TRF and EP

H7 posits that EC mediates the relationship between TRF and EP. Unpredictably, the data from Table 5, show that the effect is not statistically significant, hence the hypothesis is not supported. However, other literature has found similar outcomes, [118], discovered that both TRF and TRS behaviours exhibit a weak link with EC, and conversely, the findings suggest that the involvement of EC as a mediator is generally confirmed, as supported by other studies [119].

There are certain circumstances in which this mediation may not be valid, such as in the instance of commercial banks in Sierra Leone, which focus on short-term goals and immediate outcomes.

### 5.8. Mediation Effect of EC and the Connection Between TRS and EP

H8, suggesting a similar path for TRS, is supported. These results imply that EC mediates the relationship between TRS and EP. The findings, as depicted in Table 5, are consistent with the current body of research [55,56]. The study asserts that committed individuals would experience a strong sense of inclusion, actively participate in significant initiatives as members, and demonstrate feelings of loyalty and affection towards the bank.

However, the mediation of EC in the relationship between TRS and EP highlights the situational effectiveness of transactional leadership as posited by FRLT. This supports the FRLT's argument that different leadership styles can be effective depending on the context and the specific needs of the organisation. The finding that TRS, through EC, enhances EP during organisational changes in commercial banks, suggests that transactional leadership can be particularly effective in environments that prioritise short-term goals and performance standards.

## 6. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study reaffirms the critical role of leadership in shaping employee outcomes within the banking sector in Sierra Leone, particularly in a VUCA environment. The findings underscore the necessity of employing a well-rounded leadership approach that integrates both TRF and TRS to effectively drive EP during periods of organisational change. The study highlights that a strategic blend of TRF and TRS can encourage employees to voluntarily engage in behaviours beyond their formal duties, contributing to overall organisational success. Notably, the research reinforces the idea that committed employees are more motivated to exhibit OCB, which positively impacts performance.

The differential impact of EC as a mediating factor is a key finding. While EC was not a significant mediator between TRF and EP, it played a crucial role in the relationship between TRS and EP. This suggests that within the context of commercial banks, TRS is predominantly effective because it provides clear structures, sets performance targets, and implements rewards and penalties, all of which are essential in driving employee performance.

Thus, the study suggests that bank executives should embrace a leadership approach that leverages the strengths of both TRF and TRS, with a particular emphasis on the structured and outcome-orientated nature of TRS, to enhance employee performance during change initiatives.

### 6.1. Theoretical Implications

This study enriches the existing theory of TRF and TRS and their influence on EP during organisational change in the VUCA world [2,28], especially in the banking sector [96]. The results support prior results showing that both styles can coexist in one organisation to achieve desirable results. The current study used OCB as a mediating variable to elucidate the connection between the two leadership styles and employee performance. This confirms previous results [6,63,88,92,96] and underscores the critical role leaders play in nurturing an atmosphere that encourages employees to exhibit citizenship practices.

Furthermore, the findings of this study enhance the understanding of LMX [33], and FRLT [17], within the context of the banking sector, particularly in a VUCA environment. By demonstrating that both TRF and TRS can coexist and complement each other, the study supports the notion that effective leadership is not confined to a single style but rather involves a dynamic interplay of different approaches. This adds to the body of knowledge by highlighting how leadership styles can be adapted to meet specific organisational needs and contexts.

### 6.2. Practical Implications

From a practical perspective, the study proposes actionable insights for executives and policymakers in the banking sector in Sierra Leone. The findings suggest that leaders should not exclusively rely on either TRF or TRS but should instead develop a versatile leadership approach that leverages the strengths of both styles. This dual approach is

particularly relevant in the VUCA world, where adaptability and resilience are key to maintaining performance.

The study also emphasises the importance of structured leadership development programs that equip leaders with the skills needed to inspire, motivate, and manage employees effectively. By fostering a culture that values OCB and commitment, banks can enhance employee performance and navigate the complexities of organisational change more effectively.

Thus, this study provides a comprehensive analysis of how leadership styles influence employee outcomes in the banking sector. Integrating LMX and FRLT theories offers both theoretical insights and practical recommendations for enhancing leadership effectiveness in a dynamic and challenging environment.

### 6.3. Limitations and Future Research Directions

The study's data was exclusively acquired from the banking industry, which raises concerns about the generalisability of the conclusions. Performance in various industry sectors may be influenced by factors such as sector-specific characteristics and cultural variations.

As a result, future research could apply these findings to other industries, increasing their applicability. To better understand how contextual and cultural factors influence the bearing of leadership styles on employee performance, researchers could explore contrasting assessments of leadership styles in different contexts. Researchers should assess other mediating and moderating variables such as psychological capital, employee engagement, and job autonomy to uncover an additional aspect of how leadership styles impact employee performance. These potential areas can enhance knowledge and understanding of the multifaceted relationship between leadership styles and performance.

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