Influencers of academic staff performance in higher education: the role of motivation, transformational leadership and involvement in strategic planning

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Abstract

Purpose – This study empirically examines the impact of motivation, transformational leadership and involvement in strategic planning (SP) on academic staff performance at higher education institutions (HEIs). It also examines how academics’ involvement in SP mediates the associations between motivation, transformational leadership and performance.

Design/methodology/approach – This article conducted a quantitative approach based on a self-administered survey. Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was applied to analyze the data gathered from 192 faculty members at governmental HEIs in Oman.

Findings – The results indicated that academic staff motivation has a significant and positive impact on their involvement in SP and performance in HEIs. It is also revealed that employee involvement in SP activities is significantly affected by transformational leadership, while the latter does not affect academic staff performance. There is also a significant association between academic staff involvement in SP and their performance. Moreover, the relationships between motivation, transformational leadership and performance are fully mediated by academic staff involvement in SP at HEIs.

Originality/value – The current empirical work is one of the few endeavors to develop an integrated structural model to investigate how faculty members’ performance could be affected by motivation, transformational leadership and involvement in SP. Furthermore, it is considered one of the first attempts to explore the intervening role of academic staff involvement in the SP process in the connections between motivation, transformational leadership and performance within the HEI realm.

Keywords Motivation, Transformational leadership, Involvement, Strategic planning, Academic performance, Higher education institutions (HEIs)

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Strategic planning (SP) could be described as the process of determining the long-term goals and objectives of an organization and then determining the most effective way to achieve those goals and objectives (Zafar et al., 2014). SP, along with related operational planning, are among the main criteria for higher education institutions (HEIs) seeking institutional
accreditation in Oman, according to the Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education (OAAQA) (OAAQA, 2023). In HEIs, employees, including, faculty members, are required to carry out a range of responsibilities, including teaching and learning, research, community service and other administrative duties. Furthermore, staff members at HEIs ought to be actively involved in the process of developing and deploying a strategic plan that would facilitate the realization of the institution’s long-term goals and objectives concerning enhanced educational quality (Alani et al., 2018). Therefore, a significant portion of such duties is covered by the institution’s strategic plan (SP), which calls on academics to conduct several initiatives and activities to meet the SP-related key performance indicators (KPIs) (Adewale and Esther, 2012). Such circumstances under which staff members actively contribute to their institutions beyond the requirements of their positions are a growing concern for academics and management (Schwarz et al., 2023). In Oman, HEIs view SP as a critical procedure to achieve its goals and accreditation. This emphasizes how crucial it is to identify the main factors that influence faculty involvement with SP-related activities at HEIs as well as the outcomes of that involvement.

Employees at different workplaces, including HEIs, have a profound sense of a variety of aspects concerning their professions, such as work nature, coworkers, bosses and remuneration (Kuwaiti et al., 2020). Therefore, it is essential to stress the significance of motivation and leadership as major factors influencing employees’ behavior (Ahmad, 2009) as well as work-linked performance (Ng, 2017), which refers to a collection of behaviors by employees to support the organization’s goals (Rich et al., 2010). Motivation is the extent to which internal and external forces influence employees’ behavior toward improving job performance (e.g. Teye et al., 2019) and accomplishing organizational goals (Mohammed et al., 2020). Leadership is a major factor determining whether an organization succeeds or fails. Leadership style, including transformational leadership, illustrates how a leader directs and motivates a team to accomplish shared objectives (Al Khajeh, 2018; Wang et al., 2011). Consequently, transformational leadership could enhance job involvement, leading to higher performance (Bodenhausen and Curtis, 2016). Ng (2017) demonstrated that employees’ job performance is impacted by transformational leadership.

As a result, this research illuminates the role of both motivation and transformational leadership in shaping academics’ involvement in the SP process and how this affects their performance. In this regard, research has shown that staff involvement in different settings is improved by motivation (e.g. Govender and Parumasur, 2010; Mohsan et al., 2011). Additionally, the link between motivation and performance has been widely evaluated by earlier studies (e.g. Asim, 2013; Kuvaas and Dysvik, 2009; Osabiya, 2015; Shahzadi et al., 2014). However, studies that concentrate on employee involvement in the SP process, particularly in HEIs, are conspicuously lacking. More specifically, no prior research has examined academic staff involvement in the SP process as a dependent variable for motivation or as an independent variable for their performance in HEIs, particularly in the Middle East region, including Oman. Moreover, several studies have been conducted to examine the relationship between transformational leadership and employee involvement in different organizational contexts (e.g. Basyir et al., 2020; Bodenhausen and Curtis, 2016; Cheng et al., 2012) as well as the link between transformational leadership and performance (Al-Amin, 2017; Buil et al., 2019; Sundi, 2013). However, no empirical research has been conducted on the relationship between transformational leadership and academic staff involvement in SP and how this impacts their performance in HEIs, particularly in Oman.

Furthermore, Sengupta and Blessinger (2022) argued that quality assurance of HEIs has come under scrutiny and received increasing criticism. Leaders’ roles and their lack of involvement with stakeholders have been held responsible for incoherent reform mechanisms and rushed strategic vision. Thus, it is crucial to unveil how could motivation and
transformational leadership impact the performance of faculty members via their involvement in SP activities in HEIs. In this sense, limited endeavors examined the mediating role of employee engagement in the link between motivation and performance (e.g., Riyanto et al., 2021) as well as transformational leadership and performance (e.g., Buil et al., 2019). For instance, Balwant et al. (2022) investigated the mediating role of employee engagement in the link between employees’ motivation to learn and their productivity in HEIs. To the best of our knowledge, however, no study has been done on how academics’ involvement in the SP process mediates the direct effects of both transformational leadership and motivation (predictors) on their performance in HEIs (an outcome). Moreover, one of the gaps that the current research aims to fill is the absence of such antecedents of faculty performance in HEIs and the examination of such links collectively, especially within the Middle East, including Oman.

Given the preceding gaps, this article seeks to (1) assess the impact of motivation on academics’ involvement in SP and performance, (2) evaluate the influence of transformational leadership on academics’ involvement in SP and performance, (3) test the link between academics’ involvement in SP and performance and (4) investigate the intervening role of SP involvement in the paths between motivation, transformational leadership and performance. By doing so, this study adds to the body of knowledge on human resource management (HRM) in the HEI context by developing a thorough theoretical framework to assess how academics’ motivation and transformational leadership impact their involvement in the SP process and how this impacts their performance. Additionally, it strengthens the few studies on the function that involvement in the SP process plays in such linkages. It also offers helpful practical guidance and insights to concerned HEI stakeholders on the key antecedents of faculty performance.

**Theoretical background and hypotheses**

The theoretical foundation of this article is drawn on Herzberg’s motivation-hygiene theory (Herzberg, 1966) and leader-member exchange (LMX) theory (Gerstner and Day, 1997). According to Herzberg’s theory, both “motivation” and “hygiene” shape employee satisfaction. Motivators increase productivity, creativity and dedication in employees (Hur, 2018). This implies that employee motivation could lead to higher levels of job involvement and performance (Thant and Chang, 2021). Additionally, the foundation of the LMX theory is the idea that leaders form individual relationships with each follower and that the strength of these ties can impact different attitudes and actions (Ilies et al., 2007). This means that transformational leadership could substantially affect subordinates’ job involvement and performance. Hence, referring to the theoretical framework (Figure 1), we hypothesized that
academics’ motivation significantly affects their involvement in SP (H1) and their performance in HEIs (H2). It is also hypothesized that transformational leadership significantly impacts involvement in SP (H3) and faculty performance (H4). H5 is to assess the link between faculty involvement in SP and performance. Moreover, we hypothesized that involvement in SP mediates the connection between motivation (H6) and transformational leadership (H7) and performance.

Employee motivation, involvement and performance
Work involvement refers to how much an individual actively participates in his/her job to meet own requirements and needs (Zopiatis et al., 2014). Employee involvement takes various forms such as defining participative goals, organizing cross-functional task groups and meetings to address management issues and shaping decisions made by the organization (Palumbo, 2023). This reflects the crucial role of motivation in representing the energetic elements that emerge in employees and their environment and help in initiating and determining the shape, direction, intensity and duration of their work-related behaviors (Pinder, 2014). Motivation could be described as a psychological process that gives behavior direction, intensity and perseverance (Rahman et al., 2017). Teye et al. (2019) illustrated that motivation includes three types: intrinsic (the act of being involved in a task for its pleasure and satisfaction), extrinsic (doing things because of internal or external pressures), or motivated (having no intention of participating in an activity). Numerous studies have examined the outcomes of employee motivation within different disciplines, involving HEIs (e.g. Chhaing and Phon, 2022; Mohammed et al., 2020). These include involvement and performance (Zlate and Cucui, 2015). For instance, Govender and Parumasur (2010) discussed the beneficial effects of motivation on involvement. Managers can affect the motivational subdimensions of their workforce to boost job involvement. Additionally, the association between motivation and involvement in Pakistan’s banking business was shown to be highly significant by Mohsan et al. (2011). According to Evangeline and Ragavan (2016), employee motivation directly affects how involved employees are in the SP process. Furthermore, several prior studies examined the positive link between employee motivation and performance within different contexts. It is revealed that employee motivation is one of the most significant factors affecting an organization’s performance (Osabiya, 2015; Shahzadi et al., 2014). A motivated workforce will perform better because they are more active, engaged and willing to take on more responsibilities (Asim, 2013; Kuvaas and Dysvik, 2009). Thus, we hypothesize that:

H1. Academics’ motivation significantly impacts their involvement in SP activities.
H2. Academics’ motivation significantly impacts their performance.

Transformational leadership, employee involvement and performance
Transformational leadership concentrates on subordinates and their needs (Al Khajeh, 2018). A transformational leader can be defined as a proactive individual who drives change, elevates the consciousness of subordinates by showcasing their combined advantages and assists them in achieving extraordinary objectives (Bagga et al., 2023). By evaluating employees’ ability to attain organizational commitment, a transformational leader sets an exemplary model for influencing employees (Yeap et al., 2021). Prior research identified four facets of transformational leadership which are: idealized influence (providing a sense of purpose and serving as a model of the change process), inspiration (educating staff about high standards and understandably conveying crucial information), intellectual stimulation (promoting the staff’s creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving skills) and individual consideration (focusing on each employee individually, coaching and counseling) (Schmitz et al., 2023). The outcomes of transformational leadership have been assessed in
many settings. These include its impacts on employee involvement and performance. In this vein, there is a positive link between transformational leadership and job involvement (Bodenhausen and Curtis, 2016; Cheng et al., 2012). According to Sheikh et al. (2013), transformational leadership has a positive effect on the job involvement of UAE employees from different companies. Additionally, transformational leadership has a more favorable effect on job involvement (Basyir et al., 2020). Moreover, the positive impact of transformational leadership on employee performance has been verified by earlier studies (Buil et al., 2019). For example, Sundi (2013) demonstrated that transactional leadership has a substantial impact on employee performance. According to Al-Amin (2017), employee performance across a range of positions in Bangladeshi SMEs has a positive correlation with transformational leadership. Luo et al. (2019) also indicated that transformational leadership has a significant association with the performance of front-line hospitality employees from the USA and China. Therefore, the following hypotheses are developed:

**H3.** Transformational leadership significantly impacts academics’ involvement in SP activities.

**H4.** Transformational leadership significantly impacts academics’ performance.

### Employee involvement and performance

Various studies have been conducted to delve into the involvement-performance relationship (Addison, 2005). For example, Rotenberry and Moberg (2007) indicated that self-reported job involvement by employees substantially predicted some supervisor performance ratings in addition to work centrality. According to Hoye (2007), there is a correlation between involvement and perceived board member performance in voluntary sports organizations. Moreover, Chughtai (2008) found that faculty members’ performance in their roles had a positive relationship with their job involvement in Pakistani universities. Sofijanova and Zabijakin-Chatleska (2013) also demonstrated that employees’ involvement is positively linked to perceived organizational performance and better results are produced by more engaged employees (Wijaya et al., 2021). Thus:

**H5.** Academics’ involvement in SP activities significantly impacts their performance in HEIs.

### The mediating role of involvement in SP activities

Given the preceding discussion, employee motivation significantly influences job involvement, which in turn, positively enhances individuals’ performance. Similarly, transformational leadership has been found to reinforce employee involvement in work, leading to higher levels of performance. Nevertheless, limited attempts have assessed the indirect links between motivation, transformational leadership and performance through employee involvement as a mediating variable. In this vein, Riyanto et al. (2021) examined the mediating impact of engagement in the links between work motivation, job satisfaction and employee performance. Buil et al. (2019) tested the mediating role of engagement in the relationship between transformational leadership and performance. To be more specific, the intervening role of academics’ involvement in SP activities in the connections between their motivation and transformational leadership (as predictors) and their performance (as a dependent variable) in HEIs has not been studied yet. Therefore, the following hypotheses are:

**H6.** Academics’ involvement in SP activities mediates the link between their motivation and performance in HEIs

**H7.** Academics’ involvement in SP activities mediates the link between transformational leadership and their performance in HEIs.
Methods

Measures
The research model includes four reflective variables which are measured using some relevant items adapted from prior studies. In this vein, transformational leadership was measured by 7 items (e.g. leadership in my HEI communicates a clear and positive vision of the future) adapted from (Carless et al., 2000). An eight-item scale (e.g. I like to be absorbed in my job, including SP activities, while working in this HEI) adapted from (Zopiatis et al., 2014) was used to measure employee involvement. Employee motivation was measured through 6 items (e.g. I like to look back at a day’s work with a sense of a job well done, including SP activities) adapted from (Shahzadi et al., 2014). Nine items (e.g. I am currently working at my best performance level for my HEI) were used to measure employee performance adapted from the study by Rodwell et al. (1998).

Sampling and data gathering
The current paper employed a quantitative approach through the application of a self-administered survey (Appendix) to collect data from academic staff members at governmental HEIs in Oman. In doing so, two non-probability sampling methods were implemented. First, purposive sampling has been applied by distributing the survey form to academics at HEIs both online and in person at the workplace. Second, convenience sampling has been employed by sending the questionnaire-associated link to faculty members through their emails and social network profiles (e.g. WhatsApp). Convenience sampling is considered one of the most cost-effective, time-efficient and convenient methods (Taherdoost, 2016). Such methods were combined in past studies to guarantee a decrease in nonresponse bias while simultaneously helping to gather an acceptable number of replies (e.g. Soliman et al., 2021a, b, 2023a, b). To ensure every potential respondent was aware of the questionnaire, it was made available in both English and Arabic. In this respect, the survey was translated into Arabic using the back translation approach. Besides the cover page, the questionnaire form contains one section for the socio-demographic characteristics of employees (e.g. age, gender, work experiences, etc.) and another section for the items forming the investigated constructs, which are assessed using a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). A total of 192 responses were obtained from March to May 2023 and ultimately granted acceptance for further examination. Out of 192 faculty members who participated in this study, 114 are men and 78 are women, with 71.8% of them falling between the ages of 31 and 50. In addition, 27.1% of them had between 11 and 15 years of job experience, 20.8% had between 11 and 15 years of work experience and 20.8% had more than 20 years of work experience in HEIs. The participants were affiliated to governmental HEIs in Oman as follows: University of Technology and Applied Sciences (94 academics), Sultan Qaboos University (29 academics), College of Shariaa Sciences (26 academics), Vocational Training Colleges (17 academics) and others (26 academics).

Analysis procedures
For data analysis and testing the hypotheses purposes, the present paper has conducted the PLS-SEM technique relying on WarpPLS 8 software (Kock, 2022). Assessing both the measurement model and structural model are the two stages of PLS-SEM. There are several main reasons why PLS-SEM is used. First, it is a solid approach applied to strengthen current theories and assess a structural model that entails several variables and accompanying items (Becker et al., 2023). Second, it is an optimal approach for evaluating intricate models with direct and indirect paths (e.g. Hair et al., 2020; Manley et al., 2021) between determinants (independent variables) and an outcome variable. Third, it also serves as an advocated approach for looking into empirical studies in various fields and contexts (Anasori et al., 2022; JARHE).
Results

Measurement model

The measurement model is assessed by ensuring the reliability and validity of constructs and their linked indicators. First, to establish indicator reliability, we have eliminated all items with loadings below the value of 0.7, as suggested by some researchers (e.g., Hair et al., 2020; Manley et al., 2021). The analysis was thus redone, and all item loadings were above the suggested threshold of 0.7 (Table 1). Additionally, Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability (CR) values are higher than the suggested threshold of 0.7. Next, the average variance extracted (AVE) values are greater than the recommended cutoff of 0.50. Both construct

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct/items</th>
<th>Factor loadings</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>Cronbach’s α</th>
<th>AVE</th>
<th>VIF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employee motivation (MOT)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>MOT1</td>
<td>(0.865)</td>
<td>0.936</td>
<td>0.918</td>
<td>0.710</td>
<td>3.363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOT2</td>
<td>(0.741)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>MOT3</td>
<td>(0.880)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOT4</td>
<td>(0.837)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOT5</td>
<td>(0.861)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>MOT6</td>
<td>(0.864)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Transformational leadership (TLD)</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLD1</td>
<td>(0.889)</td>
<td>0.964</td>
<td>0.957</td>
<td>0.794</td>
<td>2.315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLD2</td>
<td>(0.902)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TLD3</td>
<td>(0.897)</td>
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<td>TLD4</td>
<td>(0.881)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TLD5</td>
<td>(0.886)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TLD6</td>
<td>(0.883)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TLD7</td>
<td>(0.901)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Employee involvement (INV)</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>INV1</td>
<td>(0.715)</td>
<td>0.935</td>
<td>0.921</td>
<td>0.644</td>
<td>4.325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INV2</td>
<td>(0.799)</td>
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<tr>
<td>INV3</td>
<td>(0.824)</td>
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<tr>
<td>INV4</td>
<td>(0.780)</td>
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<td>INV5</td>
<td>(0.842)</td>
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<td>INV6</td>
<td>(0.837)</td>
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<td>INV7</td>
<td>(0.774)</td>
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<tr>
<td>INV8</td>
<td>(0.841)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Employee performance (PER)</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>PER1</td>
<td>(0.834)</td>
<td>0.936</td>
<td>0.918</td>
<td>0.711</td>
<td>2.824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PER2</td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>PER3</td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>PER4</td>
<td>(0.811)</td>
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<td>PER5</td>
<td>(0.806)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PER6</td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>PER7</td>
<td>(0.844)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PER8</td>
<td>(0.860)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PER9</td>
<td>(0.889)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note(s): CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted; R = removed item
Source(s): Authors’ own work using WarpPLS 8 software

Table 1. Measurement model

Academic staff in higher education

Bahri-Ammari et al., 2022), involving human resources management and leadership (e.g., Elsetouhi et al., 2023; Khalifa et al., 2023) as well as HEIs (e.g., Soliman et al., 2021a, b, 2023a, b; Tran et al., 2022).
reliability and convergent validity are thus supported by these outcomes (e.g. Hair et al., 2020; Kock, 2022; Manley et al., 2021).

Additionally, discriminant validity was evaluated using two common methods, namely Fornell and Larcker (1981) and heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio (Henseler et al., 2015). According to Table 2's statistics, each construct’s square root of AVE is greater than the relationship it has with other latent variables. In addition, the HTMT ratios of all the constructs under investigation are below 0.90 (Table 2). These outcomes lead to establishing discriminant validity.

Additionally, given the latent constructs' VIF values are less than the indicated value of 5 (Table 1), it is clear that this academic work has not found problems with multi-collinearity or common method bias (Kock, 2022).

**Structural model**
The path analysis results (Table 3) revealed that employee motivation has a positive and significant association with both employees’ involvement in SP activities ($\beta = 0.542$, $p < 0.001$) and their performance at HEIs ($\beta = 0.456$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, H1 and H2 are confirmed. In addition, it is found that transformational leadership significantly and positively influences employee involvement in SP activities ($\beta = 0.423$, $p < 0.001$), however, there is no significant link between transformational leadership and employee performance ($\beta = 0.095$, $p = 0.090$). Thus, H3 is accepted and H4 is rejected. Moreover, employees’ involvement in SP-related activities has a positive and significant link with their performance at HEIs ($\beta = 0.320$, $p < 0.001$). Consequently, H5 is supported.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>Path coefficient ($\beta$)</th>
<th>$p$-value</th>
<th>Accepted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1: MOT $\rightarrow$ INV</td>
<td>0.542</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2: MOT $\rightarrow$ PER</td>
<td>0.456</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3: TLD $\rightarrow$ INV</td>
<td>0.423</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4: TLD $\rightarrow$ PER</td>
<td>0.095</td>
<td>0.090</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5: INV $\rightarrow$ PER</td>
<td>0.320</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3. Direct effects**

**Note(s):** $R^2$ values: INV = 0.753; PER = 0.663

**Source(s):** Authors' own work using WarpPLS 8 software
Moreover, given the $R^2$ values of employee involvement and performance which are 75 and 66%, respectively (Table 3), the current work’s model has a strong explanatory power (Cohen, 1988).

Mediation analysis
The current work further investigates the mediating role of employee involvement in the connection between motivation (MOT) and transformational leadership (TLD) (predictor variables) and performance (PER) (an output variable). Using WarpPLS’s automatic calculation of the indirect effects of $\beta$ and their linked $p$ values, we applied the most sophisticated and reliable approach of Kock (2014). Employing path isolation, the indirect effect $\beta$ between MOT and PER via INV was significant ($\beta = 0.315, p < 0.001$), proving that employee involvement in SP activities fully mediated the relationship between motivation and their performance. Thus, $H_6$ is accepted. Additionally, the indirect effect $\beta$ between TLD and PER via INV was significant ($\beta = 0.536, p < 0.001$), pointing out that employee involvement in SP activities fully mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and performance. Therefore, $H_7$ is confirmed (see Table 4).

Discussion and conclusions
This article investigates the influencers of academic staff performance, considering the mediating role of their involvement in the SP process at governmental HEIs in Oman. The results showed that academic staff motivation had a positive influence on their involvement in SP activities. This implies that academic staff members who possess a high level of motivation are likely to participate in the SP activities at their HEI more actively. This result is in line with the findings of prior studies (e.g. Govender and Parumasur, 2010; Mohsan et al., 2011) indicating how motivation enhances job involvement. Additionally, academic staff motivation positively impacts their performance. This illustrates that better performance in any work situation has resulted from increased motivation of employees. This result is compatible with earlier studies (e.g. Asim, 2013; Kuvaas and Dysvik, 2009; Osabiya, 2015; Shahzadi et al., 2014) that reveal the substantial role of motivation in improving employee performance. Next, transformational leadership is found to significantly influence employee involvement in SP activities. This implies that a transformational leader may motivate academic staff to actively engage in HEI strategic plan initiatives and activities. This finding is consistent with those of past studies (e.g. Basyir et al., 2020; Bodenhausen and Curtis, 2016; Cheng et al., 2012), realizing a positive connection between transformational leadership and employee involvement. In addition, the results concluded that transformational leadership does not have a significant link with employee performance. This unexpected outcome implies that academic staff performance at public HEIs in the Sultanate of Oman is not directly and significantly impacted by transformational leadership. On the one hand, other factors may be quite important in determining how they function. However, this also shows how leadership effectiveness is a complex, context-dependent phenomenon that produces different outcomes in different organizational circumstances. This result conflicts with past research (e.g. Al-Amin, 2017; Buil et al., 2019; Sundi, 2013), which found that the presence of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Path</th>
<th>Indirect effect $\beta$</th>
<th>$p$-value</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$H_6$</td>
<td>MOT $\rightarrow$ INV $\rightarrow$ PER</td>
<td>0.315</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>Mediation/accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H_7$</td>
<td>TLD $\rightarrow$ INV $\rightarrow$ PER</td>
<td>0.536</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>Mediation/accepted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source(s): Authors’ own work using WarpPLS 8 software

Table 4. Indirect effects
transformational leadership within the organization can improve workers’ performance. Moreover, the findings demonstrated that employees’ involvement in SP activities greatly raises their performance levels. This bolsters the claim that participating in SP activities could broaden employees’ skill sets and experiences, improving HEI performance and quality, which is considered the primary goal of accreditation in HEIs (Al Shraah et al., 2023). This result coincides with findings of past studies (e.g. Chughtai, 2008; Hoye, 2007; Rotenberry and Moberg, 2007; Sofijanova and Zabijakin-Chatleska, 2013) that found a connection between employees’ work involvement and how well they performed there.

Interestingly, the empirical results indicated that academic staff involvement in SP activities fully mediated the connection between motivation and performance as well as transformational leadership and their performance. These results reflect the fact that the SP of HEIs has a multitude of KPIs, which demand a certain set of actions from employees, along with the existence of motivation and transformational leaders. The preparation, coordination and execution of such actions, therefore, eventually improve their experiences and performance. These findings support past research revealing the mediating role of employee engagement in the link between motivation and performance (e.g. Riyanto et al., 2021) or transformational leadership and performance (e.g. Buil et al., 2019).

Given the afore-discussed findings, this article provides a set of academic contributions in various ways. First, it adds to the underpinning theories, such as Herzberg’s motivation-hygiene theory (Herzberg, 1966) and LMX theory (Gerstner and Day, 1997) by developing and testing an integrated theoretical framework concerning the key determinants of faculty performance in HEIs in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and the Middle East region as well. Second, it contributes to the body of knowledge in HRM in the HEIs domain by illuminating the relationship between motivation, transformational leadership, SP involvement and academic staff performance. More specifically, this study represents one of the first efforts to assess the impact of academics’ motivation and transformational leadership on their involvement in SP activities and performance in HEIs. To the best of our knowledge, no published research has looked at the effects of such influencers on university faculty performance, notably in the GCC nations including the Sultanate of Oman. Additionally, it is regarded as one of the earliest investigations of the mediating role of academics’ involvement in SP activities in the links between motivation, transformational leadership and performance in HEIs.

Practical and social implications
This article produces various contributions to senior managers and faculties at HEIs. The results illustrated that academic motivation and transformational leadership are both powerful catalysts for boosting employee involvement in SP activities and overall organizational success. That is, managers of HEIs should motivate academic staff members to be actively involved in SP activities and committed to their tasks. As a result, the overall atmosphere is improved, which benefits academic staff and students alike and raises the profile of the university. Additionally, HEIs should use a multidimensional strategy involving opportunities for professional development, equitable appreciation of achievements and a positive work environment. A sense of ownership is cultivated by acknowledging and coordinating individual aspirations with HEI objectives, leading to creating a positive workplace-related culture and behavior. On the other hand, a lack of academic motivation can result in low levels of SP involvement, poor work performance, decreased research output and even turnover, all of which can jeopardize the standing and competitiveness of the institution.

Moreover, HEIs should frequently place a strong emphasis on principles that are closely related to transformative leadership, such as intellectual curiosity, innovation and ethical
reasoning. HEIs should also offer networking opportunities, exposure to many viewpoints and access to mentorship, all of which help produce well-rounded and sympathetic leaders. These leaders, in turn, encourage job-related involvement and achievement at work by developing diverse cultures, stimulating creativity and encouraging continuous growth. Since faculty members, belonging to HEIs in Oman, come from different cultures and nationalities, academic leaders should manage and promote inclusivity, including transformation, by establishing and upholding pertinent regulations (Dahleez et al., 2023). Further, leaders at HEIs need to prioritize a vision that goes beyond the ordinary and inspires their team members. This entails developing a compelling mission that aligns with the beliefs and goals of the workforce. The role of transformative leadership in HEIs ultimately fosters not only individual career advancement but also innovation and organizational success. Furthermore, the empirical results illustrated how important employee involvement in SP activities is to HEIs. To ensure that faculty members are aware of the SP process and its goals, HEIs must first develop efficient communication channels to facilitate knowledge sharing regarding the SP among staff members. This flow of information can be facilitated by open forums, online forums and regular meetings. A culture of involvement in the SP could be reinforced by praising and encouraging new ideas and outstanding initiatives by different stakeholders at HEIs. Assembling cross-functional teams with representatives from several departments can also bring a range of perspectives to the table and improve SP discussion. Finally, offering staff workshops and training in the SP elements can provide them with the knowledge and abilities needed to fully participate in the SP process. The aforementioned procedures lead to raising employee productivity at HEIs.

Limitations and further studies
Despite the contributions of this research, there is a set of limitations representing potential future research areas. The factors determining academic performance at governmental HEIs in Oman were the basis for the current study. Future research might therefore examine similar factors in other nations or compare two nations with quite distinct educational systems and cultural backgrounds. This may alleviate the issue of the results’ generalizability. Additionally, this study used a quantitative approach and a questionnaire to gather data from respondents. Future studies may adopt a qualitative approach or a mixed approach that uses multiple data collection instruments. This results in providing serviceable insights and a thorough comprehension of the study matter. In addition, future research can expand the study’s model by including further independent variables. The impact of staff satisfaction, trust, workload, burnout and/or stress on their performance can be analyzed by further work. Future studies could also examine the moderating effect of workplace spirituality, workforce agility and/or work-life balance on the paths between performance and its antecedents. In addition, it could be argued that the results of the associations between the studied variables might be related to institutional experience and position as well as demographic characteristics like gender and age. Future studies could thus look at these characteristics, as control variables, to help understand the links between such variables.

References


Appendix 1. Survey

Gender
( ) Male       ( ) Female

Age
( ) 20-30 years     ( ) 31-40 years     ( ) 41-50 years     ( ) more than 50 years

The name of the current higher education institution (HEI) in Oman you work at:
( ) University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS)
( ) Sultan Qaboos University (SQU)
( ) College of Sharia Sciences
( ) Vocational Training Colleges
( ) Others

Work experience at the current institution:
( ) 1 – 5 Years     ( ) 6 – 10 Years     ( ) 11 – 15 Years     ( ) 16 – 20 Years     ( ) More than 20 Years

Position (optional): ............................................................................................

Please rate the statements below according to your degree of agreement (1= strongly disagree; 5= strongly agree)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employee motivation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel a sense of personal satisfaction when I do my job well, including SP activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>My opinion of myself goes down when I do my job badly, including SP activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I take pride in doing my job as well as I can, including SP activities.</td>
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<td>I feel unhappy when my work, including SP activities, is not up to my usual standard.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I like to look back at a day’s work with a sense of a job well done, including SP activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I try to think of ways to do my job effectively, including SP activities.</td>
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</table>

Transformational leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership in the HEI, where I currently work, communicates a clear and positive vision</td>
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<td>of the future.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership in my HEI treats staff as individuals, supports and encourages their development.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership in my HEI gives encouragement and recognition to staff</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership in my HEI fosters trust, involvement, and co-operation among team members.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership in the HEI, where I currently work, encourages thinking about problems in new</td>
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<tr>
<td>ways and questions assumptions.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The leadership in my HEI is clear about its values and practices what it preaches.

Leadership in the HEI, where I currently work, instils pride and respect in others and inspires me to become highly competent.

**Employee involvement in strategic planning (SP)**

I like to be absorbed in my job, including the SP activities, while working in this HEI.

I consider my job, including SP activities, to be very central (important) to my existence.

Most of my personal life goals are job oriented, including involvement in SP activities.

I have very strong ties with my present job, including the SP activities, in this HEI which would be very difficult to break.

Most of my interests are centred around my job including SP activities for this HEI.

I live and breathe my job including the SP activities.

I am very much personally involved in my job, including the SP activities.

The most important things that happen to me involve my present job, including the SP activities for this HEI.

**Employee performance**

I am currently working at my best performance level for my HEI.

It is my right to use all my sick leave allowance. *(R)*

Employees should only do enough to get by. *(R)*

I try to be at work as often as I can.

I am one of the best employees at the work I currently do.

I am one of the slowest employees at the work I currently do. *(R)*

I set very high standards in my work for my HEI.

My work is always of high quality.

I am proud of my work performance.

Source(s): Authors’ own work

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**Corresponding author**

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