

INTELLECTUAL STIMULATION AND EMPLOYEE PROSOCIAL MOTIVATION IN INTERVENTIONIST AGENCIES IN RIVERS STATE

Gabriel, J. M. O.

Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Administration and Management, Rivers State University, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

and

Oguara, A. A. T.

Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Administration and Management, Rivers State University, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This study explored the influence of intellectual stimulation on employee prosocial motivation in Interventionist Agencies in Rivers State, Nigeria. Drawing from the theoretical foundations of Social Exchange Theory and Vertical Dyad Linkage, the study examined how leaders who foster intellectual stimulation can influence prosocial behaviours such as altruism and self-sacrifice among their employees. A cross-sectional survey design was carried out, involving 351 respondents across eight key interventionist agencies, including NDDC, NEMA, RSSDA, and HYPREP. Data were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis via SPSS (v. 23.0). The findings reveal a statistically significant and positive relationship between intellectual stimulation and prosocial motivation dimensions. Practical implications are discussed, including policy reforms in leadership development, staff training, and organisational design. This paper contributes to the broader segment of transformational leadership in public sector contexts, offering insights relevant to scholars and other industry stakeholders.

Keywords: Intellectual Stimulation, Prosocial Motivation, Altruism, Self-Sacrifice, Transformational Leadership, Interventionist Agencies

INTRODUCTION

In modern times, employee prosocial motivation, which is the inclination to engage in behaviours that benefit others has become a cornerstone for organisational performance and ethical governance, especially within public sector institutions tasked with delivering critical services (Grant, 2019). Interventionist agencies in Rivers State, Nigeria, such as the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), and Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency (RSSDA), are key drivers of socio-economic

development and public welfare. Yet, these agencies often grapple with systemic issues including bureaucratic inertia, poor service delivery, and declining public trust.

Amid these challenges, leadership has emerged as a transformative lever to reinvigorate employee engagement and motivation. Intellectual stimulation, which is a key dimension of transformational leadership, offers a promising avenue for inspiring employees to think independently, solve problems creatively, and adopt altruistic behaviours that align with organisational goals (Bass & Avolio, 1993).

This study centred on intellectual stimulation, a leadership practice that encourages innovation, critical thinking, and open-mindedness and its role in fostering prosocial behaviours among employees. The study posits that in interventionist agencies which seem to have characteristics such as rigid structures and ethical lapses, intellectual stimulation can act as a catalyst for change by enhancing employees' sense of purpose, engagement, and willingness to go beyond the call of duty. The purpose of this study was therefore to examine the influence of intellectual stimulation on employee prosocial motivation in Interventionist Agencies in Rivers State

The specific objectives were to:

1. Determine the extent to which intellectual stimulation influences altruistic behaviour among employees.
2. Assess the relationship between intellectual stimulation and self-sacrificial behaviours in the workplace.

Conceptual framework

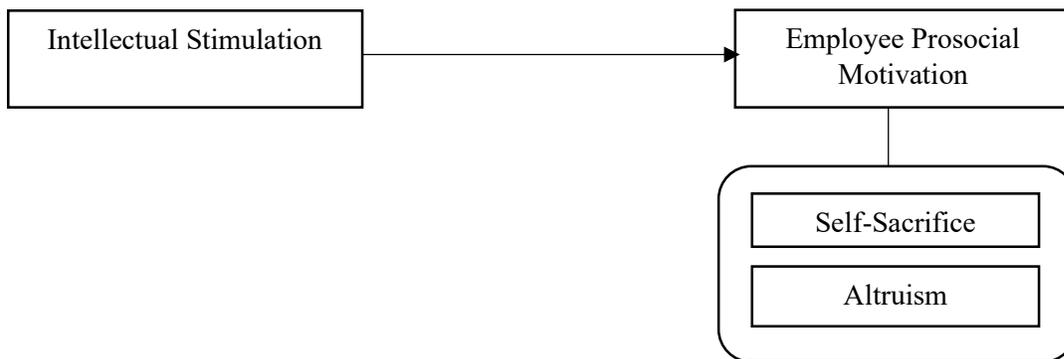


Figure 1: Relationship between Intellectual Stimulation and Employee Prosocial Motivation
Source: Desk Research (Dimensions of Transformational Leadership adapted from Burns, (1978) \,and Measures of Employee Prosocial Motivation adapted from Penner, (2002).

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between intellectual stimulation and altruism in interventionist agencies in Rivers State?

2. What is the relationship between intellectual stimulation and self-sacrifice in interventionist agencies in Rivers State?

Statement of Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H₀₁: There is a significant positive relationship between intellectual stimulation and altruism.

H₀₂: There is a significant positive relationship between intellectual stimulation and self-sacrifice

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundation

This study is underpinned by two principal theories: Social Exchange Theory (SET) and Vertical Dyad Linkage (VDL) Theory. These theories offer insight into how intellectual stimulation influences prosocial motivation within organisations.

Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1986) posits that social behaviour results from an exchange process aimed at maximising benefits while minimising costs. In the context of leadership, transformational leaders who engage in intellectual stimulation encourage creativity, questioning assumptions, and critical thinking, thereby nurturing discretionary behaviours that benefit the organisation (Bass & Riggio, 2006). This in turn leads to higher levels of altruism and self-sacrifice (Cropanzano et al., 2017).

Vertical Dyad Linkage Theory (Dansereau et al., 1975), which eventually developed into Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory, focuses on the unique dyadic relationships leaders form with individual subordinates. Employees engaging in high-quality exchanges (in-groups) where trust, mutual respect, open communication and developmental opportunities exist, leads to intrinsic motivation and discretionary behaviours (Breevaart & Bakker, 2018). Intellectual stimulation is a critical tool for cultivating these high-quality exchanges, challenging employees' cognitive frameworks, promoting learning, and validating their capacity to contribute meaningfully (Banks et al., 2020).

Together, Social Exchange Theory and Vertical Dyad Linkage theories offer a strong foundation for understanding how intellectually stimulating leadership practices can nurture intrinsic motivation and foster selfless, ethically grounded behaviour among employees within organisations.

Conceptual Review

Concept of Intellectual Stimulation

Intellectual stimulation is a dimension of transformational leadership characterised by a leader's ability to challenge existing assumptions, promote critical thinking, and encourage creativity among followers (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Leaders who exhibit this trait do not merely provide answers; instead, they inspire their subordinates to reframe problems, explore alternative innovative solutions, and pursue learning opportunities. This is vital in complex and dynamic environments where innovation and adaptability are crucial (Hoch et al., 2018).

Concept of Prosocial Motivation

Prosocial motivation refers to an individual's desire to benefit others, typically manifesting in behaviours like helping, sharing, showing compassion and demonstrating commitment (Grant & Berg, 2021). In organisational contexts, prosocial motivation is manifested by staff going beyond job requirements to assist colleagues, volunteer for extra tasks, and engage in self-sacrificing behaviours. These behaviours contribute to team cohesion, ethical climate, and institutional effectiveness (Bolino et al., 2021). Prosocial motivation is driven by a combination of intrinsic factors (such as empathy and moral values) and extrinsic cues (such as leadership behaviours and organisational norms). Intellectual stimulation strengthens prosocial motivation by nurturing employees' sense of autonomy, competence, and purpose. (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Empirical review

Empirical studies show a positive correlation between intellectually stimulating leadership and employee prosocial behaviour. For instance, Choi (2006) found that employees under intellectually stimulating leaders were more likely to exhibit high levels of organisational citizenship behaviour. Hoch et al. (2018) demonstrated that intellectual stimulation fosters innovative performance and enhances work engagement. Similarly, Lemoine et al. (2019) found that intellectually stimulating leaders cultivate psychologically safe environments where employees feel empowered to contribute creatively and ethically.

In Nigeria, Gabriel (2015) examined the influence of various organisational and leadership factors on organisational citizenship behaviours and corporate resilience in Nigeria's domestic aviation sector. The study found that employees who perceived their leaders as intellectually stimulating, encouraging innovation, critical thinking, and independent problem-solving demonstrated higher tendencies to engage in altruistic and civic behaviours. Edonomokumor et al. (2025) found that intellectual stimulation mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and creative behaviours, which helps negate staff turnover. This therefore shows intellectual stimulation's dual role in fostering both innovation and organizational loyalty. Likewise, Adenigbagbe et al. (2025) reported that intellectual stimulation had an impact in significantly influencing employee performance in Abuja-based SMEs. Global research affirms the value of intellectual stimulation in enhancing workplace prosocial motivation. However, empirical studies focusing specifically on interventionist agencies remain limited.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a cross-sectional correlational survey design. This approach enables the collection and analysis of data from a large sample at a single point in time, suitable for examining the relationships between variables. The population comprised 4,170 employees across eight interventionist agencies in Rivers State: NDDC, NDBDA, RIWAMA, RSESA, HYPREP, Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs, RSSDA, and NEMA. Using Bowley's proportional allocation formula, a sample size of 351 respondents was determined and distributed proportionally across the agencies. A structured questionnaire was developed, consisting of three sections: demographic data, intellectual stimulation items (as a dimension of transformational leadership), and prosocial motivation items (altruism and self-sacrifice). All items used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Data were analysed using SPSS version 23.0. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test bivariate relationships,

and Multiple Regression Analysis assessed the predictive influence of intellectual stimulation on prosocial motivation, controlling for demographic variables.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Bivariate Analysis

Table 1: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlations Coefficient showing the relationship between Intellectual Stimulation and Employee Prosocial Motivation in Interventionist Agencies in Rivers State

		Intellectual Stimulation	Self-Sacrifice	Altruism
Intellectual Stimulation	Pearson Correlation	1	.619**	.581**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	230	230	230
Self-Sacrifice	Pearson Correlation	.619**	1	.728**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	230	230	230
Altruism	Pearson Correlation	.581**	.728**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	230	230	230

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Researcher's desk/SPSS Output, 2025

H₀₁: Relationship between Intellectual Stimulation and Altruism
Pearson correlation showed a statistically significant positive relationship ($r = 0.619$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that employees who perceived their leaders as intellectually stimulating were more likely to engage in altruistic behaviours.

H₀₂: Relationship between Intellectual Stimulation and Self-Sacrifice
There was also a significant positive relationship between intellectual stimulation and self-sacrifice ($r = 0.581$, $p < 0.01$). This supports the view that intellectually stimulating leadership encourages employees to put organisational goals above personal interests.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings from this study show that there is a significant and positive relationship between intellectual stimulation and prosocial motivation among employees in interventionist agencies in Rivers State. This suggests that when leaders actively encourage innovation, critical thinking, and problem-solving, employees are more inclined to act in ways that benefit others, including their coworkers, clients, and the wider organisation. These results are consistent with prior research which emphasises that innovative leadership behaviours foster a sense of intrinsic motivation, particularly when leaders challenge subordinates to question assumptions and approach problems from new perspectives (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Furthermore, the data reflect that intellectual stimulation contributes meaningfully to the development of a prosocial climate, one in which employees are willing to go beyond the boundaries of their formal roles to support the goals of the organisation (Gabriel, 2015). This aligns with the theoretical proposition of Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1986), which suggests

that employees respond to supportive and developmental leadership with reciprocal behaviours such as cooperation, altruism, and organisational citizenship.

Importantly, the findings also indicate that intellectual stimulation enhances employees' perception of being valued and respected, thereby fostering a culture of trust and mutual respect. This outcome supports the core tenets of Vertical Dyad Linkage Theory (Dansereau et al., 1975), where high quality leader-subordinate exchanges are found to promote greater engagement, ethical behaviour, and discretionary effort.

As a result, this study aligns with the findings of previous researchers who emphasised the motivational impact of intellectually engaging leadership practices. Leaders who challenge assumptions, value creative input, and foster autonomy are more likely to inspire altruistic and self-sacrificial behaviours among employees.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Intellectual stimulation as a leadership strategy significantly enhances prosocial motivation among employees in interventionist agencies. Leaders who intellectually stimulate not only encourage innovation and critical thinking but also strengthen employee alignment with organisational and societal goals. These outcomes are crucial for the effectiveness and ethical standing of interventionist agencies in Rivers State.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were proposed:

1. Implementation of targeted training programs on leadership, with a focus on intellectual stimulation.
2. Cultivate a culture of openness, ethical practice, and continuous learning to support leadership efforts.
3. Recognition and reward of prosocial behaviours to reinforce intrinsic motivation among employees.

REFERENCES

- Adenigbagbe, I., Adenigbagbe, K., Egbon-Charles, C., & Gambo, N. (2025). *Impact of transformational leadership dimensions on employee performance among SMEs in Abuja, Nigeria*. European Journal of Business and Innovation Research. <https://doi.org/10.37745/ejbir.2013/vol13n187104>
- Banks, G. C., McCauley, K. D., Gardner, W. L., & Guler, C. E. (2020). A meta-analytic review of authentic and transformational leadership: A test for redundancy. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 31(1), 101379. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2019.04.006>
- Bass, B. M., & Avolio, B. J. (1993). Transformational leadership and organizational culture. *Public Administration Quarterly*, 17(1), 112–121.
- Bass, B. M., & Riggio, R. E. (2006). *Transformational leadership* (2nd ed.). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Blau, P. M. (1986). *Exchange and power in social life*. Routledge.
- Bolino, M. C., Klotz, A. C., Turnley, W. H., & Harvey, J. (2021). Exploring the dark side of organizational citizenship behavior. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and*

- Organizational Behavior*, 8, 145–170. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-012420-091323>
- Breevaart, K., & Bakker, A. B. (2018). Daily job demands and employee work engagement: The role of daily transformational leadership behavior. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 23(3), 338–349. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ocp0000082>
- Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. Harper & Row.
- Choi, J. (2006). A motivational theory of charismatic leadership: Envisioning, empathy, and empowerment. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 13(1), 24–43. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10717919070130010501>
- Cropanzano, R., Anthony, E. L., Daniels, S. R., & Hall, A. V. (2017). Social exchange theory: A critical review with theoretical remedies. *Academy of Management Annals*, 11(1), 479–516. <https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2015.0099>
- Edonomokumor, T., Arhinful, R., Mensah, L., & Obeng, H. A. (2025). Creative behavior as a mediator between transformational leadership and turnover intention in Nigeria's oil and gas industry. *Future Business Journal*, 11, Article 139. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s43093-025-00563-1>
- Dansereau, F., Graen, G., & Haga, W. J. (1975). A vertical dyad linkage approach to leadership within formal organizations. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 13(1), 46–78. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0030-5073\(75\)90005-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/0030-5073(75)90005-7)
- Gabriel, J.M.O. (2015). Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) and Corporate Resilience in the Domestic Aviation Sector in Nigeria. *A thesis submitted to the postgraduate school, Rivers State University of Science and Technology, Nkpoluoroworukwo, Port Harcourt, in fulfillment of the requirement for the award of doctor of philosophy (phd) degree in management, Faculty of Management Science*
- Grant, A. M. (2019). The motivation of meaningful work. In R. Ryan (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of human motivation* (2nd ed., pp. 273–286). Oxford University Press.
- Grant, A. M., & Berg, J. M. (2021). Prosocial motivation at work: When, why, and how making a difference makes a difference. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 72, 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010419-050756>
- Hoch, J. E., Bommer, W. H., Dulebohn, J. H., & Wu, D. (2018). Do ethical, authentic, and servant leadership explain variance above and beyond transformational leadership? A meta-analysis. *Journal of Management*, 44(2), 501–529. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206316665461>
- Lemoine, G. J., Hartnell, C. A., & Leroy, H. (2019). Moral approaches to leadership: A review of ethical, authentic, and servant leadership. *Academy of Management Annals*, 13(1), 148–187.
- Penner, L. A. (2002).** "Dispositional and Organisational Influences on Sustained Volunteerism: An Interactionist Perspective." *Journal of Social Issues*, 58(3), 447-468.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2020). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. Springer.