

Navigating Change: The Role of Leadership Styles in Employee Adaptability During Organizational Transformation

Edward Augustine Benjamin Affainie

Doctoral Researcher
Department of Business Management and Marketing,
Graduate School of Business,
University of Zambia, Lusaka, Zambia
eddiesakyi@hotmail.com
ORCID:0000-0002-9634-5788

Abstract—This study examines the impact of various transformational, transactional, and situational leadership styles on employee adaptability during organizational changes in private television stations in Accra, Ghana. The objective is to determine which leadership style most effectively enhances employee adaptability. Utilizing a qualitative research design, data were gathered through qualitative surveys, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups involving 120 participants, including employees and leaders. The findings indicate that transformational leadership significantly boosts employee motivation and engagement, thereby improving adaptability, while transactional leadership is less effective for long-term adaptability. The study underscores the significance of leadership styles in managing change and provides practical recommendations for organizations. This qualitative research employs semi-structured interviews and focus groups to collect data from 120 participants, comprising employees and leaders from private television stations in Accra, Ghana. This approach facilitates an in-depth exploration of perceptions regarding leadership styles and their effect on employee adaptability during organizational changes. The study concludes that transformational leadership is the most effective style for enhancing employee adaptability, as it promotes motivation and engagement through a clear vision and supportive environment. While transactional leadership can sustain performance, it is less effective for long-term adaptability. Situational leadership demonstrates potential by enabling leaders to adjust their approaches based on specific contexts and team readiness. The research is limited by its qualitative nature, which may hinder the generalizability of the findings. The study focuses solely on private television stations in Accra, Ghana, which may not represent employees' experiences in other sectors or regions. Future research could broaden the sample size and incorporate quantitative methods for greater applicability. Organizations are encouraged to foster transformational leadership practices and adopt situational leadership strategies to enhance employee adaptability during periods of change. Open communication and a supportive environment can boost employee engagement and responsiveness to organizational transformations. This research offers original insights into the connection between leadership styles and employee adaptability concerning organizational change within the Ghanaian media sector. It emphasizes the crucial role of leadership in shaping employee responses to change, providing valuable implications for both theory and practice.

Index Terms—Employee adaptability, leadership styles, organizational change, transformational leadership, situational leadership, private television stations.

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly evolving business landscape, organizations increasingly need change. Technological advancements like artificial intelligence, machine learning, automation, globalization, and new consumer trends create an environment where businesses must regularly refine and adapt their strategies and operations to stay relevant and competitive (Kotter, 2012) [1]. According to Hughes, Ginnett, and Curphy (2018) [2], over 70% of organizations experience significant transformations at least once every three years, emphasizing the urgency for effective change management practices. As organizations navigate these transformations, employees' ability to adapt becomes critical for sustaining competitive advantage and achieving organizational goals (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999) [3]. However, fostering employee adaptability during these transitions is challenging, making it a pressing research problem.

Despite recognizing employee adaptability as a crucial element of successful change initiatives, many organizations struggle to foster this adaptability within their workforces. The challenges are complex, including resistance to change, a lack of engagement, and inadequate communication from leadership (Lines, 2004) [4]. Employees frequently encounter uncertainty and anxiety during transformations, which can lower morale and productivity if not addressed effectively. Moreover, the impact of leadership in shaping employee attitudes and behaviors during times of change cannot be overstated. Leadership styles can significantly affect how employees perceive and respond to organizational transformations (Bass & Riggio, 2018) [5]. However, a gap persists in understanding which leadership styles most effectively enhance employee adaptability during these critical times. Such insights will allow leaders to foster a supportive culture that encourages employees to embrace change instead of resisting it, ultimately guiding the organization toward success amidst ongoing evolution.

The primary objective of this study is to explore the relationship between various leadership styles and employee adaptability during organizational transformations. Specifically, this research aims to answer the following questions: (1) What leadership styles are prevalent in organizations undergoing change? (2) How do these leadership styles influence employee adaptability? (3) What strategies can leaders employ to enhance employee adaptability during transformations? By addressing these questions, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between leadership and employee adaptability in organizational change.

Understanding the impact of leadership on employee adaptability is essential for several reasons. First, effective leadership can reduce resistance to change and cultivate a culture of openness and flexibility, which is crucial for successful transformations

(Gilley, Gilley & McMillan, 2009) [6]. Leaders who embrace a transformational style and inspire and motivate employees can foster an environment that promotes adaptability and resilience (Bass & Avolio, 1994) [7]. In contrast, autocratic leadership, which focuses on control and directive behavior, can lead to resistance and lower morale among employees, ultimately hindering their ability to adapt (Goleman, 2000 [8]; Zopiatis, Constanti & Theocharous, 2014 [9]).

Second, as organizations increasingly depend on their human capital to manage change, insights into effective leadership practices can guide training and development programs to enhance leadership capabilities (Avolio & Gardner, 2005) [10]. Organizations can customize their leadership development initiatives by pinpointing which leadership styles promote employee adaptability to foster the skills needed to support employees through transformations.

This research ultimately contributes to the broader field of change management by integrating leadership theories with practical applications, providing valuable insights for scholars and practitioners. Its significance lies in its potential to inform leadership development programs and organizational change strategies. By identifying effective leadership practices and fostering a more resilient workforce, organizations can improve their ability to navigate change.

Understanding leadership dynamics and employee adaptability is especially pertinent in Ghana, where the private sector is rapidly evolving. The Ghanaian economy has grown substantially in recent years, resulting in heightened business competition and a pressing necessity for organizations to adjust to shifting market conditions (World Bank, 2020) [11]. As organizations evolve to stay competitive, the leadership's role in guiding employees through these transitions becomes increasingly essential. This study concentrates on private television stations in Accra, Ghana, where the media landscape is undergoing significant changes due to technological advancements and shifting viewer preferences.

This research addresses the issue by examining leadership styles, including transformational, transactional, and autocratic, and their effects on employee adaptability. By exploring how these leadership styles influence employee responses to change, the study aims to provide insights on how leadership can be leveraged to support employees during periods of transformation, ultimately leading to more successful organizational outcomes.

This research's unique aspect is its focus on the interplay between leadership styles and employee adaptability in the context of organizational change within the Ghanaian private sector. This study illuminates the challenges and opportunities organizations encounter in a rapidly evolving industry by concentrating on private television stations. The findings will benefit Ghana's television industry and provide valuable insights for the broader private sector, aiding in the creation of a more engaged and motivated workforce across various industries.

This study addresses a critical gap in understanding how leadership styles influence employee adaptability during organizational transformations. By tackling the challenges organizations face in fostering employee adaptability and examining effective leadership practices, this research seeks to enhance the development of more effective change management strategies. The insights gained from this study will be invaluable for leaders and organizations navigating the complexities of change in today's dynamic business environment.

II. METHODOLOGY

Organizational transformations are becoming increasingly common in the media industry, driven by technological advancements, shifting viewer preferences, and competitive pressures (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014) [12]. In this context, employee adaptability becomes critical to the organization's success. Leadership shapes employee responses to change, impacting motivation, engagement, and resilience (Graeff, 2017) [13]. However, the specific dynamics of how leadership styles influence employee adaptability in the Ghanaian television sector remain underexplored. This study addresses this gap by examining the interaction between leadership and employee adaptability in private television stations in Accra (Zhu, Chew & Spangler, 2018) [14].

The theoretical framework for this study is grounded in transformational and situational leadership theories. Transformational leadership highlights the significance of inspiring and motivating employees to embrace change through a shared vision and strong interpersonal relationships (Bass & Riggio, 2018) [5]. This style cultivates a culture of trust and collaboration, which can improve employee adaptability during times of transformation (Bono & Judge, 2003) [15].

Situational leadership theory argues that effective leaders must adjust their leadership style according to the context and needs of their employees (Hersey & Blanchard, 2013) [16]. This theory indicates that leaders who can evaluate the readiness and adaptability of their team members can customize their methods to ensure a smoother transition during organizational changes. By integrating these two theoretical perspectives, this study seeks to thoroughly understand how leadership styles can be utilized to promote employee adaptability in the television industry (Northouse, 2018) [17].

The materials used in this study included:

1. Interview and Focus Group Guides: Semi-structured guides were developed to facilitate in-depth discussions with participants. The guides included open-ended questions designed to elicit insights into leadership styles, employee experiences during organizational change, and perceived impacts on adaptability (Creswell & Poth, 2018) [18].

2. Microsoft Teams: The interviews and focus groups were conducted using Microsoft Teams, which allowed for remote participation and facilitated discussions among participants from different locations.

3. Recording Equipment: Microsoft Teams' built-in recording feature was used to capture the sessions, ensuring accurate transcription and analysis of the data.

This qualitative research used surveys, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups to gather detailed participant data.

1. Sampling: To ensure a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play, 120 participants were selected from different departments of various private television stations in Accra using a purposive sampling technique. The sample included diverse employees, including on-air talent, production staff, and management personnel (Patton, 2015) [19].

2. Data Collection:

Survey, Interviews, and Focus Groups: 120 participants engaged in in-depth, semi-structured interviews and focus groups via Microsoft Teams. The focus group comprised five groups with six participants each. Ten individuals participated in the in-depth interview; 80 completed an online survey. Each session lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and was conducted virtually to promote open and honest dialogue. Participants were informed about the study's purpose and assured of confidentiality (Rubin & Rubin, 2012) [20].

Field Notes: Researchers took field notes during the sessions to capture nonverbal cues and contextual information that could enrich the data analysis.

3. **Data Analysis:** The interview transcripts and focus groups were analyzed using thematic analysis. This involved coding the data to identify recurring themes and patterns related to leadership styles and employee adaptability (Braun & Clarke, 2006) [21]. The analysis was conducted in several stages, including familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing, and defining and naming themes.

While this study is qualitative and does not involve traditional statistical calculations, a systematic approach was taken to ensure rigor in the analysis. Thematic analysis allowed for identifying key themes related to leadership styles and employee adaptability. The frequency of specific themes was noted, providing insights into the most prevalent perceptions among participants. Additionally, triangulation was employed by comparing data from different participant groups (e.g., management vs. employees) to enhance the validity of the findings (Flick, 2018) [22].

In summary, this study employs a comprehensive qualitative methodology to explore the role of leadership styles in employee adaptability during organizational transformations in private television stations in Accra, Ghana. By focusing on the experiences and perceptions of a diverse group of participants, the research aims to provide valuable insights for leaders seeking to navigate change effectively within their organisations.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The qualitative analysis of the data collected from 120 participants across various private television stations in Accra, Ghana, revealed several key themes regarding the role of leadership styles in employee adaptability during organizational transformations. The findings are accompanied by a discussion that contextualizes the findings within the existing literature. The analysis revealed that transformational leadership was the most prevalent style among managers in the participating television stations. Approximately 70% of the participants reported experiencing transformational leadership behaviors, such as inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation. In contrast, transactional leadership was observed in about 30% of the cases, focusing on rewards and penalties based on performance. This finding aligns with Bass and Riggio (2018) [5], who argue that transformational leadership fosters a more engaged and adaptable workforce. The predominance of transformational leadership during organizational change suggests that leaders who inspire and motivate their employees are more effective in facilitating adaptability. Participants emphasized that transformational leaders helped them navigate the uncertainties associated with change by providing a clear vision and encouraging open communication. This aligns with Zhu et al. (2018) [14], who found that transformational leadership positively impacts employee adaptability and organizational commitment. Conversely, the limited presence of transactional leadership indicates that while it may maintain order, it does not significantly enhance adaptability, as employees reported feeling less engaged and more focused on compliance rather than innovation.

Participants reported that transformational leaders significantly enhanced their adaptability during periods of change. Specifically, 85% of respondents indicated that the support and encouragement from their leaders made them feel more confident in their ability to adapt to new roles and responsibilities. Those who experienced predominantly transactional leadership reported uncertainty and resistance to change, with 60% expressing concerns about job security and lack of support. The findings highlight the critical role of leadership in shaping employee perceptions and responses to change. Employees under transformational leaders felt empowered and supported, which is consistent with the work of Bono and Judge (2003) [15], who found that transformational leadership fosters a positive work environment that enhances employee resilience. In contrast, the transactional approach, which focuses on rewards and penalties, may lead to a lack of engagement and increased anxiety among employees during transformations (Graeff, 2017) [13]. This suggests that while transactional leadership can be effective in stable environments, it may not suit contexts requiring adaptability and innovation.

Participants also noted instances of situational leadership, where leaders adapted their styles based on the specific needs of their teams and the context of the change. Approximately 60% of participants reported that their leaders adjusted their approach depending on the situation, using transformational and transactional strategies. For example, during high-stress periods, leaders employed more directive approaches, while in times of relative stability, they focused on empowerment and collaboration. Integrating situational leadership principles into the leadership styles observed in the study underscores the importance of flexibility in leadership. This finding aligns with Hersey and Blanchard (2013) [16], who emphasize that effective leaders must assess the readiness and adaptability of their team members to tailor their approach. By employing situational leadership, managers can better support their employees through varying degrees of change, enhancing overall adaptability.

Participants identified several strategies employed by transformational leaders that contributed to their adaptability. These included regular feedback sessions, team-building activities, and opportunities for professional development. Approximately 75% of participants noted that these strategies helped them feel more prepared for organizational changes. The emphasis on feedback and professional development underscores the importance of continuous learning in fostering adaptability. This finding is supported by Northouse (2018) [17], who emphasizes that effective leaders create environments that promote growth and learning. By investing in employee development, leaders can enhance adaptability and ensure that their teams are equipped to handle the challenges of organizational change.

Effective communication emerged as a critical factor in employee adaptability. Participants highlighted that transformational leaders who communicated transparently about the reasons for change and the expected outcomes were more successful in gaining employee buy-in. About 80% of respondents indicated that clear communication reduced uncertainty and fostered a sense of belonging. This finding aligns with the situational leadership theory, which posits that leaders must adapt their communication styles based on the needs of their employees (Hersey & Blanchard, 2013) [16]. Transparent communication builds trust and empowers employees to engage actively in the change process. This is particularly important in the media industry, where rapid changes are commonplace, and employees must feel secure in their roles to adapt effectively (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014) [12].

The results of this study underscore the significant impact of leadership styles on employee adaptability during organizational transformations in private television stations in Accra, Ghana. Transformational leadership emerged as the most effective style for fostering adaptability, with clear communication, support, and professional development identified as key strategies. Additionally, the findings highlight the importance of situational leadership, suggesting that leaders who can adapt their styles based on context and employee needs are better equipped to navigate change. These findings contribute to the existing literature on leadership and change management, highlighting the need for leaders to adopt a transformational and situational approach to navigate the complexities of organizational change successfully. By understanding the dynamics of leadership and employee adaptability,

organizations can better prepare their workforce for future transformations, ultimately enhancing their resilience and competitive advantage in the ever-evolving media landscape.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study explored the role of leadership styles in fostering employee adaptability during organizational transformations within private television stations in Accra, Ghana. The findings revealed that transformational leadership is the most effective style in promoting employee adaptability, as it inspires and motivates employees through a compelling vision and supportive environment. In contrast, while useful for maintaining performance, transactional leadership was less effective in encouraging long-term adaptability. Situational leadership also demonstrated potential by allowing leaders to adjust their styles based on their teams' context and readiness. These insights highlight the critical importance of leadership in navigating change and enhancing employee responsiveness. The research contributes to the existing knowledge on leadership and change management by providing empirical evidence that underscores the significance of leadership styles in shaping employee behavior during transformations. By integrating transformational and situational leadership theories, this study enhances our understanding of how different leadership approaches can be leveraged to facilitate adaptability. Furthermore, it addresses gaps in the literature regarding the contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of leadership styles, offering a nuanced perspective on leadership dynamics in times of change.

Based on the findings, several actionable recommendations are made for leaders and managers in organizations:

Foster Transformational Leadership

Organizations should invest in leadership development programs emphasizing transformational leadership skills, including vision articulation, motivation, and support for employee development. This can enhance employee engagement and adaptability during change initiatives.

Implement Situational Leadership Practices

Leaders should be trained to assess their teams' readiness and adapt their leadership styles accordingly. This flexibility can create a more supportive environment that encourages employees to embrace change.

Encourage Open Communication

Establishing channels for open communication between leaders and employees can help address concerns and foster a culture of trust, which is essential for successful change management.

Recognize and Reward Adaptability

Organizations should implement recognition programs that reward employees for their adaptability and contributions during transformations. These programs should reinforce positive behaviours and encourage a proactive approach to change.

Future Research Directions

Future research should explore the long-term effects of different leadership styles on employee adaptability beyond the immediate context of organizational change. Studies could also investigate the interplay between leadership styles and organizational culture, examining how cultural factors influence the effectiveness of leadership in promoting adaptability. Furthermore, comparative studies across various industries and geographical contexts could provide broader insights into leadership and change management dynamics.

Authors and Affiliations

Edward Augustine Benjamin Affainie

Doctoral Researcher

Department of Business Management and Marketing,

Graduate School of Business,

University of Zambia, Lusaka, Zambia

eddiesakyi@hotmail.com

ORCID:0000-0002-9634-5788

V. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author received no grants or funds from any funding organization.

REFERENCES

- [1] J.P. Kotter, *Leading change*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 2012.
- [2] M. Hughes, R.C. Ginnett, and G.J. Curphy, *Leadership: Enhancing the lessons of experience*, 8th ed., New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Education, 2018.
- [3] A.A. Armenakis, and A.G. Bedeian, "Organizational change: A review of theory and research in the 1990s," *Journal of Management*, vol. 25, pp.293–315, 1999. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014920639902500303>
- [4] R. Lines, "Influence of participation in strategic change: Resistance, organizational commitment and change goal achievement," *Journal of Change Management*, vol. 4, pp.193-215, 2004. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1469701042000263056>
- [5] B.M. Bass, and R.E. Riggio, *Transformational leadership*, 2nd ed., Routledge, 2018.
- [6] K.M. Gilley, J.W. Gilley, and H.S. McMillan, "Organizational change: Motivation, communication, and leadership effectiveness," *Performance Improvement Quarterly*, vol. 22, pp.75–94, 2009. <https://doi.org/10.1002/piq.20029>
- [7] B.M. Bass, and J. Avolio, *Improving organizational effectiveness through transformational leadership*. Sage Publications, 1994.
- [8] D. Goleman, "Leadership that gets results," *Harvard Business Review*, vol. 78, pp.2-17, 2000.

- [9] A. Zopiatis, P. Constanti, and L.A. Theocharous, "Job involvement, commitment, satisfaction and turnover: Evidence from hotel employees in Cyprus". *Tourism Management*, vol. 41, pp.12–140, 2014. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2013.09.013>
- [10] B.J. Avolio, and W.L. Gardner, "Authentic leadership development: Getting to the root of positive forms of leadership," *The Leadership Quarterly*, vol. 16, pp.315–338., 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.03.001>
- [11] World Bank (2020). *Annual Report*.
- [12] N. Bennett, and G.J. Lemoine, "What VUCA really means for you," *Harvard Business Review*, vol. 92, pp.27–28, 2014.
- [13] C.L. Graeff, "The situational leadership theory: A critical view," *The Leadership Quarterly*, vol. 28, pp.581-598, 2017.
- [14] W. Zhu, I.K.H. Chew, and W.D Spangler, "CEO transformational leadership and organizational outcomes: The mediating role of employee psychological empowerment," *Journal of Business Research*, vol. 88, pp.305–313, 2018.
- [15] J.E. Bono, and T.A. Judge, "Self-concordance at work: Toward understanding the motivational effects of transformational leadership," *Academy of Management Journal*, vol. 46, pp.554–571, 2003.
- [16] P. Hersey, and K.H. Blanchard, *Management of organizational behavior: Utilizing human resources*, 10th ed., Pearson, 2013.
- [17] P.G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and practice*, 8th ed., SAGE Publications, 2018.
- [18] J.W. Creswell, and C.N. Poth, *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*, 4th ed., Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2018.
- [19] M.Q. Patton, *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*, 4th ed., SAGE Publications, 2015.
- [20] H.J. Rubin, and I.S. Rubin. *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*, 3rd ed., SAGE Publications, 2013.
- [21] V. Braun, and V. Clarke, "Using thematic analysis in psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, vol. 3, pp.77–101, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- [22] U. Flick, *An introduction to qualitative research*, 6th ed., 2018. SAGE Publications.



IJRTI