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Perspectives of Colombian Higher Education Deans and Faculty Directors on Transformational Leadership

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MA, American College of Education, 2015

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Leadership emerges as a powerful force in the effort toward achieving quality education.
The transformational leadership style inspires leaders to work toward a common goal to
create change. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore higher education
deans' and faculty directors' perspectives on their practice of transformational leadership
in higher education institutions in Colombia. Transformational leadership theory served
as the conceptual framework for this study. Data were collected from semi structured
interviews with 6 higher education deans and 6 faculty directors. Findings from coding
analysis revealed 7 themes: leadership commitment, shared vision, idealized influence,
inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, organizational performance, and future
orientation. Colombian higher education leaders may use the findings to improve
decision-making practices, increase motivation, and enhance organizational commitment
and effectiveness.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to God, and to my family, in special to my mother Ayda Nancy Alban Guzman, who has always encouraged me to do and to be my best. From a little girl, she told me that with self-discipline and responsibility our dreams can come true, she showed me that the limit is beyond the sky, and that nothing is impossible if I set my mind and heart to. My mother has always supported me and has always been there for me. She allowed me to stand on her shoulders and achieve. Thank you, Mom, for being example of faith, love, and perseverance. Thank you for being my mother. I love you!!

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I thank God for an outstanding achievement I could not have done without his blessings upon my life. I would like to thank my family and friends for their support and motivation. Completing this educational journey certainly would not have been possible without the guidance, direction, and support of my chairperson Dr. J Don Jones, and my committee members, Dr. Donald Wattam, and Dr. Danielle Hedegard, I am very grateful for their invaluable support and feedback. I would like to thank my Editors Joe J Gredler, and Rob Thompson. I thank my colleagues at Walden University for the encouragement and for believing in me throughout my doctoral study.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Higher education institutions in Colombia must achieve the high academic

standards required by the Colombian Ministry of Education, which is evidenced by the

high-quality accreditation established by the law 30 of 1992 (Camacho, Messina, & Uribe

Barrera, 2017). A critical aspect of achieving accreditation for Colombian higher

education institutions is to have qualified leaders within the academic organizations

(Murillo-Vargas, Gonzalez, & Urrego-Rodríguez, 2020). According to Gumus, Bellibas,

Esen, and Gumus (2018), effective leadership practices bring academic success to

educational organizations. Transformational leadership empowers leaders to achieve

higher levels of performance within their organizations. Transformational leadership in

the field of educational leadership permits leaders to increase their commitment and

capacity in meeting goals (Bush, 2017). Considering the importance that transformational

leadership brings to educational organizations, many countries around the world have

focused on improving their leadership practices based on the transformational leadership

principles (Maureira Cabrera, 2018). However, in some Latin American countries such as

Colombia, transformational leadership has been considered mostly for instructional

practices in higher education institutions, and a lack of information exists concerning

transformational leadership practices in Colombian higher education institutions at the

leadership management level (Mejía, 2018). The purpose of the current study was to

explore deans' and faculty directors' transformational leadership practices in higher

education institutions in Colombia. As education changes, leaders must become

transformational leaders to inspire educational members to go beyond their task

requirements and contribute to enhancing quality education for Colombian society (Sierra Villamil, 2016). This study may contribute to the body of knowledge that supports educational leaders in enhancing their leadership roles, improving their decision-making practices, increasing their motivation, and deepening their organizational commitment and effectiveness within their educational organizations.

In the following chapter, I detail the scope of the study and the justification for the approach to the research problem. I present the background and context of the study to address the research questions. The chapter also contains the research problem, purpose of the study, research questions, conceptual framework, nature of the study, definitions of key terms, assumptions, scope and delimitations, and limitations. The chapter concludes with the significance of the inquiry and a summary.

Background

In Colombian secondary schools, teachers and students professed a positive perception when asked about school directors' transformational leadership practice (Leal-Soto, Albornoz Hernández, & Rojas Parada, 2016). D. C. Acosta (2017) conducted a study of secondary school leaders' effective leadership practices. D. C. Acosta identified positive communication skills with teachers, strength in decision-making, and positive teamwork skills as the most important leadership practices. Additionally, D. C. Acosta provided insight into teachers' and students' perception of transformational leadership among Colombian school directors. In a mixed-methods study, Al-Husseini and Elbeltagi (2016) sampled 439 teaching staff and 10 leaders from higher education institutions to examine the importance of transformational leadership practices in enhancing educational

process innovation. This study provided valuable information to my research as it relates to the utilization of transformational leadership within higher education institutions in developing countries. This research also served as a basis for interview questions in my study. Alizadeh and Amirkabiri (2017) studied the consequences of transformational leadership dimensions on the idea of organizational commitment in a sample of 554 individuals; findings indicated that the organizational commitment of teachers is more justified through their style of transformational leadership, which may improve the quality of education within higher education institutions. Bouwmans, Runhaar, Wesselink, and Mulder (2017) examined the extent to which transformational leadership positive perception is related to team learning. Findings revealed a positive association between transformational leadership with team learning through some additional factors, such as decision-making, interdependence, and teachers' efficacy. Bouwmans et al.'s results provided insights into my study relative to how transformational leaders can have a positive influence on team working environment, decision-making, and teacher efficacy. Elrehail, Emeagwali, Alsaad, and Alzghoul (2018) found that transformational leadership and knowledge sharing have a positive impact on higher education institutions' innovation. Elrehail et al. provided information about essential tools for measuring transformational leadership perception within higher educational contexts. In a quantitative study, Khan and Ismail (2017) evaluated how transformational leadership behaviors affect student learning performance, learning motivation, learner communication satisfaction, and sense of leadership. Findings revealed that transformational leadership behaviors such as idealized impact, intellectual incitement,

and attributed charisma are the most important characteristics of individual learning

outcomes, such as communication satisfaction and learner sense of leader trustworthiness

in instruction. Khan and Ismail's study provided insight into the need for training of

stakeholders to improve their perception of transformational leadership as a tool that may

enhance their educational performance. In a descriptive-quantitative study, Nuñez,

Nuñez, Acosta, Parejo, and Palma (2018) studied the managerial skills of leaders in

Barranquilla, Colombia, and found that leaders focus their leadership techniques on

planning strategies to encourage growth and better perception and practice. This study

provided insight into leadership challenges in the development of strategic plans,

elements, and processes at the leadership management level. Ortega, Pérez, and Luis

(2016) found that personality and suitability shape the profile of the university teacher as

a transformational leader. Moreover, the teacher as a transformational leader must

implement a leadership style following the situations presented during the management

of the developmental process, the guidelines established in the pedagogical model, and

the specific characteristics of the students form whom they are responsible (Ortega et al.,

2016). This study provided insight into the primary dimensions that educational leaders

must address, which are related to school improvement. Pérez-Ortega, Jiménez-Valdés,

and Romo-Morales (2017) sampled 627 faculty employees in a quantitative study to

examine the role of transformational leadership within the educational management

context as a tool to encourage higher education change and university transformation.

Results from Pérez-Ortega, Jiménez-Valdés, and Romo-Morales (2017) validated the

need to use transformational leadership in an educational management, as well as the

need to conduct further research on transformational leadership in other cities of
Colombia. In a qualitative multiple case study, Pineda-Báez, Bauman, and Andrews
(2019) explored the transformational leadership practices of teachers from Colombian,
Canadian, and Australian universities through unstructured interviews. The interviews
revealed that all teachers had a classroom role and teacher leadership responsibilities.
When addressing educational management, leaders can achieve effective skills by
collaboratively working with teachers. This study provided insight into effective
leadership practices within higher education institutions.

Problem Statement

Leadership in education is one of the most controversial and confusing topics,
given the multiple perspectives that have been assumed within educational settings
(Suwadi, 2017). Relationships among perceptions of leadership and the variables that
exist within an educational context were identified by Jovanovica and Ciricb (2016), who
indicated that when educational managers use a transformational leadership style,
teachers are more satisfied with their position and drive toward their professional growth,
which supports a more effective student learning culture. However, a gap exists
concerning how researchers elsewhere in the world have addressed this topic. In Latin-
American countries like Colombia, transformational leadership has not been explored in
depth within university settings (Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016). Transformational
leadership research in Colombia has focused on transformational instructor leadership
rather than educational management leadership (Bucurú & Rojas Minotta, 2018).
Research addressing this topic has concentrated on how teachers perceive and practice

transformational leadership within their instructional practices, but there was a lack of information on how educational managers or educational administrators perceive and practice transformational leadership (Mesa, Bernal, Marcos Abed, & Valdes Ramirez, 2017). Following with this line, Flessa, Bramwell, Fernandez, and Weinstein (2018) noted the importance of further research in Latin American higher education institutions concerning leadership styles and leadership perspectives within education management. Castillo and Hallinger (2018) conducted a similar systematic review of Latin American educational journals that discuss leadership and management. The findings yielded recommendations for enhancing research capacity about educational leadership among Latin American universities. Henley, Contreras, Espinosa, and Barbosa (2017) found that over 40% of professors in Colombian universities perceive that successful higher education instruction depends on leaders who demonstrate transformational leadership behaviors and good practice related to transformational leadership principles. However, Henley et al. did not consider the transformational leadership perception at the educational management level. Further research, including input from educational leaders at this level, may be critical to have a broader insight into the phenomenon (Becker et al., 2017). Rozo, Sandra, and Abaunza de González (2016) measured the transformational leadership perceptions of 94 professors from eight major universities in Northwest Colombia and found that 68.1% had a positive perception of transformational leadership practice among teachers. However, the study did not include school managers or administrators. The limited findings reaffirmed the necessity of a study addressing

educational leaders (i.e., deans and faculty directors) to increase the knowledge about this important leadership style within higher education contexts in Colombia.

The current study contributed to the body of knowledge needed to address the lack of information concerning the perspectives of deans and faculty directors on their practice of transformational leadership in Colombia. There was a need for further research on transformational leadership by exploring the higher education deans' and faculty directors' perspectives on their practice of transformational leadership. This study may contribute to establishing strategies and curricular actions aimed at the exercise of leadership that leads to the optimization of the teaching-learning process in higher education universities and institutions in Colombia.

Purpose of the Study

This basic qualitative study addressed the perspectives of deans and faculty directors regarding their transformational leadership practices in Colombian higher education institutions. Few studies had been carried out that focused on the leadership style of educational leaders who are at the management level in Colombian higher education institutions. The basic qualitative design was used to investigate the central phenomenon of this study, which involved deans' and faculty directors' perspectives on their transformational leadership practices in higher education institutions in Colombia. The educational community may find this study useful for improving the leadership practices of educational leaders within their organizations.

Research Questions

In this study, I used the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1: What are Colombian higher education deans' and faculty directors' understanding of transformational leadership?

RQ2: What are the perspectives of higher education deans and faculty directors in Colombia regarding how their transformational leadership practice has impacted their organizations?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that informed this study was based on transformational leadership theory. Burns first introduced the theory in 1978, and Bass (1997) later expanded on Burns's work. I selected the transformational leadership theory to serve as the conceptual framework for this study because this theory focuses on leaders' perception and practice of transformational leadership, which is reflected in the output of those for whom the leader is responsible. Positive perceptions of transformational leadership improve leaders' decision-making, motivation, organizational commitment, organizational climate, and the basis for enhancing quality education (LePine, Zhang, Crawford, & Rich, 2016). Bass and Avolio (1994) established a set of five elements of transformational leadership: (a) idealized influence or attributed charisma, (b) idealized influence or behavioral charisma, (c) inspirational motivation, (d) intellectual stimulation, and (e) individualized consideration. Jiang, Zhao, and Ni (2017) claimed that idealized influence thrives on the leader's perception and acceptable practices. Additionally, Para-González, Jiménez-Jiménez, and Martínez-Lorente (2018) asserted that a leader's positive perception of transformational leadership practice encourages followers to challenge themselves to contribute positively to an organization. Transformational

leaders are able to engage, inspire, and empower others to build a thriving organization (Bohorquez, 2016).

A transformational leadership approach generates important change in people's lives and within organizations (Khalili, 2016). Transformational leadership restructures values, perspectives, expectations, and aspirations of employees to contribute to building and practicing effective leadership skills. The components of the transformational leadership theory supported this study by facilitating the exploration of transformational leadership practice and determining participants' perceptions concerning the outcome of their transformational leadership skills to contribute to improving the quality of the Colombian higher education institutions. Transformational leadership theory is described in further detail in Chapter 2.

Transformational leadership theory provides an understanding of effective leadership practices and relationships between school leaders and those involved in the educational community (Galli, 2019), which was related to RQ1 in the current study. Transformational leadership theory is built on the concept that a transformational leader is perceived through their transformational leadership practices. A transformational leader is perceived as an outgoing and knowledgeable person who sets high and clear standards, treats others with respect, motivates and inspires them, and contributes to the success of their organization (Boamah, Laschinger, Wong, & Clarke, 2018). This concept was directly related to Research Question 2. The transcripts of the interviews were analyzed to determine leaders' (i.e., deans' and faculty directors') transformational

leadership understanding and to explore their perspectives regarding their transformational leadership practices in higher education institutions in Colombia.

Nature of the Study

I conducted a basic qualitative study including semistructured interviews with six higher education deans and six faculty directors from two universities in Colombia (three deans and three faculty directors per institution). As Creswell and Creswell (2017) indicated, qualitative researchers attempt to understand how individuals interpret or perceive their experiences and the meaning they give to those experiences. Qualitative methodology provides opportunities for the researcher to step beyond the evident and attempt to know the world of the participants from their perspectives. For these reasons, I chose the basic qualitative design as the ideal approach for this study. Merriam and Grenier (2019) suggested that qualitative research can be applied at all levels of education to describe and understand unique situations and interactions in a particular context. The main reason for using this approach was to discover how participants viewed the phenomenon that formed the basis for this study. The phenomenon addressed in this study was the perspectives of deans and faculty directors regarding their transformational leadership practices.

According to Mihas (2019), the basic qualitative design is used when the researcher is interested in understanding the way in which the participants involved in a study perceive a particular phenomenon. Moreover, the researcher is interested in how people interpret their experiences, construct their world, and give meaning to those experiences. The purpose of the basic qualitative design is to understand how people

make sense of their lives, their worlds, and their experiences, and the goal is to uncover

and interpret the meanings (Eisner, 2017). Qualitative methodology was appropriate for

this study because I explored how leaders (i.e., deans and faculty directors from two

Colombian universities) perceived their transformational leadership practices based on

their leadership experiences.

Permission to conduct the study in Colombia was requested from the two

universities and individual participants. The participants included six deans and six

faculty directors from two Colombian universities (three deans and three faculty directors

per institution). The selection of participants was through purposeful sampling (see

Naderifar, Goli, & Ghaljaie, 2017). Participants were individuals working as educational

leaders in Colombian higher education institutions (i.e., deans and faculty directors). The

time frame identified to recruit participants was also purposive because the starting time

of the academic year needed to be taken into consideration to schedule the interviews.

Participants did not have any relationship with me, which enabled me to avoid any

potential conflict of interest or professional influence. I examined the data within the

context of the two research questions, and I organized the findings according to the

themes that emerged through the coding of the interview transcripts. The interviews were

audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, translated into English, and converted to text files.

For coding and storing the interviews, I used the qualitative data analysis software

Atlas.ti. As a form of respondent validation, I conducted member checking to allow

participants to check and approve my reading of the transcript data (Varpio, Ajjawi,

Monrouxe, O'Brien, & Rees, 2017). Member checking is a way of discerning whether the

data are consistent with the participants' responses (Thomas, 2017). Member checking improves the credibility of qualitative research. In this study, I emailed the interview transcripts to the participants, and I asked them to verify their accuracy (see Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019).

I followed the policies and procedures of confidentiality and the protection of participants and their information. The identities of universities and participants were not disclosed. Moreover, legal and ethical procedures for data collection and informed consent were considered before I collected data. Finally, participants were informed of the type and the purpose of the study.

Definitions

Academic standards: The output of higher education in terms of students' achievement (Alach, 2016).

Academic performance: The level to which an individual has achieved their short- or long-term educational goals (Stebbins, 2017).

Educational management: A field that addresses the process of planning, directing activities, and organizing tasks in an educational organization. Moreover, educational management is concerned with the effective use of human and material resources to accomplish the educational organization's goals (Oplatka, 2019).

Educational motivation: An internal process that makes a person feel inspired to move toward an academic purpose or goal or to carry out and achieve an academic task, which plays a large role in learning (Wentzel, 2017).

Follower: A person who supports and admires another individual or set of ideas (Giddens, 2018).

High-quality institution: An organization that has a clear mission and vision and is effective in meeting its goals (Balcerzak & Pietrzak, 2016).

Higher education: The learning process that occurs at a university, college, or institution beyond a high school level (Bathmaker, 2016).

Leadership: A method of guiding, supporting, and inspiring others. Leadership is linked to change, movement, and persuasion (Grint, Jones, & Storey, 2016).

Leader: An individual who has the power to motivate or inspire followers. This person has the capacity to influence a group of people toward the achievement of a purpose or a goal (Wirtz, Rigotti, Otto, & Loeb, 2017).

Organizational commitment: A connection between the employee and the organization through effective behavior and attitudes (Cheah, Chong, Yeo, & Pee, 2016).

Perspective: A particular thought, attitude, or point of view toward or way of regarding something (Evertson & Brophy, 1976).

Social change: The constant transformation of individuals and their interactions within the society that change cultural and social institutions (Komives, 2016).

Assumptions

Some basic assumptions were considered in this study. The first assumption was that the participants understood and practiced transformational leadership within their organizations. Also, I assumed that they understood the interview questions and were capable of responding to them. Moreover, I assumed that the participants would answer

the questions honestly and openly. Finally, I assumed that the instrument used in this inquiry would provide a reliable and valid measure of transformational leadership perspectives. These assumptions were important in the context of the study to provide clarity, reliability, and validity to the research process.

Scope and Delimitations

I addressed the transformational leadership perspectives of deans and faculty directors from Colombian higher education institutions relative to their transformational leadership practices. Because deans and faculty directors are the primary leadership management personnel within higher education institutions in Colombia, exploring their perspectives regarding their transformational leadership practices may inform future studies about educational leadership. The scope of this study was limited to six deans and six faculty directors from two higher education institutions in Colombia recruited through purposeful sampling (three deans and three faculty directors per institution). The rationale for this scope was to explore how a small sample of 12 educational management leaders perceive their transformational leadership practices so that I could identify their leadership potential and improve future higher education curricula in leadership. Selection criteria for participants included deans and faculty directors who had been working for a minimum of 1 year at a Colombian higher education institution.

Findings from this study may inform future research in educational leadership and may inform transformational leadership practices that may enrich the higher education curriculum concerning leadership. The knowledge gained from this study may provide insight as to how a certain group of Colombian leaders perceive their transformational

leadership practices to improve higher education quality in Colombia. Findings may be transferable to other higher education institutions throughout Latin America.

The full range theory is the most common theory that supports studies about leadership (Sosik & Jung, 2018). However, this theory was excluded from the current study because it does not focus on the transformational leadership style. Rather, full range theory focuses on all of the different leadership styles, providing only a general description of transformational leadership, which was the main focus of this inquiry. Therefore, transformational leadership theory was chosen to support this study.

Limitations

When reviewing the literature, I observed a gap in research on transformational leadership at the management level in Latin American higher education institutions, which included Colombia. Because the study included a small number of participants, the findings yielded implications for further study. Instead of including a large sample, I focused on the deepness of data and the exhaustive analysis of them (see Maxwell, Delaney, & Kelley, 2017). A large number of participants can bolster transferability, though there are benefits to obtaining a rich description afforded by the inclusion of a small, targeted group.

A second limitation was that only deans and faculty directors were included as data sources for this study. Other forms of data may have facilitated a broader understanding of the phenomenon. In addition, interviews with other members of higher education institutions may have provided a more extensive understanding of

transformational leadership practice, but a broader scope may have detracted from the perspectives of the leaders who were at the management level.

I was the sole person responsible for collecting and analyzing data in this study. I currently work at a Colombian higher education institution. Therefore, the potential for researcher bias existed. To minimize researcher bias and to strengthen the reliability and validity of this study, I did not have any connection or relationship with the study site institutions or participants. Moreover, I followed strict protocols to enhance the reliability and validity of data collection and analysis.

<div align="center">**Significance**</div>

This study may contribute to the field of education by providing insight into how deans and faculty directors perceive their practice of transformational leadership to enhance their leadership role and the role of others within higher education institutions, and to improve higher education in Colombia. This study may increase knowledge of transformational leadership at the educational management level in higher education settings in Colombia. Research on educational leadership styles has been limited in the Colombian higher education system as compared to other parts of the world (Pineda, 2016). The results of this study may inform higher education leaders (i.e., deans and faculty directors) in Colombia of the potential benefits of transformative leadership practices within their organizations. These practices may include improvement of their leadership skills, decision-making practices, motivation, and organizational commitment. Moreover, findings from this study may support the implementation of leadership

programs and services within the regular curriculum, and may provide opportunities for further participation in professional training on leadership.

According to Han, Seo, Yoon, and Yoon (2016), transformational leadership theory encourages effective leadership practices that can be applied to many aspects of individuals' lives, including personal and professional. In addition, exploring transformational leadership practices to promote educational quality in Latin America, and subsequently developing these practices may foster improvement in higher education managers' and educational community members' appreciation of the difficulties that Latin America countries face and the contributions they can make to improve them. Setting positive goals, developing critical thinking to solve problems, and making wise decisions to help others and contribute to the organization's success are skills not only for leaders but also for people who seek to live a successful life (Fund, 2019).

This study may also be significant in relation to social change because it may improve social conditions by helping to improve transformational leadership practices. The study adhered to Walden University's mission, which focuses on utilizing education and knowledge to promote positive social change. This study may contribute intellectually and socially as a beneficial foundation for researchers to develop better leaders who transform individuals and organizations for the betterment of society. Finally, this study about deans' and faculty directors' perspectives regarding their transformational leadership practices in Colombian higher education institutions may be significant for future practice for educational policymakers who are interested in developing transformational leadership strategies that benefit educational leaders. These

leaders may become more aware of the benefits of transformational leadership practices, and they may endorse further development of educational leadership within higher education contexts.

Summary

Transformational leadership provides educational opportunities for leaders to contribute to achieving a high-quality education within Colombian higher education institutions. Much of what is known about transformational leadership in higher education contexts is limited to instructional leadership, and a significant knowledge gap exists in how educational leaders such as educational managers (i.e., deans and faculty directors) respond to the leadership challenges of 21st-century education. To understand the unique aspects of transformational leadership that are present in Colombian higher education institutions, deans and faculty directors who had been working for a minimum of 1 year at a higher education institution in Colombia were interviewed to explore perspectives they had regarding their transformational leadership practices.

Chapter 2 includes the literature search strategy used to explain how the literature review was conducted. A detailed description of the conceptual framework and a comprehensive review of the literature are provided to support this inquiry on transformational leadership. The topics that I address in this review include the following: (a) transformational leadership, (b) five practices of exemplary leadership, (c) Colombian ministry of education standards for higher education accreditation and their relationship to transformational leadership, (d) definitions of leadership, (e) relation of transformational leadership to high-quality education, and (f) development of

transformational leadership in Colombian higher education institutions. This chapter also

includes a section on the gap in the research and the importance of transformational

leadership in Colombian higher education.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Research on transformational leadership in Colombian higher education institutions has concentrated on professors' perception of this leadership style within their instructional activities, but there was a lack of information on how Colombian higher education leaders who are at the management level perceive and practice this style of leadership within their professional practices (Mesa et al., 2017). The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore higher education deans' and faculty directors' perspectives on their practice of transformational leadership in higher education institutions in Colombia. According to Sandoval and Guerrero (2018), transformational leadership has a critical impact on Latin American education because students and schools seem to be affected positively when effective transformational leadership practices exist within the educational organizations. Transformational leadership in Latin American countries such as Colombia have been explored in elementary and secondary educational settings and have focused on instructional practice (Bernasconi & Rodríguez-Ponce, 2018). A gap in the literature existed regarding educational leaders' perspectives on their transformational leadership practices in Colombian higher education institutions. A qualitative study addressing how educational leaders (i.e., deans and faculty directors) perceive their transformational leadership practices may contribute to (a) increasing the body of knowledge about educational leadership in Colombian higher education institutions, (b) achieving a more in-depth understanding among educational leaders regarding transformational leadership, and (c) improving the quality of Colombian higher education based on leadership practices.

Major sections of this chapter include the literature search strategy, the conceptual framework, and an exhaustive review of the current literature regarding educational leadership, effective leadership practices, transformational leadership and its effective practices within the educational context, Colombian higher education, Colombian secondary and elementary education, and its relationship with both leadership and transformational leadership. Other concepts discussed include leaders' leadership style, leadership management in higher education, Colombian higher education accreditation, and standards. I conclude the chapter with a summary of major themes in the literature.

Literature Search Strategy

Databases and other resources were consulted to conduct a comprehensive literature review of printed and digital material from the past 5 years. I used Walden University's library portal as the primary source to access the following databases: ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, Academic Search Complete, ERIC, Education Resource Complete, SAGE, and PsycINFO. In addition to these databases, I used Google Scholar to increase access to the most current literature. I also reviewed other resources, such as online/printed journals and trade publications, for recent relevant studies and articles pertaining to transformational leadership. Colombian journals, magazines, books, and publications about transformational leadership in higher education institutions in Colombia were taken into consideration as well to ensure the academic rigor of a comprehensive literature review. All articles were peer reviewed.

During the literature search process, I used the following keywords to search the literature: *transformational leadership*, *educational leadership*, *leadership management*,

transformational leadership perception, *transformational leadership practices*, and

Colombian education. Initially, several articles were returned from the broadest relevant

search term, *transformational leadership in Colombian education,* with a publication date

of less than 5 years and full-text access. Once the terms *current leadership practices*,

Colombian higher education, or *leadership skills* were added, fewer than eight results

were returned. Other concepts included *qualitative research*, *basic qualitative design*,

interviews, and *qualitative data analysis*. A broader search term of *leadership* yielded

around 1,455 results, which were narrowed using the limiters *transformational*

leadership, *transformational leadership in education*, *transformational leadership*

practices, and *higher education and its relationship with transformational leadership*.

The narrowed parameters yielded articles and studies that were relevant to the current

study. As a consequence of the limited amount of available research on transformational

leadership in Colombian higher education, the search terms *transformational leadership*

in Latin American education and *transformational leadership in higher education in*

Latin American were applied to the literature search. Research related to transformational

leadership in higher education yielded the largest number of resources and led to the

discovery of some articles directly relating to transformational leadership in higher

education at the management level.

Google Scholar was an important source in which a large number of scholarly

articles were found. These tools provided access to thousands of matches that were

returned using the same search parameters. The downside to using this tool was the large

quantity of related articles that needed to be manually sorted to find academically

rigorous material that was accessible and appropriate for the current study.

Conceptual Framework

Transformational leadership theory refers to the idea of leadership based on a

team-oriented culture, effective leadership practices, and positive change within

organizations (Wang, Demerouti, & Le Blanc, 2017). Transformational leadership theory

enables leaders to follow effective leadership principles that are meant to inspire leaders

to bring out the true potential to effect change. A transformational leader encourages

followers through permanent support (Duan, Li, Xu, & Wu, 2017). Follower commitment

may increase as the leader's perception of their transformational leadership practices is

positive and shared (Tabassi, Roufechaei, Bakar, & Yusof, 2017). Transformational

leadership theory allows the optimization of commitment to values and improving the

outcomes for the community and stakeholders (Afsar, Badir, Saeed, & Hafeez, 2017).

Practicing transformational leadership principles motivates the followers so that they

voluntarily align their vision with the organization's vision. Transformational leadership

theory enhances leaders' positive perspectives that lead to collective goals and

achievements (Dong, Bartol, Zhang, & Li, 2017). Transformational leadership theory

focuses on increasing positive perceptions of the motivation that enables leaders to build

trust and confidence in their leadership practices, and enables organizations to achieve

better results inside and outside of the organizations. Transformational leaders analyze

their perspectives regarding their transformational leadership practice to look for

explanations that require them to rethink old methods of problem-solving in order to

apply new perspectives to resolve new issues (Sun, Chen, & Zhang, 2017). Ding, Li, Zhang, Sheng, and Wang (as cited in Rosenbach, 2018) affirmed that transformational leadership theory is used to encourage the pursuit of excellence, inspire self-development and improvement, and achieve a sustainable commitment to the organization and community.

Transformational leaders may add value to the organization through their perceived trustworthiness and integrated standards of excellence, which are considered critical aspects of effectiveness (Ramsey, Rutti, Lorenz, Barakat, & Sant'anna, 2017). Transformational leaders are supportive, friendly, attentive, and charismatic when assessing the needs of an organizations (Maqbool, Sudong, Manzoor, & Rashid, 2017). In practice, transformational leaders within the educational field (a) influence teachers to work toward a common goal and align to the vision of the school, (b) create a pleasant environment that fosters collaboration, (c) include teachers in the decision-making process, (d) pay attention to the needs of the school's employees, and (e) lend support to teachers experiencing challenges in the classroom to achieve quality education (Boamah et al., 2018). I chose the transformational leadership theory to support this study because the effective practice of transformational leadership principles promotes cohesion and collaboration through shared decision-making, support, intellectual stimulation, motivation, and shared values, resulting in achieving a critical understanding of leadership practices and a positive perception that enables positive change to occur within organizations (see Anderson & Sun, 2017).

In the next section, transformational leadership and transformational leadership practices in higher education contexts are described and framed within the higher education context. Concepts related to educational leadership, management leadership in the field of higher education, and quality higher education in Colombia are examined.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts

Leadership in Education

The concept of leadership, as a complex social phenomenon, is influenced by culture, as are the criteria of leadership effectiveness (Aguilar & Correa, 2017). The fact that someone is considered a leader depends on others perceiving that person as such, and that perception is informed by the belief system of a society (Bejarano, 2016). A manager could be considered a good leader in a certain country, whereas in another country the same manager may be seen as a tyrant; the perception of subordinates will determine the effect that leadership practice has on them (Espinosa, Contreras, & Barbosa, 2016).

The leadership style of an organization is reflected in the culture of the organization and its relationship with society; if a leader distrusts their power, it is likely that other members of the social organization will act in a similar way when interacting with colleagues and the community (Bligh, Kohles, & Yan, 2018). If a leader works collaboratively and is open, it is likely to promote the same attitudes among staff, and the leader may collaborate with other organizations. In most cases, the organizational culture is defined by the style of its leader. If the organization is faithful to its philosophy and mission, the style of its leader must be consistent with them (Contreras, Vesga, & Barbosa, 2016).

According to the style of coherent leadership, leaders of the organizational field agree on the variety of changes they are experiencing and will continue to face organizations in the present century (Shanafelt & Noseworthy, 2017). The speed of technological changes threatens to overcome the speed of adaptive capacity not only of individuals but also of institutions; to be a sustainable organization in this century, a significant change in the strategies used for human resources development is needed at the organizational and educational level (Allui & Sahni, 2016).

The model of total leadership rank suggests that to develop internal leaders, it is necessary to work toward a permanent improvement in the behavior and the potentials of individuals and teams (Somenzari, Ramos, & Sacomano, 2017). In this way, the followers achieve an internal locus of control, undergo a transformation in their beliefs and values, and go beyond their interests to achieve the common good, producing an increase in their effort that exceeds the expectations they had (Rajesh & Suganthi, 2016).

Regarding the origin and evolution of transformational leadership, reference is made to the main theories that have arisen around this topic (Benavides, 2016). There has been discussion of classic leadership concepts such as the features and behaviors, as well as situational, charismatic, and transactional leadership, until reaching meaningful leadership skills known as transformational leadership (Cragg & Spurgeon, 2018).

The term *transformational leadership* was coined by Downton in 1973 as a response to the needs of modern organizations; the term offered a new alternative for the study of leadership and more appropriate tools to assess the real behavior of people linked to an organization (Espinoza-Solis & Elgoibar, 2019). At the same time, Lindsey,

Nuri-Robins, Terrell, and Lindsey (2018) affirmed that different leadership studies in previous decades covered not only business but also political, military, and educational problems, so it was necessary for experts and scientists in the study of the subject to begin developing a new option that addressed not only the business leader practices but the leader who could transform their business (Willis, Clarke, & O'Connor, 2017).

It is in this order of ideas, according to the Hoch, Bommer, Dulebohn, and Wu (2018), the theories of "The Great Man" (Bass, 1990; Northouse, 2004) and later behavioral and situational studies, were an input for the emergence of theories much more integrative and holistic as the exchange theory "Follower Leader" (Schrieseim, Castro and Cogliser, 1999) and the "Meta Way" model (Evans, 1970; House, 1971; House & Dessler, 1974; House & Mitchell, 1974 ; Fiedler, 1967), but without the latter being sufficient to assess the real type of leadership in organizations (García, Pantoja, & Duque, 2011).

This new context leads to the formal development of a leadership model that would serve as a tool to face new business challenges. It was James M. Burns who, in the year of 1978, described a new leadership model that caught the attention of academics of the time. Developed from the analysis of biographies of several political leaders, this model led to the identification of two types of opposing leaders located in a continuum. From one extreme, the transactional leaders; who, according to Burns, lead from exchanges (for example, jobs by votes or salary increases in exchange for increased productivity). On the other, there are the transformational leaders, who stimulate and

inspire their subordinates to achieve extraordinary results and at the same time, develop

their leadership skills (Nguyen, Mia, Winata, & Chong, 2017).

Further, in 1995, Bernarda, based on the concepts proposed by Burns, develops a

new theory based on the approach that a transformational leader measures himself, in

terms of his influence on the followers, in the way he transforms and motivates them by

means of charisma, intellectual excitement and individual consideration (Hermosilla et

al., 2016).

This historical context gives clues to the integration of the classical theories that

were necessary to arrive at the transformational leadership model, and those theories

contributed a fundamental aspect of transformational leadership to this new model: the

influence and inspiration that the leader must have on his followers in search of

competitive behaviors and attitudes (Cragg & Spurgeon, 2018). When talking about

transformational leadership, it also necessary to refer to transactional leadership.

Transformational leadership differs from transactional leadership in terms of the

relationship and exchange of information between superiors and subordinates (Blanch et

al., 2016). Transactional leadership seeks to maintain stability instead of promoting

change in an organization through regular economic and social exchanges in which

specific objectives are achieved, both for leaders and followers (Cecconello et al., 2017).

Transformational Leadership Style

Transformational leadership is a popular topic among scholars around the world.

(Anderson, 2017). Research on this topic has appeared in the literature used in the United

States in educational research, as well as in practice. In Latin American countries,

transformational leadership has been studied as an instructional practice more than as a leadership management practice (Hammad & Hallinger, 2017). Leadership practices encourage leaders to work toward achieving specific goals to improve the quality of organizations through the ideals of equality, fairness, and justice. Transformational leaders understand the importance of motivating followers to go beyond their self-interests and to attend to their necessities.

The transformational leadership concept was introduced by Burns in 1978 and further developed by Bass in 1985 based on leaders in diverse professions, such as business executives, military officers, and politicians. According to Burns, the concept of transformational leadership had been used for almost 25 years in different countries, and in the field of applied research and practice. Several studies indicate that transformational leadership is one of the most popular leadership styles. Bass proposed that practicing transformational leadership enables employees to help others, and inspires them to work more effectively toward their organization's vision and mission.

Transformational leadership scholars affirm that transformational leaders must build a vision and exhibit positive behavior; they also must support group and individual goals (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Yukl, 1994). Transformational leaders empower individuals and encourage them to implement change (Alqatawenh, 2018). According to Bass (1985), transformational leadership occurs when leaders influence their followers by increasing their positive perception and awareness of the importance and efficacy of their roles and tasks within their organizations, making followers or subordinates aware of their needs for personal and professional growth, accomplishment, and development,

while motivating subordinates to seek the common good of the organization instead of pursuing individual benefit.

Effective practices of transformational leadership occur when a leader inspires and motivates other people to share a vision and gives them the resources needed for developing their full potential and achieving a common goal. Transformational leaders become role models within their organizations, and they are optimistic and cooperate to generate organizational commitment, as well as focus on the subordinate' needs for growth and improvement (Rosenbach, 2018). According to Ghavifekr, Hoon, Ling, and Ching (2017), transformational leaders encourage problem-solving practices and accept new ideas from their followers.

A transformational leader also attempts to generate and facilitate learning opportunities for followers and sometimes may perform the role of a coach or a mentor. Bass (1985) said that there are four dimensions that characterize transformational leadership. The first dimension is charisma. The charismatic leader inspires, gains respect and trust, and increases optimism. Inspiration is the second dimension, which focuses on leaders' behavior as a role model for followers and subordinates. The third dimension is individual consideration. This dimension enables leaders to recognize and determine followers' needs and provide them with opportunities for customized training sessions and activities for growth within their positions. The last dimension of transformational leadership is intellectual stimulation, which focuses on decision, creativity, and innovation. According to Girma (2016), a transformational leader one who empowers others to do the best for the organization and who acts as a role model with strong values

and principles, considering all ideas and viewpoints to foster a spirit of cooperation within an organization, and create a vision of change.

Finally, transformational leaders are responsible for helping the organization perform beyond expectations, as these leaders influence a sense of mission by stimulating learning experiences and arousing new ways of thinking (Christensen et al., 2019).

Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership

Effective leadership practices enable leaders to carry out their tasks adequately. Kouzes and Posner (2018) used different techniques to evaluate leadership practice in private and public organizations. They found similar aspects that characterize an effective leader. Honesty was identified as the first essential quality of an exceptional leader, followed by competence, and finally vision and inspiration. The five practices of exemplary leadership are operationalized in the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) to assess leader behaviors from the perspectives of leaders, colleagues, and subordinates (Kouzes & Posner, 2018). Considering the characteristics recognized above, the five effective practices that Kouzes and Posner identified are as follows:

- Modeling the way: leadership by example by aligning one's actions and beliefs;
- Inspiring a shared vision: engaging colleagues and peers toward common objectives;
- Enabling others to act: empowering followers into cooperative and collaborative actions;

- Challenging the process: inspiring innovative ideas to achieve positive

  change;

- Encouraging the heart*:* recognizing employees' contributions to the common

  goals of the group or organization.

The extent to which the leader demonstrates each of the five practices depends on the organization, individual leader, and the demands of a given situation (Kouzes & Posner, 2018). Empowering others to act efficiently towards positive goals within organizations is the most crucial leadership habit; whereas inspiring shared vision is the most challenging practice to achieve. Nonetheless, translating a shared vision into action can produce powerful results (Ndalamba, Caldwell, & Anderson, 2018).

Transformational Leadership Practices Within the Educational Context

High-quality education demands that educational institutions innovate in their educational management and instructional processes to encourage a sense of inclusion that can motivate educational members to create different ideas that apply in their work, improve the performance of the organization, and promote collaboration and integration toward the achievement of common goals. Therefore, educational institutions require leaders who can establish an adequate organizational vision, inspire motivation, understand and communicate emotions, and at the same time, show interest in their followers (Ramos-Garza & Ramos-Garza, 2019). These requirements demand transformational leaders who understand the importance of practicing the principles of this leadership style. Moreover, these same leaders must hold positive perceptions concerning their leadership practices.

Leaders must also possess strong communication skills to guide the direction of the organization. Transformational leadership has been identified as the type of leadership that achieves all of the previously mentioned requirements and creates an environment conducive to innovation. Since it generates positive perceptions, transformational leaders also help others achieve job satisfaction by driving proper feedback that serves to guide followers and keep them motivated toward achieving the goals of the organization (Tintoré, 2019).

Ball (2018) found that maintaining and promoting a positive perception of leadership is essential for transformational leaders to achieve greater success, which helps ensure that followers may find more meaning to their work. Transformational leadership ensures positive perceptions of followers through interpersonal relationships (Deschamps, Rinfret, Lagacé, & Privé, 2016). According to Scott (2017), for a positive perception of leadership to be achieved, it is necessary to place people and ideas at the heart of the organization's philosophy.

The perception must encourage personnel to grow and learn from mistakes, which provides a sense of trust, openness, and comfort. This approach helps innovation to flourish in the process, promoting a positive attitude and learning environment. The positive perception of leadership also achieves a sense of appropriate community in which individuals' function in a trusted environment. When a positive perception for satisfaction is sought, it is critical to consider the aspects that this process contains such as evaluating, criticizing, and prosecuting (Segura, Saldaña, & Gianpiere, 2018). For Northouse (2017), leaders emphasize more negative feedback than positive feedback,

especially from the superiors. It is sometimes seen as a negative factor that prevents achieving positive perceptions on leadership (Bolman & Deal, 2018) so feedback is required without judgments, and this can only be achieved by a good leader (Jaques, 2017).

In some countries such as Mexico, achieving a positive perception of leadership has occurred within educational environments in a particular way: communication among leaders has been nonverbal, indirect, ambiguous, courteous and frank (Schermerhorn & Bachrach, 2018). Therefore, research in Latin America suggests that leaders must motivate followers and provide positive incentives. Leaders must exhibit patience and make an effort to motivate and facilitate the participation of the employees. This approach increases the collectivism of a group and the degree to which individuals demonstrate their commitment to their group, organization, or family (Oberschall, 2017). Positive transformational leadership perception leads to a higher quality of performance in every region (Martínez-Garrido, 2017).

Research concerning transformational leadership has occurred within the educational context in a meaningful way. Using a multilevel analysis, Martínez-Garrido (2017) sampled 5,733 teachers from schools in 15 Latin American countries. These researchers investigated the relationship between school management and leadership practices. The results showed that variables such as teachers' support, school climate, and work environment have the highest influence on the level of positive leadership perception among educational leaders in Latin American schools. The body of literature supported the notion that, regardless of region, educational leaders can demonstrate

positive perceptions about general leadership practices through particular related variables.

A meta-analytic review of transformational leadership within instructional practices and analysis research was conducted by Balwant (2016) to find associations between transformational leadership practices and quality education. The findings of this study indicated that transformational instructor-leadership has a positive relationship with students' perceptions of academic performance and cognitive learning. This study suggested the necessity for further research on this topic, particularly in higher education institutions in which transformational leadership has been focused mainly on training transformational instructor-leaders.

Across educational institutions, positive leadership perceptions and positive school climate are essential characteristics for the success of every principal, student, and school (Strayhorn, 2018).

In a mixed-methods study performed by McCarley, Peters, and Decman (2016) 399 teachers were selected through purposeful sampling. These individuals participated in two different tests to assess the relationship between teacher perceptions of the degree to which a principal practices transformational leadership and the perceived school climate. The results of the analysis indicated a positive correlation between perception of transformational leadership and all the elements of a school's climate. This study provided an insight into the importance of transformational leadership perceptions by leaders for educational improvement and supported my study's research question, which attempted to measure leaders' perceptions of their leadership practices.

Leadership also has an impact on followers' attitudes and performance. However, there is a gap in leadership studies in higher education institutions (Alonderiene & Majauskaite, 2016). This basic qualitative study carried out by Alonderiene and Majauskaite sampled 72 faculty members and ten supervisors from Lithuanian public and private universities. Through surveys, the study attempted to study the impact of transformational leadership style practices on job satisfaction of faculty in Lithuanian higher education institutions. The findings revealed a significant positive influence of leadership style on job satisfaction of faculty. This study was meaningful to my research since it provided insight into effective leadership practices within higher education institutions to improve quality education.

Based on the Leadership Model of Full Range, Pérez et al. (2015) studied the transformational leadership style and perception of its effectiveness in a Latin American higher education institution. The study sampled 93 employees from a Mexican university and used the multifactor leadership questionnaire (MLQ) indicating that educational administrators in Mexican higher education institutions became involved in transformational leadership practices. The study confirmed that transformational leadership is associated with the effectiveness of the leaders' leadership practices and their followers' positive leadership perceptions through positive behavior, charisma, and individual stimulation.

A correlational descriptive quantitative study that focused on the relationship between leadership practices and the quality education in three educational institutions (Bentín, Mariscal Ramón Castilla and Rosa Merino) from a Latin American country

located in the district Rímac sampled 134 teachers through the random number table

strategy. The research carried out by Soria (2016) utilized the inventory of leadership

practices and the organizational commitment questionnaire. The psychometric properties

of content validity, construct validity, and reliability were considered. The data collected

were treated with Spearman's non-parametric statistical test to measure the relationships

postulated in the general and specific hypothesis between the variables and dimensions of

research and to evaluate the statistical significance of the sample results, which evidenced

that these results were generalized to the population. The correlations found revealed

indices that evidenced the existence of statistically significant positive correlations of

leadership practices and quality education in terms of organizational commitment (0.65),

and between the dimensions of these leadership practices (challenging processes,

inspiring a shared vision, enabling others to act, serving as a model and providing

encouragement) and teaching organizational commitment. The findings related to these

correlations, finally, proved to be significant at a probability level of $p <0.05$.

A descriptive study which emphasized a theoretical review of 68 articles from 11

Latin American countries attempted to publicize the educational quality landscape with

relationship to leadership understanding in the region and how it has evolved over time.

Rivera (2016) carried out this study using a methodology which focused on a count of

frequencies based on the leadership and organizational culture model of Bass and Avolio

(1985). This model consisted of the information found in three leadership styles,

including the transformational leadership style and concluded that there is a strong

relationship between the understanding of leadership practices, the types of leadership

implemented in the educational organizations in Latin American countries, and the leadership practices that were adopted to improve quality education. In this study, Rivera suggested the need to conduct more in-depth and empirically observable evidence into the relationship raised between leadership and quality education so that the transformations that have occurred in the educational leadership context and their impact can have a more significant influence in the near future. The relevance of this research to my study supported the research question that attempted to measure the leadership understanding among educational leaders in Colombia.

The role of leadership in Colombian higher education institutions was analyzed by Ortíz and Miguel (2017) who carried out a qualitative study to determine the type of appropriate leadership consistent with the characteristics of Colombian higher education institutions. In this study, Ortíz and Miguel compared the conceptual aspects of transformational leadership and the characteristics of Colombian higher education institutions to evaluate the advantages of this type of leadership. The data analysis was developed in four stages. The first stage consisted of documentary research, which was conducted on the different leadership proposals applied to Colombian educational institutions; the second stage described the Colombian higher education institutions and their structure. In the third stage, an analysis was made to compare the characteristics of the transformational leadership with the structure of higher education institutions. The last stage reflected and concluded the advantages of transformational leadership in Colombian higher education institutions. The results of the study showed that Colombian educational institutions have a different organizational structure from traditional

Colombian institutions; moreover, Colombian higher education institutions have different functions (i.e., education, relations, management, research), which are performed by a highly trained staff working in an extremely dynamic environment. These results pointed to the need for transformational leadership, which democratizes decision making and produces advantages for Colombian higher education institutions.

The development of a tool for the identification of leadership style among 20 students representing a higher education institution in Colombia (12 women, 8 men) was developed by Acosta et al. (2017). The tool consisted of 12 cinematographic scenes in which each student acted according to a defined leadership style. The purpose of the scenes was to observe six mental states: commitment, valence, relaxation, stress, concentration, and excitement. Subsequently, a statistical treatment was carried out to discover which mental states had more considerable variability (standard deviation) and, therefore, better possibilities of being observed. The results showed that most of the students presented the transformational leadership style, which was evidenced through positive transformational leadership perception, inspiration faculty, the interaction between leader and followers, and stimulation among peers and followers toward working to the mission and vision of the team and the organization. This study informs my research strategies to identify transformational leadership practices and evaluate them according to individuals' perceptions.

Teaching and leadership management play an essential role in improving the learning process within educational institutions. Therefore, a study about the existing leadership practices in the group of teachers and managers of the program of techniques

and technologies of the Cooperative University of Colombia was carried out by Cuadros (2015) with the aim of developing an improvement strategy based on leadership processes oriented to the development of learning, organizational improvement, and academic achievement. This study recognized types of leadership in teachers and principals. I considered a descriptive research qualitative technique and a semi-structured interview developed for students and a focused group for professors to collect data. The general objective of the study was to identify the teachers' and managers' leadership style from the perceptions of students. Specific objectives aimed to determine the leadership practices of teachers and managers in the development of their function and to analyze the styles of perceived leadership, the most common elements that contribute to the improvement of school management. Results of this study showed the coexistence of the three styles of leadership, as well as responses from students highlighting the presence of positive leadership practice. I observed the importance of knowing the university context to understand an appropriate leadership style for institutional success according to different situations, aims, or groups. This study was meaningful to my research topic since it provided an analysis of transformational leadership practices through leadership perceptions, which increased the body of knowledge that supported my study research question, and which attempted to investigate leaders' perceptions regarding their leadership practices.

In Latin America, leadership has been a critical topic as it is related to the context of changes and challenges that higher education institutions must face. A study carried out by Araneda-Guirriman, Neumann-González, Pedraja-Rejas, and Rodríguez-Ponce

(2016) attempted to explore the relationship between the perception of a leadership style

that professors have about their academic faculty directors and the education quality

achieved by these directors. The multifactor leadership questionnaire was applied to 55

professors from 22 academic faculties in six Latin American universities. The universities

chosen participated in the institutional accreditation processes led by the National

Accreditation Commission. The sampling was non-probabilistic and non-representative,

and for convenience, since there was no sample framework of the population. Therefore,

the accessibility and availability criteria of the respondents prevailed in answering the

instrument. Of the 71 people contacted, 55 agreed to participate in the study, which gives

a response rate of 77%. The data was processed through bivariate correlation analysis and

stepwise multiple linear regression. The multivariate level of the transformational

leadership showed a higher positive and significant correlation ($R = 0.679$, $p <0.001$)

with the quality of academic faculties. The results reported that leadership style perceived

by academics, regarding the faculty directors, is related to the educational quality they

achieved. Transformational leadership is the one factor that had a significant and direct

connection with the educational quality of these faculties, as it was measured in the

average years of accreditation of the professional careers. The results also indicated an

opportunity for higher education institutions to worry about their academic practices, in

particular their academic quality, where leadership plays a fundamental role, since being

present becomes a catalytic agent to guarantee the educational quality. In this sense, the

leaders of the academic faculties were characterized through their followers' perceptions

as active leaders by giving a higher score to the transformational and transactional

leadership styles. Moreover, the results showed that perceived transformational leadership is the only factor that affected a faculty's academic quality. Finally, the results concluded that transformational leadership is the style that has the most profound impact on the quality of academic faculties in Latin American higher education institutions.

Quality Higher Education in Colombia

Many educational reform projects, at all levels, have been undertaken during the last decade in Colombia. Some have reached their final stage and have become administrative acts of a legal application, while others have not exceeded early stages and have disappeared. However, both have generally had common objectives according to the time and the needs to be met. On some occasions, the proposed reforms have been due to changes or the introduction of methodologies and trends, the impulse toward research and innovations and in others to policies of financing, coverage, administration and internationalization, and promotion of science and technology. Although implementation of the reforms has always implied control and surveillance processes, these were limited to the confrontation of compliance with the regulations. Only with the promulgation of the Political Constitution of Colombia in 1991 did the spirit of quality appear in the field of education as the guiding objective of educational processes which considered effective leadership practices as one of the most critical factors to achieve quality education (Reimers & Chung, 2019).

As a result of the regulation of the 1991 Constitution, the Higher Education Law 30 of 1992 was realized, and with it came the formulation of elements and bodies which constituted a system of promoting and judging the quality of programs of Higher

Education institutions in Colombia. In compliance with this Law 30 of 1992, The

National Accreditation Council was created, and its composition and functions were

established. The National Accreditation Council, based on policies and principles of its

nature, prepared a series of documents that established conditions, processes, and

procedures that must be taken into account in the prosecution and assurance of the quality

of programs and institutions. Authorized opinions have emerged from the dissemination

and knowledge of these documents by the academic community, which has been

incorporated into the review of some of them. This process of permanently updating

education to the new law had been foreseen by the National Accreditation Council since

its creation. However, to preserve the integral spirit of the policies of judgment and

assurance of the high quality of the programs and based on the experience gained in the

accreditation of more than a hundred of them, a completed and integral review is being

carried out.

　　　With the approval of Law 30 of 1992, which organized the public service of

higher education in Colombia, most institutions are now defined as centers of knowledge.

They consider their primary mission to educate students within a disciplinary conception,

and they have assigned increasing importance to creative activities that favor the search

for more excellent knowledge, leadership practices, artistic creation, and the study of

social, technological, and environmental problems among others.

　　　Society will generate a set of significant challenges for higher education

institutions, challenges that, at the same time, open a series of opportunities for their

development, consolidation, and contribution to the construction of an improved society,

specifically in living conditions and in economic, political, cultural, and social aspects

(Shields, 2017). The current challenges of universities are:

- Accepting and understanding the needs for change. Not adapting to change is limiting quality;

- Increasing coverage with quality and equity in access to the institution and the system;

- The incorporation of new technologies in the teaching and learning processes;

- The relevance of the research carried out in such a way that it contributes to and energizes social development;

- The diversification of quality controls and the construction of monitoring and achievement indicators. It is beneficial in institutions to establish performance indices internally as an instrument to enhance their self-regulatory capacity;

- The improvement of management capacity, which should be reflected in more exceptional leadership, organizational, and administrative quality;

- The implementation of effective leadership practices that enable leaders to strengthen their skills;

- The adoption of efficient financing systems to achieve the proposed quality objectives;

- The redefinition of the mission and its fulfillment with prospective vision and strategic sense.

The concept of quality education presents serious difficulties of analysis and

solution according to Sadovnik, Cookson, Semel, and Coughlan (2017). For these

authors, the quality of higher education includes both the specific aspects of the learning process, as well as the institutional and systemic ones, in which quality is measured by achievements in social products, such as socialization of values, attitudes, effective leadership practices, and organizational commitment among others.

Elements for a Quality Policy in Colombian Higher Education

Every public policy must start with a sound diagnosis that indicates not only the problems to be solved but also the causes of these problems and their most significant manifestations (Spector & Kitsuse, 2017). In Colombia, according to the National Accreditation Council, it is evident that the low quality of education is related to insufficient funding, human capital, and leadership skills, as well as physical, technological, and computer resources to make possible a high-quality educational infrastructure. The lack of effective leadership practices among teachers and educational managers does not allow them to establish strong leadership policies (Garcés Bedoya, Trivaldo, Armando, & Sanchez Cordoba, 2019).

Additionally, there are socio-cultural elements that negatively affect the quality of Colombian education, such as an oral and written tradition, rejection of technological development, the absence of a solid tradition in research, and the isolation of the Colombian educational system from international trends (Álvarez & Pérez-Montoro, 2016).

In terms of process, educational policies in Colombia deal with academic processes such as teaching, research, leadership practices, academic extension, and educational members, as well as critical Colombian administrative and academic

processes, such as admission and registration, planning, effective leadership practices, academic disciplinary control, and monitoring of graduates. This policy seeks to promote high levels of performance, leadership skills, environmental impact, and the satisfaction of the agents and users of the system, such as employers, graduates, teachers, administrators and the community in general (Molano, 2016).

The improvement and quality of education must be linked to the existence of the evaluation process that allows institutions or programs to know the successes and deviations of their academic project systematically. The evaluation understood as a system of coherence among the different factors that constitute the reason, the performance, and the duty of higher education institutions (Rivera Porras, Berbesi Carrillo, Piedrahita, & León, 2018). This process entails considerations of the three essential dimensions: relevance or functionality, understood as the coherence of the institutional process and its programs with the needs and characteristics of the area of influence of the institution; effectiveness, defined as the coherence between the activities carried out by the institution as a whole to fulfill its aims and the objectives of each of its programs; and efficiency, understood in turn, as the coherence between the resources invested, the effort expanded, and the time taken to achieve the objectives of the programs and the aims of the institution.

It is necessary to think about having Colombian higher education institutions that, based on their own academic structure, advance curricular reforms that strengthen the basic nuclei of training in disciplines and professions to reduce merely informative contents and that they have the capacity to respond adequately to society's defendants, as

well as to promote effective leadership practices and development possibilities (Martínez Iñiguez, Tobón,& Romero Sandoval, 2017).

Higher education institutions are a fundamental and inseparable component of the set of institutions that fulfill the function of contributing to guaranteeing the positive aspects of society as a whole. To this end, a specific framework of action and a set of resources that the institution has to organize and deploy in a positive way must first be established; secondly, the permanent reflection on the characteristics of the desired society and the mission of the institution must be considered, which requires a significant capacity for social and institutional planning (Lawrence, 2017).

In higher education, national intelligence is a critical measure. Therefore, the country has an obligation to ensure that education is delivered with quality, efficiency, and relevance t (García, 2016). According to the General Education Law. The importance of higher education is reflected in the volume of human and material resources that higher education institutions manage, which, although perhaps insufficient, are essential resources which must be utilized optimally and transparently. If higher education institutions according to their profile adequately perform their functions, if they prepare highly qualified people for the various sectors of academic, leadership, economic, social and political activity, if they generate knowledge and develop technology, preserve and disseminate culture, then, the social investment made in them will be fully justified (Melo-Becerra et al., 2017).

Society must ensure rational, planned, adequate access to higher education due to its magnitude and quality, to meet the needs of leadership, the economy, and the

development of society. According to the National Commission for the Development of Higher Education, academic access implies equity and efficiency, including equity in the distribution of research and professional opportunities and their impact on the social field, as well as efficiency in the utilization of available resources, both human and financial, which are by definition scarce in a less-developed country like Colombia (Guiliany, Durán, Parra, & Caraballo, 2018).

Leadership within the institution is vital for the conduct of higher education institutions to meet their objectives and fulfill their mission. To fulfill this purpose, higher education must be provided with a management model, which contemplates at least the following aspects:

- Strengthens planning processes that take into account the present, but include a prospective and future vision;

- Adopts decentralized operation schemes, maintaining the unity of purpose and policies;

- Modernizes information systems with the incorporation of information technology and cost systems;

- Incorporate leadership practices that contribute to empower leaders' leadership skills and improve quality education;

- Performs permanent management evaluation actions to allow examination of not only the products and results but also of the processes and procedures, to appreciate the operation of the institution as a living system, and to determine strategic tasks and continuous improvement programs;

- Incorporate the concept of professionalization of institutional management where officials of the administrative apparatus of higher education institutions (HEIs), in their different academic-administrative instances, must have a specific qualification that enables them to carry out their work (Uribe-Tirado, 2016).

Leadership Management in the Field of Higher Education

Leadership in higher education institutions is critical for institutional development and instructional practices, and its impact on the community. Higher education institutions are currently concerned with increasing the elements of leadership that can overcome the constant and vertiginous challenges that are presented today (Arias, Molina, Intriago, & Vera, 2018).

There are clear differences between the function and satisfaction of a group led by a leader and the function and satisfaction of a group which has no leader. In this sense, Campoverde, Rosero, Gonzalez, and Ortiz (2018) maintain that the performance of leaders affects the environment and culture of the organization of higher education institutions, and that this models the dedication that the members of the educational institutions have for their work and the predisposition they have toward change and improvement.

In contrast to previous decades in which leadership was related to authoritarianism or bureaucracy, today effective leadership is characterized by a vision of the future, innovation, and change (García-Martínez, Higueras-Rodríguez, & Martínez-Valdivia 2018). This new way of understanding leadership is defined as transformational

and visionary. Gómez, del Valle Díaz, and De la Vega Marcos (2018) point out that educational leaders face a crucial dilemma in their efforts to improve teaching and learning in schools.

Indeed, both theory and evidence have begun to merge around transformative approaches to leadership considered as the most able to meet the challenges that leaders face in higher education institutions (Urbaez, 2018). Educational work demands constant preparation by teachers and educational managers. The teachers and managers are also leaders and as such exert influence on their followers. This influence, in turn, is guided toward achievement of a personal and institutional mission. Higher education institutions establish their identity, supported by values and philosophy transmitted to their community, as well as the definitive vision of a goal they want to reach and trace, as well as plans and leading actions (Benavídez et al., 2018).

In this sense, Cabrera (2018) argued that educational organizations must adapt to the changing environment that surrounds them, which requires leaders to motivate and direct the educational members so they can change. Additionally, the organization's leadership must also change as it develops and progress.

Summary

The review of the literature demonstrated that effective transformational leadership practices have positive influence on higher education institutions' environment; leaders' positive perceptions; and teachers' job satisfaction, commitment, and efficacy (Alonderienne & Majauskaite, 2016; Banuelos & Moreno, 2015; Bass, 1985; Perez & Molano, 2016; Rivera, 2016; Soria,2016; Tintore & Guell, 2016). On the other

hand, leadership management has played a critical role within the teaching and learning

processes of Colombian higher education (Avidov-Ungar & Reingold, 2018).

The review also evidenced that in Latin America higher education institutions,

leadership has become a critical component related to change and new challenges that

quality education needs to face (Araneda-Guirriman et al., 2016).

The literature pointed out that higher education must be delivered with quality,

efficacy and relevance thought academic, leadership, economic, social and politic aspects

where effective transformational leadership practices contribute positively to generate

quality knowledge (Melo-Becerra, Ramos-Forero, & Hernández-Santamaría, 2017). The

literature revealed that teachers' positive perceptions of their leadership roles contribute

to support and improve quality education within higher education institutions and

suggested that more considerable attention on leaders' perceptions regarding their

transformational leadership practices is necessary to increase the body of knowledge of

the literature (Uribe-Tirado, 2016).

Based on the review of the current literature, there is limited understanding and

lack of knowledge about transformational leadership practices at the management level in

higher education institutions in Colombia. What is known about transformational

leadership in Colombian higher education is limited by how teachers perceive and

practice this style of leadership within their instructional practices. Researchers have been

able to keep pace with the rapid growth of transformational leadership throughout the

United States. However, little is known about how Latin American countries like

Colombia perceive this style of leadership at the management level in higher education

institutions. Currently, no research studies have been identified that examine either educational leaders such as deans' or faculty directors' perceptions of their transformational leadership practices in higher education institutions in Colombia, or how these leaders understand transformational leadership within these educational contexts. Therefore, this study may contribute to increasing the body of knowledge in the literature by providing critical knowledge concerning higher education deans' and faculty directors' transformational leadership understanding and their perceptions on their transformational leadership practices in higher education institutions in Colombia. In the next chapter, the sections are organized based on the Research Design and Rationale, Role of the Researcher, Methodology, and Issues of Trustworthiness.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore higher education deans'

and faculty directors' perspectives on their transformational leadership practice in higher

education institutions in Colombia. A large body of knowledge exists concerning how

professors and college students perceive leadership practice, but little is known about

how educational leaders who are at the management level in Colombian higher education

institutions perceive their transformational leadership practices. In this chapter, I describe

the research method including the research design and rationale. Moreover, I describe my

position and any biases or ethical considerations within the role of the researcher. The

methodology section provides the data collection procedures used in the study, as well as

the participant selection logic, data collections instruments, and the process for analyzing

data. Next, the issues of trustworthiness section describe aspects of credibility,

transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical procedures. Lastly, a summary

of the chapter is provided.

Research Design and Rationale

The research questions that guided the study were developed based on the

available literature that revealed a lack of knowledge on transformational leadership at

the management level in Colombian higher education institutions:

RQ1: What are Colombian higher education deans' and faculty directors'

understanding of transformational leadership?

RQ2: What are the perspectives of higher education deans and faculty directors in Colombia regarding how their transformational leadership practices have impacted their organizations?

The perceptions of the participants were central to an understanding of how educational leaders who are at the management level understand transformational leadership as a critical component that contributes to improving Colombian higher education. Because the perspectives of the participants led to a deeper understanding of the transformational leadership practices within higher education contexts and how this practice has impacted their organizations, a basic qualitative approach was selected. The focus of the basic qualitative approach is to understand how people interpret, construct, or derive meaning from their world and their experiences (Merriam, 2009). The basic qualitative approach is used by researchers who are interested in solving a problem, effecting a change, or identifying relevant themes rather than attempting to position their work in a particular epistemological or ontological paradigm. Moreover, this approach addresses the experiences of the participants as they interpret the events within a study. In the current study, I aimed to explore leaders' perceptions of their transformational leadership practice, which accounts for my adopting the qualitative methodology and the basic qualitative research design for this study.

Basic qualitative or interpretive studies can be found in any discipline. However, in applied fields of practice such as education, the basic design is the most common qualitative approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Interviewing participants allows them to express their perspectives through conversation. Semistructured interviews were the main

tool I used to explore the perspectives of the participants. To this end, the basic

qualitative approach was the most appropriate design for this study.

The basic qualitative approach is used to investigate participants' perceptions of

their experiences (Cho, 2017). This approach was the most suitable design to answer the

research questions in the current study. The qualitative approach emphasizes how people

understand their behaviors and experiences, and what meaning they give to those

experiences (McGrath, Palmgren, & Liljedahl, 2019). The aim of qualitative educational

research is to improve the quality of education; the basic qualitative research design

contributes to the goal of gaining a comprehensive understanding of effective educational

practices and processes and allows researchers to explore educational methods,

approaches, and practices of teachers, educational leaders, and administrators (Gratch &

Warren, 2018). Such insight is difficult to achieve using quantitative approaches.

I conducted an analysis of research designs before choosing the basic qualitative

design. Ethnography allows the researchers to immerse themselves within a culture, often

for years (Creswell & Poth, 2016). However, I did not intend to immerse in a culture for

an extended period; therefore, an ethnographic design was inappropriate. Moreover,

ethnography focuses on studying the system of social phenomena, such as a society's

customs, traditions, and practices that define a culture, and these topics did not guide the

focus of my study. Case study allows an in-depth investigation of a single case using

several methods and sources of data. My study did not constitute a single case in that

sense, and I used only interviews as a data source. Grounded theory involves the

collection and analysis of data to develop a theory (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). My study

included two research questions related to the perspectives of transformational leadership

practices and the understanding of this type of leadership. I did not intend to generate a

theory. Finally, the mixed-methods approach was not appropriate for my study because

this approach involves both quantitative and qualitative data, and my study required only

qualitative data collection and analysis.

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher for the current study was to conduct virtual

semistructured interviews with each of the 12 participants (six deans and six faculty

directors) from two Colombian higher education institutions, transcribe the interview

data, and analyze their responses. I was the only person to collect, analyze, and interpret

the interview data. I work at a Colombian higher education institution. However, I have

never served as a leader manager, and I did not have any relationship with the

participants, thereby avoiding any potential conflict of interest. To reduce researcher bias,

I kept a journal throughout the data collection process to enhance objectivity. This

method prevented me from inserted any thoughts or feelings that may have influenced the

interview. Moreover, I bracketed my feelings and thoughts throughout the process.

Bracketing is a technique used in qualitative research that enables the researcher to

moderate the potential effects of preconceptions (McNarry, Allen-Collinson, & Evans,

2019). This technique is not used to suppress biases but to acknowledge and refer to them

throughout a study (Cypress, 2017). By using bracketing, I was confident that I

minimized inaccurate findings as my research progressed and led me in new directions

(see Astroth & Chung, 2018).

Methodology

This section includes the rationale for the selection of participants who participated in the study, instrumentation, procedures for the recruitment of participants, and issues of trustworthiness. Each section and subsection include detailed information to provide the reader with the procedures and processes necessary to recreate or extend the study. The section concludes with a comprehensive data analysis plan.

Participant Selection Logic

The population of leaders who were at the leadership management level in the two Colombian higher education institutions consisted of 120 leaders, including 20 deans and 20 faculty directors. According to Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim (2016), in qualitative research the number of participants is small because qualitative research methods are often concerned with obtaining an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon or are focused on meaning, which is often centered on the how and why of a particular issue, process, situation, subculture, scene, or set of social interactions, rather than on making generalizations to a larger population of interest. Qualitative researchers must keep the sample size appropriate and manageable for the study (Tracy, 2019). The sample of the current study consisted of 12 participants (six deans and six faculty directors) who provided in-depth information concerning the phenomenon. This sample included six representatives from each of the two Colombian higher education institutions selected for the study (three deans and three faculty directors per institution). Because qualitative researchers pursue an understanding of the participants' perceptions of their experiences, it is critical to select a study sample that allows the researcher to obtain relevant data. A

small sample supports this objective (Merriam, 2002). According to Welch and Piekkari (2017), basic qualitative studies with as few as 10 participants can yield meaningful and applicable results in qualitative research. Therefore, I concluded that 12 participants would provide sufficient, deep, and rich data. It is also important that the participants in a qualitative study have firsthand experiences (Lewthwaite & Nind, 2016). Six higher education deans and six faculty directors constituted the appropriate number of participants to provide the firsthand information needed to carry out this investigation and answer the two research questions. According to Boddy (2016), the sample size of a qualitative study is based on the nature of the study and its objectives. Patton (2002) suggested that selecting a sample should be based on the reasonableness of describing a phenomenon. In the current study, a sample of 12 participants was also based on recommendations for qualitative studies of this nature, the objectives of this study, and the desired level of depth for my research questions.

I used purposive sampling because the participants were directly and intentionally selected with a purpose in mind. According to general scholars, researchers need a clear purpose and criteria to define which participants fit their goals (see Bungay, Oliffe, & Atchison, 2016). The current study presented a clear objective and specific criteria for recruiting participants. Selecting participants based on these objectives reflected a purposeful sampling technique.

To initiate the participant selection process, I reached out to the universities' human resources departments or the presidents' offices to obtain permission for their personnel to participate in the study. Additionally, I requested a list of deans and faculty

directors, including information to how to contact them. I contacted participants and recruited only those who met the inclusion criteria (deans and faculty directors with 1 year minimum of leadership experience). I contacted potential participants until I had recruited six participants from each university (three deans and three faculty directors per institution) for a total of 12 participants. If I had not obtained the required number of participants from the two selected universities, or if the selection criteria had not been satisfied by the participants, I would have recruited participants from other universities in Colombia.

When prospective participants verbally approved of being interviewed, I emailed a formal interview invitation, informed consent form, and interview protocol. Participants emailed back the signed informed consent. After receiving all informed consent forms, I proceeded with scheduling the interviews via email.

One of the alternative sampling approaches that I considered before choosing purposive sampling was random sampling, in which I would ask each higher education institutions' president for a list of all their deans and faculty directors, and would randomly select the participants from that list. In randomly sampling, all participants have the same probability of being selected, but in this study only the participants who met the selection criteria were recruited. Moreover, because I intended to conduct interviews as the means of data collection, I needed a relatively small number of participants. Statistical generalization was not a relevant concern, so I was able to use purposeful rather than random sampling.

The term *saturation* in qualitative research is the point past which no new information is observed in the data (Saunders, 2018). Saturation and its relationship with sample size is critical because it allows the researcher to determine the appropriate number of participants. Several strategies can help a researcher estimate the sample size, but in qualitative research the required number of participants should depend on when saturation is reached (Russell & Gregory, 2003). In the current study, the final number of participants was not determined until saturation was reached, and the presumed saturation point was 12 participants.

Instrumentation

Data for this study was gathered utilizing virtual semi-structured individual interviews. I chose the semi-structured interview because through this data collection method, individuals are allowed to provide perceptions of events and experiences as required in a basic qualitative study (King & Brooks, 2018). Each interview took place at a time and in a location convenient to the participant. Each interview was recorded for accuracy and later transcribed. Although I anticipated an interview length of 60 minutes, the actual amount of time varied and from 40 minutes to 60 minutes. According to Hawkins (2018), the interview is the most important qualitative method for collecting data. The interviews for this study were conducted in a secure location that could not be overheard by others.

Open-ended questions were utilized to determine participants transformational leadership understanding and how they perceive their transformational leadership practice. The first part of the interview process (questions 1-12) (Appendix C) contained

open-ended questions that addressed research question one: What are Colombian higher education deans and faculty directors' understanding of transformational leadership? This set of questions collected deep information concerning transformational leadership principles, concepts, and primary aspects of transformational leadership to determine the participants' understanding of this leadership style.

The second part included open-ended questions (questions 13-24) (Appendix C) that focused on answering research question two: What are the perspectives of higher education deans and faculty directors in Colombia regarding how their transformational leadership practice has impacted their organizations? This set of questions collected information related to transformational leadership practices to determine how the perception of these practices has impacted the participants' organizations.

I created the interview questions (Appendix C) based on the purpose of the study and the research questions and based on the literature review of transformational leadership measurement and evaluation such as the Multifactor leadership questionnaire (Avolio & Bass, 2004).The elements from the Multifactor leadership questionnaire that were included in my interview questionnaire were related to the transformational leadership dimensions which are described as:

- Idealized (attributed) influence in which leaders are admired, respected, and trusted. Followers identify with them and try to define them (questions 1,8,11,12);

- Idealized influence (behavior) which has the same meaning as the previous factor, but the items that measure it are focused on specific leaders' behaviors (questions 3,6,7,20,22);

- Inspirational motivation which refers to leaders who are able to motivate their team members, providing meaning to their work. Also, the leader formulates an attractive future vision for employees and the organization (questions 13,15,19,24);

- Intellectual stimulation which refers to leaders who encourage their collaborators to be innovative, creative and seek for themselves the solution to the problems that may arise (questions 4,5,9,10,21);

- Individualized consideration which considers leaders' individual achievement and growth needs of their team members, acting as mentors or coaches (questions 2,14,16,17,18,23) (Samanta & Lamprakis, 2018);

Moreover, to design the interview questions, I developed an interview protocol which was examined by three higher education leaders with expertise and experience in leadership. Enlisting their help added credibility to the goal that the interview protocol and questions garnered the information needed to address the research questions. The higher education leaders reviewed the interview protocol and interview questions and approved them. In qualitative studies, interviews adhere strictly to the interview protocol since this tool guides the researcher (Ravitch & Riggan, 2016). Therefore, I used the interview protocol as a guide for the participants to know the most important aspects of

the interview. Moreover, the interview protocol in this study served as an instrument of inquiry for obtaining participants' thoughts, feelings, and concerns regarding the study.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I collected the data from two Colombian higher education institutions. I reached out to the Human Resources of the Provost or the Universities' Presidents to obtain permission for recruiting participants who met the specific criterion (deans and program directors with a minimum of one year of educational leadership experience). After the institutions' approval, and due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I e-mailed each participant from these institutions. When the participants verbally approved of being interviewed, I e-mailed a formal participation invitation, the Informed Consent form, and the interview protocol. In the event that a sufficient number of deans or faculty directors did not meet the criterion of one year of educational leadership experience, I would have invited deans and faculty directors from other higher education institutions in Colombia as a contingency to improve the feasibility of the study in attaining the sufficient number of participants.

I collected data through virtual conference with each of the 12 participants due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Each participant connected to the virtual conference from a secure room in their own house where the interview could not be overheard by others. I conducted the interviews and collected data over the course of one month. Using open-ended questions, I captured the participants' perceptions. According to Paradis, O'Brien, Nimmon, Bandiera, and Martimianakis (2016), utilizing interviews to collect data is the most suitable manner for qualitative studies. Each interview was scheduled for one hour,

in total. I allotted 2 months to complete all interviews. Additionally, I respected the participants' comfort with the process to promote flexibility and sufficient depth of their reflections to gain a deep understanding of their perceptions. I recorded the interviews using a digital handheld device. I was the only person who transcribed the interviews verbatim. In the informed consent, participants were told about the voluntary nature of the study and the ethical principle related to the right of withdrawing from the study at any time without prejudice or penalty. Participants' information reminded confidential. I reported any early withdrawal from the study to all individuals and agencies concerned within the study, such as the IRB and research committee members, among others.

The debriefing process in this study included recruiting other participants until I had the 12 individuals required even if these potential participants were from higher education institutions other than the original sites. Consequently, the new recruitment process followed the same ethical considerations and criterion as the original recruitment process. To this end, the formal invitation email included a final statement explaining that participants were under no obligation to participate, and that there were no negative consequences if they withdrew.

Data Analysis Plan

Data collected from the interviews contained information about transformational leadership understanding and practice of transformational leadership within the participants' organizations. The first set of questions (1-12) (Appendix C) contained data to answer research question one: (a) What are Colombian higher education deans and faculty directors' understanding of transformational leadership? The second set of

questions (13-24) (Appendix C) contained data to answer research question two: (b) What are the perspectives of higher education deans and faculty directors in Colombia regarding how their transformational leadership practices have impacted their organizations?

Data from each recorded interview was transcribed, translated into English, and coded. Verbatim transcription allowed an integral analysis and interpretation of verbal data, and it facilitated the process of coding (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006). The transcriptions were e-mailed to the participants for their review. Participants did not offer any changes or corrections. The data was presented within the context of the two research questions and the two participants groups (deans and faculty directors). Then, the data was organized according to the themes that emerged through the coding of the interviews (transcripts). A qualitative data analysis software, Atlas ti 7.5, was utilized to conduct a Thematic Analysis. Thematic analysis was a logical method to explore people's views, opinions, knowledge, experiences or values from a set of qualitative data such as interview transcripts, social media profiles, or survey responses (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). I then coded and stored the interviews from each participant since this is a useful data analysis tool in qualitative research (Friese, 2019). According to Woods, Paulus, Atkins, and Macklin (2016), coding involves grouping together conceptually similar data in the respective nodes after the desegregation of textual data based on similarities and differences. To conduct the thematic analysis, I followed the six steps developed by Braun and Clarke (2019)

- Familiarization: During this step, I got a thorough overview of all the data I collected before starting analyzing individual items.

- Coding: I highlighted sections of the interview transcripts, these were phrases or sentences, and I came up with labels or "codes" to describe their content.

- Generating themes: I looked over the codes I created, identified patterns among them, and started coming up with themes.

- Reviewing themes: In this step, I made sure that the themes were useful and accurate representations of the data. Here, I could return to the data set and compare the themes against it.

- Defining and naming themes: Once I had assembled a final list of themes, I named and defined each of them.

- Writing up: In this last step, I wrote my analysis of the data. According to the research question, the aims and approach of participant groups (deans and faculty directors) in this study was inductive because it involved allowing the data to determine the themes.

To begin the coding process, I transcribed and translated into English the semi-structured interviews, which were organized according to the two research questions and the two participant groups (deans and faculty directors). Then, I created a Hermeneutic Unit (UH), also known as a project or database that includes primary documents such as citations, codes and memos (Friese, Soratto, & Pires 2018).Within this UH, the documents associated with a particular project such as the interviews can be collected and organized. The Atlas ti program was used to import the transcript of each interview

(primary documents). Different coding options are available to the researcher as open coding, live or by list. Atlas ti 7.5 program provides a toolbar to facilitate coding, thus allowing the creation and organization (in alphabetical order) of codes through the code manager. The primary document is shown on the left side of the program, while the codes are displayed on the right side.

To encode each response, I used the open and In vivo coding strategies (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Initially, open coding was applied to consider every detail of the interview transcripts. The information was coded by identifying one or more passages of text with a topic and relating it to a code. Atlas ti 7.5 allowed me to assign different colors to each code for easy distinction (right side of the program). Atlas ti 7.5 has a highly visual manner of showing both coding and context (Rambaree, 2016). The code manager showed the codes that I created.

During In vivo coding, I focused on identifying portions of data that itself was representative of a concept. In vivo coding in Atlas ti 7.5 took the highlighted text as its code name. The ability to navigate a multitude of primary documents offered by this program was crucial in determining the connections between categories and codes as they emerged. The Atlas ti 7.5program offers 7 types of relationships with their respective symbol, but many others can be created according to the researcher's needs and conveniences. One of the most useful tools of this program is the Codes-Links Manager that I used to link codes with other codes, allowing the construction of networks that facilitated the construction of relationships or links between codes and themes. The creation of networks allowed me to visualize graphically the structure of data and themes.

I applied successive reading, coding, revision, and re-codification of the data in categories or "families" ("Family" is a term used in Atlas ti 7.5 to refer to thematic categories) (Santos, 2019). Another useful tool of Atlas ti 7.5 was its "Family Manager" that facilitated the process of creating and managing "families." The primary advantage of a "family" was that it could be used like any other type of code to design elaborate queries within the entire data set or use them as network nodes (Oswald, 2019).

In qualitative research, discrepant cases could arise during the data analysis. This situation happens when a participant's responses may contradict or run counter to any particular category or specific pattern. In this study, all data was considered and discrepant cases were identified as significant for further probing or follow up. Moreover, in case of discrepant findings, I presented the participants with a summary of the findings and, when necessary, I discussed with them their responses. Discrepant cases were identified and reported. Discrepant findings can yield for potential flaws of instruments design, data ambiguity or insufficient depth in participants' responses (DiLoreto & Gaines, 2016).

Issues of Trustworthiness

This section addresses the trustworthiness and the credibility of the study. In each subsection I include specific elements that are appropriate for qualitative research. I conclude this section with ethical procedures for the treatment of participants and their rights.

Credibility

I utilized member checking to establish the credibility of this study. According to

Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, and Walter (2016), the trustworthiness of results is the key

to maintain high-quality qualitative research. Member checking, also known as

participant or respondent validation, is a technique that allows the researchers to explore

the credibility of results. Data are returned to participants to check for accuracy with their

experiences. Therefore, participants in this study received a copy of the interview

transcription via e-mail for review and clarification. Utilizing member checking provides

a means to ensure that the findings of the study are trustworthy, verifiable, and reliable,

and that the study is ethically conducted (Connelly, 2016). Considering the participants'

feedback after checking their responses, I asked them to edit, and clarify their own words

from the narratives. I used member checking only with the verification of interview

transcripts. Moreover, I bracketed my feelings and thoughts throughout the process, and I

kept a research journal describing my own experiences, feelings, and biases that might

have influenced my interpretation of the data. Data from each participant was explored to

create a rich description of their perceptions.

Transferability

I addressed transferability by providing detailed information about this study's

procedures, context, participants, and their perspectives to permit other researchers in

similar situations to arrive at similar conclusions. I utilized a researcher's journal to

reflect upon my own experiences in efforts to remain objective. To promote

transferability further, discrepant cases were explored and described to deepen the understanding of the data.

Dependability

Using reflexivity, maintaining a research journal to describe my own experiences, feelings, and biases that may influence my interpretation of the data reinforced the dependability in this study (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). In addition, during the interviews, I added my personal comments and saved those thoughts for the journal. Member-checking and verbatim transcription allowed for transparency and possible duplication of the study. Also, the use of a secure central database for storing, managing, and coding the data provided a way to ensure the integrity of the data.

Confirmability

Confirmability was related to the objectivity of a qualitative study (Wa-Mbaleka, 2017). I used reflexivity to address confirmability in this study. Reflexivity was described as engaging in self-reflection to identify factors that could influence the researcher's interpretation of the data (Postholm, 2019). I used a researcher's journal to reflect upon any feelings or biases that could emerge during the interview phase. I reviewed my notes and annotations throughout the process and as new themes emerge. Additionally, I reflected upon my own experiences with involvement in professional development and its influence on my leadership expertise. Finally, I assured confirmability by bracketing any feelings or biases that could arise during the interview phase.

Ethical Procedures

I applied to obtain Walden's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval and the

higher education institutions' permissions. Upon receipt of the universities' consent,

prospective participants who approved to participate in the study received a formal

participation invitation, the Informed Consent form, and the interview protocol via e-

mail.

The consent form described: (a) purpose of the study, (b) nature of the study, (c)

participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time, (d) methods of data collection,

(e) time needed during the study, and (c) assurances of confidentiality and all information

concerning ethical protection. Moreover, the Informed Consent form included all

information about the material related to the study.

Participants refusing participation, early withdrawal from the study, or any

predicable adverse events were reported immediately to all individuals and agencies

directly and indirectly involved in the research such as the IRB, and research committee

members among others. In case any of these events happened, I put in place contingency

plans, which included a new recruitment process of participants.

Incentives such as money, gift cards, books, and invitations to join support groups

and associations among others are strategies to be used by researchers to ensure

participant recruitment and retention. However, this study did not provide any type of

incentive. Instead, it focused on a critical ethical principle, which is the right to withdraw.

This principle states that participants can withdraw at any time and during any stage of

the investigation. In this study, no pressure of participation or obligation was applied in

any way to prevent research participants from withdrawing from the study. This study considered the ethical principle of respect for persons (Brännmark, 2017). In this principle, the right to withdraw protects individuals from "information imbalance, inability to hedge, inherent uncertainty, and untoward bodily invasion, and it serves to bolster public trust in the research enterprise" (Schaefer & Wertheimer, 2010, p. 329). During debriefing, I reminded participants that the data they provided would remain confidential. I asked the participants whether they had any questions regarding the study. I documented each step of the data collection process in detail in my research journal to maintain ethical considerations and quality of data collection.

I used pseudonyms to ensure ethics and keep confidentiality of the participants. Moreover, confidentiality was assured by locking the data in a file cabinet in my home. Utilization of a secure, central database for storing, managing, and coding the data provided a means by which to guarantee the integrity of the data. Transcripts of the interviews were secured with a password. I was the only person responsible for transcribing the data. All identifying information will be kept confidential, retained for 5 years and then destroyed.

Summary

In this chapter I explained the reasons for utilizing a basic qualitative approach addressing the problem and research questions of this study. I presented and explained each component of the research design, the participants' selection, data collection, and instruments. I outlined the data analysis, presented procedures for ensuring the highest ethical standards, and provided criteria for trustworthiness of the study.

In Chapter 4, I present a comprehensive analysis of the participants' perspectives and the findings from the study organized around each research question.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore higher education deans'

and faculty directors' perspectives on their practice of transformational leadership in

higher education institutions in Colombia. It was important to know how Colombian

deans and faculty directors understand transformational leadership and how the practice

of this type of leadership affects their organizations. Research in this area may assist the

educational community in improving the leadership practices of educational leaders

within their organizations. Chapter 4 includes the research questions, descriptions of the

interview settings and participant demographics, the data collection and data analysis

processes, the evidence of trustworthiness, and the results of this qualitative study. The

research questions for this study were the following:

RQ1: What are Colombian higher education deans' and faculty directors'

understanding of transformational leadership?

RQ2: What are the perspectives of higher education deans and faculty directors in

Colombia regarding how their transformational leadership practice has impacted their

organizations?

Setting

The interviews for this study were conducted through virtual conferences due to

the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants remained in their homes to observe social

distancing and follow COVID-19 protocols. I chose a secure room in my home where the

interview could not be overheard by others, and I suggested that the participants do the

same. The interviews were conducted at a time convenient for each participant. The

interviews took place after work hours and did not interfere with the leaders' duties. To

establish rapport, participants and I engaged in light conversation about how they were

doing, how their year was progressing, and how their work was going before the

interviews began. Each participant appeared to be comfortable and excited about

participating. Nothing from the initial conversations appeared to indicate pressure or

tension that could have influenced the participants' responses to the interview questions.

Demographics

The participants for this study were deans and faculty directors with a minimum

of 1 year of leadership experience who worked at two Colombian higher education

institutions. The two higher education institutions were located in the south region of

Colombia that encompasses both rural and suburban settings. The two higher education

institutions have a total of 1,407 professors, 784 administrators, and student populations

that exceed 20,000 students. Deans and faculty directors belong to the administrative

area, but deans hold a higher rank than faculty directors. Moreover, the leadership tasks

of deans in higher education institutions in Colombia are different from those of the

faculty directors. I assigned pseudonyms to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the

participants. A brief summary of each participant's leadership position and years of

leadership experience is presented in Table 1 followed by a brief description of each

participant.

Table 1

Summary of Demographics

Participant	Present position	Years of leadership experience
Don	Faculty director	1.5 years
Gloria	Faculty director	15 years
Mara	Faculty director	8 years
Liseth	Faculty director	3.5 years
Cristian	Faculty director	4 years
Pedro	Faculty director	3.5 years
Juan	Dean	19 years
Jorge	Dean	6 years
Mario	Dean	2 years
Ronald	Dean	2 years
Sarah	Dean	1.5 years
Yanira	Dean	4 years

Note. All names are pseudonyms assigned to protect the privacy of the participants.

Don is 39 years old; he has been a faculty director of the Linguistics faculty for 1.5 years. He has been leading several activities at the regional and national level on his discipline.

Gloria is 45 years old; she has been a director of the Internationalization Department for 15 years. She has been holding a leadership role proposing and managing several projects to improve the Internationalization Department that includes the mobility of students, teachers, and administrators.

Mara is 49 years old; she has been a director of the Psychology program. She has been working as a leader in the Humanistic and Social Sciences faculty for 8 years. She has been leading several projects to improve her discipline and to offer her employees alternatives of professional improvement.

Liseth is 52 years old; she has been a director of the Social Work Department for 3.5 years. She has been leading several strategies and activities toward the improvement of her department.

Cristian is 38 years old; he has been a director of the Master's Program in Pedagogy for 4 years. Before this position, he held other leadership roles.

Pedro is 49 years old; he has been a Director of the Agricultural Science Research Center for 3.5 years. He has managed a research group where he works on several projects to improve his discipline.

Juan is 50 years old; he has been working as a dean of the Engineering faculty for 19 years, and he is also the academic director at this organization. He has been providing different strategies toward achieving academic accreditation of his faculty, and he has been leading different projects, activities, and plans to improve his faculty.

Jorge is 54 years old; he has been working as a dean of the Agricultural Science faculty for 6 years. Jorge has been leading different plans and projects to achieve high quality in his faculty.

Mario is 27 years old; he has been working as a dean of the Linguistics faculty for 2 years. Mario has been leading national and international projects to achieve high academic standards.

Ronald is 35 years old; he has been working as a dean of the Law faculty for 2 years. Before being designated as a dean, he worked as a teacher at the law school and was leading several plans, strategies, and projects to achieve institutional accreditation of the Law faculty at his organization.

Sarah is 47 years old; she has been working as a dean of the Education faculty for 1.5 years. She also holds a leadership role as a program director of the Childhood Program at her organization.

Yanira is 46 years old; she has worked as a dean of the Health Sciences faculty for 4 years. She has been leading programs that have positioned her faculty at high academic levels.

Data Collection

After receiving IRB approval (09-01-20-0748440), I proceeded with the data collection plan. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I contacted the universities' presidents to obtain permission for recruiting participants by email and not face-to-face. The organizations provided me with a list of deans' and faculty directors' names and contact information to recruit potential participants. The information from the list that the organizations provided included faculty directors and deans who had a minimum of 1 year of leadership experience with their organizations. I sent six emails to deans and six emails to faculty directors (three deans and three faculty directors per institution) explaining general aspects of the study, outlining the purpose of the study, and inviting them to participate. Four faculty directors agreed to participate and two did not answer the email. Five deans agreed to participate and one did not answer the email. I sent the invitation email to two other faculty directors and one dean, and all of them accepted. After faculty directors and deans agreed to participate, I emailed them the consent form, and they replied with the words "I consent." I scheduled the interviews, but it was necessary to reschedule three interviews because two deans and one faculty director had

job-related activities at the time scheduled for the interview. Ronald's original interview was rescheduled because he had to attend to a meeting. Mario's original interview was rescheduled because he had a situation with some work reports. Cristian's original interview was rescheduled because he had a conference. Rescheduling the interviews did not present a problem. I let Ronald, Mario, and Cristian know that I appreciated their flexibility and desire to participate.

I conducted virtual semistructured interviews with 12 participants to obtain the data for this study. I changed from face-to-face interviews to virtual interviews through video conference due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated social distancing protocols. Saturation was ensured by the number of participants for this study. According to Hennink, Kaiser, and Weber (2019), saturation is reached when data collected become repetitive and redundant. I used constant comparison to identify common perspectives, and I noticed that by the 10th interview, the information was becoming redundant. The 11th and 12th interviews were held to determine whether new data would surface. The data obtained from these last two interviews were consistent with data from the previous interviews.

With participants' permission, I recorded the virtual interviews. I used the interview protocol as a guide for participants to understand the most important aspects of the interview. Moreover, the interview protocol served as an instrument of inquiry for obtaining participants' thoughts, feelings, and concerns regarding the study before I conducted the interviews (see Appendix A). The common feeling before the interviews was one of gratitude for being part of the study.

A few participants allowed me to video record the interviews; most only allowed me to audio record them. I used ZOOM as the virtual platform to conduct the interviews; this virtual platform had an option to record the conferences using the camera or only the microphone. I asked the participants which way they felt more comfortable to be recorded. I used the Instant Transcription application to transcribe the interviews. This application manages more than 70 languages; therefore, it was convenient for me because I conducted the interviews in Spanish to be translated into English. I used Cambridge Translator to translate interviews into English. All transcripts were reviewed while listening to the recordings to ensure accuracy in transcription. All transcripts were saved in Microsoft Word rich text format for uploading into the Atlas.ti 7.5 qualitative software for data analysis.

All interviews were between 45 and 60 minutes in length. Because the interviews were virtual due to the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing protocols, the interviews took place online while each participant remained in their home. During the interviews, I used a researcher's journal to note any feelings or biases that could have emerged. Finally, during the interviews, I bracketed my feelings and thoughts throughout the process. Bracketing is a technique that helps the researcher to moderate the potential effects of preconceptions (McNarry at al.,2019).

The COVID-19 pandemic forced me to change the original plans for data collection. I contacted the organizations and the participants virtually, and I conducted the interviews virtually. I thought the pandemic might influence the feelings of the participants during the interview and might affect their responses because all of the

participants were in quarantine. However, the participants seemed not to be affected. In fact, they seemed to enjoy the interview and its pace and flow.

Data Analysis

The following section presents the data analysis process used to answer each research question according to each participant group (faculty directors and deans). I considered it important to conduct the analysis according to participant groups because in Colombian higher education institutions, deans and faulty directors have different leadership roles. Therefore, analyzing the data based on the leadership role was important. In the findings section, I review the findings in relationship to the codes and the themes that emerged from data analysis for each research question and each group of participants.

At the completion of the interviews, recorded data were transcribed utilizing the Instant Transcription application and saved in Microsoft Word documents. Then, I e-mailed participants a copy of the transcriptions to review their responses. The participants e-mailed back, agreeing with the transcriptions. After the participants agreed with the accuracy of the transcriptions, I translated the interviews into English using Cambridge Translator. I uploaded all the transcriptions to Atlas.ti 7.5 qualitative data analysis software for storing and managing the transcripts. The data was presented within the context of the two research questions and the participants groups (deans and faculty directors). Then I organized the data according to the themes that emerged through the coding of the interviews (transcripts). To analyze the data, I conducted a Thematic Analysis. Thematic Analysis proved an important method to explore the participants'

perspectives on their transformational leadership practice. According to King and Brooks (2018), Thematic Analysis allows the researcher to study people's views, opinions, knowledge, experiences, or values based upon a set of qualitative data, such as interview transcripts, social media profiles, or survey responses.

To conduct the thematic analysis in Atlas.ti 7.5, I followed the six steps developed by Braun and Clarke (2019):

- Familiarization: During this step, I got a thorough overview of all the data I collected before starting analyzing individual items.

- Coding: I highlighted sections of the interview transcripts, these were phrases or sentences, and I came up with labels or "codes" to describe their content.

- Generating themes: I reviewed the codes I created, identified patterns among them, and started deriving themes.

- Reviewing themes: In this step, I made sure that the themes were useful and accurate representations of the data. Here, I was able to return to the data set and compare the themes against it.

- Defining and naming themes: Once I had a final list of themes, I named and defined each of them.

- Writing: In this last step, I wrote my analysis of the data according to the research questions and each participant groups' (deans and faculty directors), aims and approach, which was inductive because it involved allowing the data to determine the themes. I presented the themes and their relationship to the found codes.

To begin the coding process, I created a Hermeneutic Unit (UH) in Atlas.ti 7.5, also known as a project or database that includes primary documents such as citations, codes and memos. Within the Hermeneutic Unit, I organized the interview transcriptions according to the two research questions and the two groups of participants (deans and faculty directors).

To encode each response, I used the open and the In vivo coding strategies (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). Initially, I used open coding to consider every detail as I developed categories or "families" (Family is a term used in Atlas.ti 7.5 to refer to thematic categories) (Varela-Ordorica & Valenzuela-González, 2020). The information was coded by identifying passages of the interviews with a topic and relating it to a code. I assigned names to all codes. Atlas.ti 7.5 allowed me to see both coding and its context. The code manager showed the codes that I created, the co-occurrence codes, and the codes with their specific quotations taken from the interview passages.

During In vivo coding, I focused on the words of the participants to create codes, a process that allowed me to identify the main families and come up with the themes. I utilized the Atlas.ti 7.5 program to establish relationships among the codes and the themes with their respective symbols. After creating the families, I created tables and networks to visualize graphically the structuring of data according to the research questions and the participant groups (deans and faculty directors). In the following table, I presented the codes and themes that emerged from the interview transcriptions reviewed in Atlas.ti 7.5. The table also presents the number of quotations taken from the interviews

reviewed in Atlas.ti 7.5, I used some of the quotations to support the codes and themes description below and a summary (see Table 2).

Description of Emergent Codes and Themes

Emerging Theme 1: Leadership Commitment

The first theme that emerged from the analysis of participant's responses was *leadership commitment*. The codes related to this theme were *commitment, encouragement* and *managing situations*. The theme of *leadership commitment* encompasses a leadership quality that inspires and attracts people. The codes in this theme were important concepts in the field of leadership. *Commitment* involves the act of being dedicated to something or someone. Regarding commitment, deans and faculty directors understand its importance within their leadership tasks. The participant Cristian stated, "I believe that every person who wants to achieve transformation and change in institutions and people must have a regulatory principle of commitment, ethics and co-responsibility." Gloria added important information about commitment saying, "Trust is earned over time, and based on the commitments made and tasks and challenges assumed, it is always necessary to possess a clear strategy where the results are evident in the long-, medium- and short-term, so all the results are measurable." The second code was *encouragement*, which referred to the capacity of a leader to provide support, confidence, and hope. Speaking of encouragement, Gloria pointed out, "Encouragement means to empower the employee to create and build more things. New leaders should encourage the employer by giving more opportunities to develop at their jobs."

The third code in this theme was *managing situations*, which referred to the leader's capacity to manage critical or challenging situations. About managing situations Jorge said, "I think that to get to manage critical aspects or critical situations, you have to do some preliminary exploration analysis, either because I can look for preliminary documentary evidence or because I can complement it with statistical evidence with studies already done."

Emerging Theme 2: Shared Vision

The second theme that emerged was *shared-vision*, which refers to the tasks that a leader and the other personnel want to create or accomplish as part of the organization. The codes in this theme were *decision-making, feedback*, *effective communication*, and *team working*. Deans and faculty directors presented an understanding about the significance of having strong decision-making skills, being open to positive feedback, maintaining an open communication with followers, and promoting teamwork within their organizations. *Decision-making* referred to the process of making choices by identifying an idea, gathering information, and assessing alternative resolutions. Liseth stated, "Making a decision implies taking risks, and risks are worth depending on the guidelines that exist and the purposes that a leader has." *Feedback* was the second code in this theme, and it made reference to the comments or a return of information about a result, a person, or a process. Ronald stated, "It seems important to me the feedback that is made by the different actors of the system, in this case, the teachers, the students, the administrative staff, because that also allows me to have a perspective at how a process is perceived, a practice, a guideline and, to the extent if possible, make adjustments." *Good*

communication was a code which referred to the positive in which a leader must transmit a message to others. Mara said, "It is good to know how our behavior affects our communication to others; it is frequent that in the communication act mistakes are sometimes made, and we express things that we do not really want or that others do not understand us or sometimes we do not make ourselves understood. Therefore, positive feedback for me is very important and I try to ask others what they think." The last code within this theme, *team working* refers to the willingness of people to work together to achieve a common goal. Yanira stated, "You also have to know how to listen to others and work with them because that help you to have greater co-responsibility in what you want to achieve." Deans and faculty directors agreed on the importance of having skills to make sound decisions that allow the organizations to progress and succeed, the importance of promoting teamwork, and maintaining an honest and open communication at their organization at all times. All these codes that emerged referred to the interactional and social aspect that allow an organization to have identify, service, and a centered point for the organization to "think" and organize its structure to achieve success. The code *decision making* was also referred to the capacity that a leader must have to make assertive decisions to guarantee the welfare of their subalterns and the organization. Ronald said, "Well, it is one of the leader's roles the inspection and monitoring of the tasks entrusted to each of the team members in the organization. I think that all decisions have to be taken into the team, and according to the team's performance, the decisions work or do not work." The code *effective communication* was also referred to regarding the connections that the leader is able to acquire with other people or other organizations

to strengthen ideas, plans, strategies, and future implementations. Moreover, this code concerns the interactions that a leader has inside their organization to identify issues and solve them. Cristian said, "I always try to make an assessment with teachers; it is not the formal evaluation that the already established institution has, but a slightly more familiar evaluation and self-evaluation with dynamics and strategies that I apply with the employees to know the feelings of them in all the working process and the results that have been achieved there personally have been very interesting." Moreover, *communication* was related to the strategies implemented by the leader of the organization to keep a positive communication with the members of the organization to achieve positive results. Yanira said, "When we transmit a message, I assume that the other understood the same thing that I wanted to transmit. However, that has not always happened and sometimes employees end up doing things very different from the ones that we supposedly agreed to reach upon an agreement." Pedro added, "I try to have monthly meetings, formal and informal conversations and dialogues about planning, curricular work, and aspects related to the academic process with the employees. Those meetings have had a positive impact, obviously for the program or for the faculty has brought very great results." *Team working* considered the manner in which the members of an organization work under a leader's role. Juan said, "Work teams have been formed and as work teams they formulate proposals, because obviously the results for the organization would be great if all work together. I think this maximizes resources, minimizes efforts, allows learning well, there are various amounts benefits of working together. "

Emerging Theme 3: Idealized Influence

The third theme that emerged was called *idealized influenced*, which made reference to leaders' behavior to become role models for their followers. The codes that I clustered under this theme were *change adaptability*, *inspiration*, and *ethics*. Participants identified the importance of adapting to change when necessary, inspiring followers, and holding a sense of ethics within their leadership role. The code *change adaptability* refers to adjusting to different conditions, new environments, or to modifying ideas and accepting different purposes. Pedro stated, "Changes are important; changes must be lived and assimilated. For example, what we are experiencing, the situation caused by the pandemic, made the in-campus classes be taken virtually."

Sara added "I think that the human being has the ability to resilience, adaptation and mental flexibility towards the changes that may occur, on the other hand, technological advancement makes the processes simpler and in others there is a higher degree of complexity that makes leaders to be in permanent training, adjust and adapt to changes." Change referred to acts and processes through which something or somebody becomes different. Ronald stated, "Well, precisely in a faculty, we consider that the law belongs to the social sciences, of course. As we have said previously, the social sciences are not static but belong to a dynamic modality, that dynamic modality will always be changing and generating new challenges, which is why we must be open and flexible and we as leaders, we need to be willing to face these new challenges, precisely that flexibility will motivate our students who see us as a potential leader to face or respond to those social needs." The code *inspiration* concerned the ways that a leader enhances the

potential of the followers. Jorge pointed out, "Well, I always try to do things as well as possible and I think that my behavior inspires others and that people who see that inspiration can follow that example." The code *ethics* referred to the kinds of morals and values that identify a leader. Some of these values are community service, respect, justice, honesty, etc. Sarah said, "I believe that the ethical part and the moral part constitute a fundamental axis in each of the decisions that one is going to make because, each decision has some implications for the other, and even more when the position I am holding is directly related with human talent. Therefore, I cannot ignore that each one of the actions will have implications, and many times those dilemmas in which one faces are ethical or moral dilemmas." Cristian added, "I think because you know, a leader has to treat people with dignity and respect, you know? And that's a one of the principles of equality."

Emerging Theme 4: Inspirational Motivation

The fourth theme that emerged from the data was *inspirational motivation*, which referred to the ability to inspire others through confidence, motivation, and a sense of purpose in the followers. The transformational leaders must have a clear vision, a good communication, and demonstrated commitment. The codes that I grouped under this theme were *consideration* and *empowering language.* Deans and faculty directors stated the importance of having a sense of consideration and empowerment among followers were positive aspects for leading their organizations. The code *consideration* involved the extent to which a leader demonstrates concerns for the welfare of the followers. Of consideration Mara said, "I try to arrange employees' schedules and other activities upon

common concern to make the employees feel the best possible way working with me."

Yanira mentioned, "Well, the considerations are incentives that I can give to the

employees and those are social and affective incentives. I don't have the authority to give

professional or social incentives, but if I can give emotional incentives in this sense, that

generates much more comfort than I could imagine because my permanent recognition of

those exceptional actions that some colleagues do on some occasions has been very

important to the organization." The code *empowering language* considered all the

strategic ways that a leader has to communicate with the members of the organization to

achieve common goals. Concerning this aspect, Cristian mentioned, "It is important to

me to establish some points of agreement where some forms of work and time are

expected, as this, a concession is made, let's say based on common purposes. At the

organization, there are not problems and it is done through dialogue; I believe that

dialogue is fundamental in this part because that allows us to clarify doubts, concerns,

and also unify perceptions, and then we continue with monitoring and verification of

results." Juan added, "I call people to dialogue and to that extent the decisions are agreed

sometimes not only with a person involved but we ask other people for advice. This

affected the organization in that the plans are agreed, discussed, and are assumed in a

better way."

Emerging Theme 5: Intellectual Stimulation

The fifth theme was called *intellectual stimulation*, which was related to a leader

who encourages themselves and their followers to innovate, to use critical thinking,

creativity, and to employ problem-solving strategies within their leadership role.

Moreover, this theme emphasizes on all the knowledge that a leader acquires through

professional training. The codes under this theme were *professional development*,

training, and *orientation*. Deans and faculty directors considered these codes as a critical

aspect of professional development and training and orientation options to their followers

to maintain and improve their performance within their organizations. The code

professional development was related to formal courses taken by the leaders and the

followers, courses which were taken by their own initiative or courses offered by the

organizations. Pedro mentioned, "the university has contemplated within its welfare

policies the fact that workers can be trained more and more; in fact, the person who

works with me is doing her master's degree for free. From the research group, we

promote the call to apply for scholarships such as CEIVA scholarship. We have more

than 12 scholarships for students and they get everything paid. We always seek the

personal and professional growth of our team." The code *training and orientation* was

related to formal or informal trainings and orientation involving the specific tasks that

each member should handle at the organization. These orientations and trainings are

usually provided by the organization. Sarah stated, "An improvement plan at my

organization allows workers to recognize their weaknesses with the aim of improving the

difficulties and strengthen them. I believe that is an opportunity for us to achieve a

professional growth into our field and new areas of knowledge." Cristian added, "We

have always sought to carry out a training process to help others achieving goals. As a

dean, the best way is to assume leadership by orienting and training employees so they

acquire the necessary skills to have a job well done. I am convinced that training is

necessary in the organization, complementary training based on change is part of organizational development.".

Emerging Theme 6: Organizational Performance

The sixth theme was *organizational performance*. This theme was related to strategies, plans, activities, and tasks carried out by the leader which can have a direct cause and effect relationship upon organizations and their success. The codes grouped into this theme were *development*, *performance*, and *strategic plans.* Deans and faculty directors agreed with the importance of empowering organizational development, identifying leaders and followers' performance, and designing strategic plans as critical factors within their organizations. The code *development* referred to the internal structural tasks that a leader has to manage and administer to lead their organization. Cristian said, "I believe that an organization should be projected and not stay with the same, in institutional life there are usually permanent dynamics of transformation because the institutions respond to social political demands and cultures and the institutions and one should jointly seek strategies mechanisms initiatives for improvement. I think that developing academic structures aligned to the organization standards helps a lot to have a university government where governance seeks the legitimacy of the institution and the effectiveness of the organization. That would help make a transformation of the organization." The code *performance* included the way followers carry out tasks based on a leader's guide. Yanira stated, "Ah, I feel happy when employees do what needs to be done. I feel happy, it is a tranquility for me, so there I go to give positive feedback to people because the fact that they do a suitable job will generate well-being for everyone."

The code *strategic plans* was related to institutional planning that a transformational

leader considers to carry out their leadership role successfully. Don pointed out, "Many

times institutional planning does not depend on the director; it also depends on the

members of the program. If they are willing to take risks and take on challenges, the team

as a whole decides whether they want to take that risk to include into the institutional

planning or if they do not want to take it."

Emerging Theme 7: Future Orientation

The seventh theme that emerged was *future orientation*, which considered all

changes and innovations in regulations, technology, and demands that a leader has to

implement into their organization to achieve improvement. The codes assembled into this

category were *change*, *confidence*, and *vision and strategy.* Deans and faculty directors

considered change, confidence, and having a vision and strategy as significant factors to

guarantee the success of their organizations. The code *change* in this theme *referred* to

the adjustments made into an organization to increase productivity and improve the

human and the financial capital. Juan added, "Working in the field of education means

that many things can go wrong. You know, it's not like something is permanent. We're

working with people. We're working with humans and all humans make mistakes. So,

we're always working towards improving and changing things, you know, or like trying

to fix something." Mara said, "I do not think that it is logic that everything works

excellent at my organization, but we always have to change. Obviously, it is necessary to

take time to analyze whether a change that is implemented works or not, but situations,

things nothing can be eternal and even more in this society where everything happens so

fast, so I think that the changes obviously have to take place in a prudential way." The code *confidence* related to the ability to believe in own or others' competencies and skills. Sarah said, "I think that if you are not convinced of what you are doing, it is difficult to do things well, yes, and that conviction, I think goes with my leadership ideology." Don stated "if I am here at the moment is because I believe in my institution because I believe in what we are doing contributes to a social purpose and that I also try to make it explicit in my speech with collaborators and teachers." The code *vision and strategy* encompassed the manners and processes that a leader uses to build a vision and keep the organization focused, always aiming for defined outcomes to achieve success within their organization. Moreover, it is related to the strategies that a leader contemplates to execute tasks to achieve the organizations' goals. Pedro said, "When the manager or leader sets an example at this/her organization about punctuality, commitment, quality of tasks to be carried out, the degree of responsibilities for actions to be taken would increase. The best strategy to keep an organization focused to achieve goals successfully is to be a good example at all times, then the followers would not have other choice but to follow the same working methodology. Moreover, proposing challenges all the times is necessary for the organization to advance." Mario added, "For me, it is critical to build trust and confidence, so teams work and support each other to achieve the organizations standards and goals. In the case of my organization, we all work together to achieve institutional accreditation. My strategy is to keep my employees motivated, correcting mistakes fast and making changes a soon as possible to avoid deep failures." Don stated, "I believe that if one is clear about the mission of the organization,

it is clear what its functions are, one will work based on the fulfillment of those objectives, and if this occurs, it will positively impact the organization and its vision."

Table 2

Summary of Codes and Themes

Themes	Codes
Idealized influence	Ethics, Inspiration
Leadership commitment	Commitment, Encouragement, Managing Situations
Shared vision	Decision Making, Effective Communication, Feedback, Team working
Future orientation	Change, Confidence, Vision and Strategy
Inspirational motivation	Consideration, Empowering Language
Intellectual stimulation	Professional Development, Training and Orientation
Organizational performance	Development, Performance, Strategic Plans

Discrepant Cases

In qualitative research, discrepancy may occur when participants' responses run counter to any particular category or specific pattern. Although this study did not present any surprises or clear cases of discrepancy, I e-mailed the participants the transcriptions of the interviews for checking. I sought clarification from two participants for responses around the 10th question, which referred to taking risks even though a possibility of failure exists. After clarification, I was able to code the transcripts without issues.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

I established the credibility of this study in several ways, including the utilization of member checking. I e-mailed each participant a copy of their interview transcript.

Three participants responded with minor corrections, and I contacted two participants who provided additional information to better explain one of their original responses. The two participants e-mailed me the additional explanations, which helped me add to the credibility of the data. Moreover, I bracketed my feelings and thoughts throughout the process, and I kept a research journal describing my own experiences, feelings, and biases that could influence my interpretation of the data.

Transferability

I addressed transferability in this study by providing detailed information about this study's procedures, context, participants, and their perspectives that could permit other researchers in similar situations to arrive at similar conclusions. I utilized a researcher's journal to reflect upon my own experiences in efforts to remain objective. To further promote transferability, discrepant cases were explored and discussed with participants to deepen the understanding of the data.

Dependability

I used reflexivity, and I kept a research journal to describe my own experiences, feelings, and biases that might have influenced my interpretation of the data to reinforce the dependability in this study (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). In addition, during the interviews, I added my personal comments and save those thoughts for the journal. Member-checking and verbatim transcription allowed for transparency and possible duplication of the study. Also, the use of a secure central database for storing, managing, and coding the data provided a way to ensure the integrity of the data.

Confirmability

I used reflexivity to address confirmability in this study. Reflexivity was described as engaging in self-reflection to identify factors that may influence the researcher's interpretation of the data (Postholm, 2019). Therefore, I contacted the participants when clarification was needed. I used a researcher's journal to reflect upon any feelings or biases that could emerge during the interview phase. I reviewed my annotations throughout the process. I also reflected upon my own experiences with involvement in professional development and its influence on my leadership expertise. The data collection took place during the COVIID-19 pandemic, soI observed all the social distance protocols. Therefore, I also assured confirmability by bracketing any feelings or biases that might have arisen during the interview phase due to this situation.

<div align="center">

Results

</div>

This section presents a discussion of the results and their relation to each research question. I included quotations from the interviews 'transcripts and documents to support the findings.

In the first part of this discussion, I present networks to visualize graphically codes and themes that emerged as a result of clustering the data in Atlas.ti 7.5, and I a detailed description of the findings (see Figures 1,2,3,4,5,6,7). Figure 1 shows the relationship between the codes and the first theme in this study: leadership commitment.
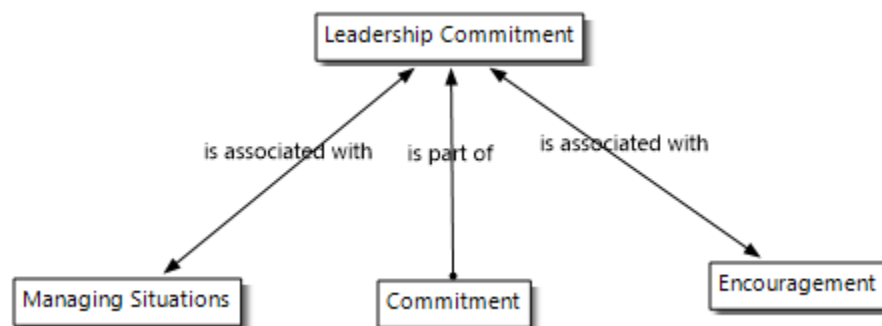
Figure 1. Leadership commitment.

The first research question asked about Colombian higher education deans' and

faculty directors' understanding of transformational leadership. Transformational

leadership is a style of leadership in which leaders work with other people to identify

problematic situations at organizations and implement change, as well as create a vision

to guide the change through inspiration (Buil et al., 2019). Transformational leaders

integrate creativity, persistence, principles, positive attitudes, and sensitivity to the needs

of others to enhance quality performance of their organizations (Jensen & Bro, 2018).

Leadership commitment was the first theme that emerged from coding data. Leadership

commitment, according to Kim and Beehr (2019), is a critical characteristic that

transformational leaders need to have to lead an organization. Commitment requires the

leader's capacity to engage their people with responsibility, punctuality, and

organization to work toward a common objective. Faculty directors and deans

demonstrated a positive understanding of leadership commitment by identifying aspects

such as *encouragement*, *managing situations*, and *commitment*. The code *commitment*

represented graphically in Figure 1 depicted a direct relationship to leadership

commitment. General characteristics of commitment are used in leadership commitment

with the difference being that in the field of leadership commitment, it is the leader who

inspires others to commit and guide the human talent to give their best every day (Asif et

al., 2019). The participant Cristian said, "I believe that every person who wants to

achieve transformation and change in institutions and change on people must have a

regulatory principle of commitment, ethics and co-responsibility." The *codes*

encouragement and *managing the situations* proved to be associated to leadership

commitment. Transformational leaders bring out the best in other people, encouraging

and motivating them to manage difficult situations with precaution. Mario stated,

"Influencing the worker, recognizing employees' skills, and talents make them feel

motivated, and usually motivated employees work better than unhappy workers." Mara

pointed out, "When people are encouraged, they fully commit to their organizations, they

feel valued and cared for." Both group of participants, deans and faculty directors,

recognized the positive value of leadership commitment and the aspects associated to it.

Figure 2 shows the relationship between the codes and the second theme in this study:
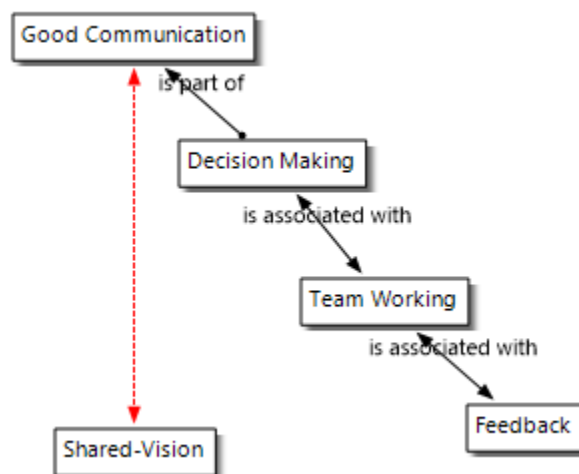
shared vision.

Figure 2. Shared vision.

  Shared-vision was the second theme that emerged from coding data. Shared-vision in leadership allows the leader to identify the essential role that each member of the organization can play in achieving their shared goals. When a leader assumes a shared-vision aspect, there is a permanent group identity, stronger team cohesion, and, ultimately, effective performance, and organizational outcomes (Qadach, Schechter, & Da'as, 2019). The codes presented in Figure 2 displayed the association among the codes *feedback*, *team working*, *decision making*, and *good* communication as critical elements for leaders to achieve a shared-vision characteristic. *Feedback* is important in the field of transformational leadership because it can be constructive to help people grow by learning, and by reinforcing the activities they are doing well (Lee, Idris, & Tuckey, 2019). The code *team working* allows a leader to create organizational structures around common goals. A transformational leader allows followers to work cooperatively with others to achieve group objectives (Ellis, 2018). Gloria mentioned, "I am not actually a leader that likes to take a lot of risks, but when risks come out, I try to get advice from

my team, and make decisions as a team. I believe a lot in team decisions and it works very well for me." The figure 2 showed that decision making is part of a good communication and good communication has a direct relationship to shared-vision. According to the majority of the participants, communication influences team effectiveness and creates a positive and significant effect on transformational leadership. Don said, "It is important to listen to various points of view. We need to analyze a decision from different perspectives, not necessarily one perspective is the correct one." Sarah added, "Leaders need to generate confidence to maintain a very open communication with employees." Pedro stated, "A comment has to be released to help another person; when the comment is not good, it is better not to do it. If the comment does not contribute, it is better not to say anything. Criticism must be to the construction not to damage the moral of the being human." Yanira reported, "I know that having an open communication with teachers and other people at the university is important, but we all hold different culture, different educational levels, skills and abilities, and we also have different personalities, so sometimes it is very difficult to keep an effective communication." Deans and faculty directors presented an understanding of the importance of holding a shared-vision characteristic and the elements described above when assuming a leadership role. Moreover, participants recognize the significance of constructive feedback and the difficulties of maintaining positive communication with employees. Khan, Ahmad, and Ilyas (2018) stated that transformational leaders focus on the entire organization as a whole and not on themselves. Transformational leaders' vision extends beyond their immediate goals. Deans and faculty directors described the

importance of teamwork as a critical part into their organizations. Mario said, "Team

works formulate important proposals for the organization. Working as a team maximizes

resources and minimizes efforts. Working together allows learning which bring positive

benefits to the organization." Sarah stated, "Working with others is very beneficial to the

organization because there may be different points of view and all of them may provide

positive changes to the organization. However, working with others is not easy all the

time. People are different with different personalities. Therefore, sometimes to agree

under a common purpose is not that easy. As leaders, we need to be very patient and

understandable." Jorge mentioned, "Due to my strong attitude, it is not that easy for me

to work within a team. Being authoritarian has affected my organization in a negative

way. Therefore, I know I need to change this aspect." The figure 2 displayed that

effective communication and decision making were codes that were associated with

organizational consciousness. Gloria stated, "Decisions are best taken in a group. I

consider everyone's opinions before taking a decision because decisions affect not only

the leader, but also the entire organization." Yanira mentioned, "Having a good working

team is essential to take wise decisions, and from the decisions taken into a group may

depend the future of an organization." Juan said, "A leader needs to analyze and imply

the risks behind decisions. It is impossible to avoid the risks that decisions can bring.

However, if those decisions are analyzed into a group. Then the advantages and

disadvantages can be better discussed." According to deans, communication is a critical

tool to manage an organization. Yanira said, "I think that the best way to keep a good

confidence with the members of the organization is to demonstrate trust and confidence."

Based on deans' and faculty directors' responses, there was an evident importance of

organizational consciousness into these leaders' practices. They described the

significance of focus on the entire organizations rather than specific individuals only.

The element of teamwork played a critical role that has affected deans' organizations

positively. Some deans recognized the need to manage attitudes and authoritarian

personalities when working in a team with the aim of achieving better results into the

organization. Finally, communication was a significant factor for participants, since it

enables organizations to have clarity on the objectives to achieve and processes into their

organizations. Moreover, according to the participants motivating individuals, respecting

their opinions, having a clear vision of the organization, and sharing ideas with

stakeholders are positive practices that deans and faculty directors use as part of their

transformational leadership roles to affect positively their organizations. Figure 3 shows

the relationship between the codes and the third theme in this study: idealized influence.
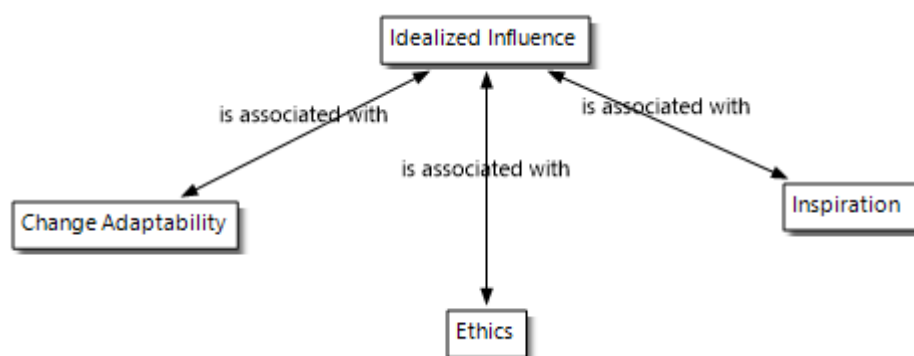

Figure 3. Idealized influence.

Idealized Influenced was the third theme of this study, and it showed to have a

relationship with the codes *inspiration*, *change adaptability*, and *ethics.* According to

Puni, Mohammed, and Asamoah (2018), idealized influence is related to leaders'

behavior to inspire their followers to be respected and trusted and to become role

models. The code *inspiration* was associated with idealized influence. Deans and faculty

directors considered that being a transformational leader means to become a role model

who inspires others to be better professionals and better human beings. For the

participants, inspiring others was one of the most important characteristics that a

transformational leader must possess. Moreover, one of the deans thought that followers

were in charge of judging leaders concerning their role of inspiring others. Mara said,

"Well, I consider that my followers should be the ones to judge if I am an inspirational

leader for them. Juan stated, "I consider myself an example to my employees. They can

follow what I do to develop the tasks faster because I have proposed some guidelines

before. It is easier if they just follow them because I know that the things that I do, have

worked good." In relation to the code *change adaptability*, Hetland, Hetland, Bakker,

and Demerouti (2018) stated that change means the leader's capacity to adjust and

connect to a new environment usually requires a new organization's culture to develop a

new structure that has to be aligned of its demands. Participants acknowledged the

significance of change adaptation and recognized this trait as one of the most important

transformational leader's characteristics. Pedro stated, "Changes are important; changes

must be lived and assimilated." Gloria mentioned, "A leader should promote

transformation and followers that follow that transformation through different processes.

Moreover, transformation requires leaders' characteristics such as charism, inspiration,

and positive attitudes. There are changes in the world and we have to adapt to new

processes." According to these results, deans and faculty directors evidenced a sound

understanding of transformational leadership dimensions and the aspects associated with

it. When considering the code *ethics*, deans and faculty directors agreed on the idea that

transformational leaders should hold a deep sense of ethics during all their leadership

tasks and behavior. Don added, "A leader must give an example of the actions that one

hopes to obtain from others. I believe that punctuality and responsibility should be in

compliance in the actions." Ronald added, "The moral principles and ethics of the leader

must always be at the forefront, that is, we cannot try to transform by example if we have

not established and validated moral principles and ethics." Figure 4 shows the

relationship between the codes and the fourth theme: inspirational motivation.
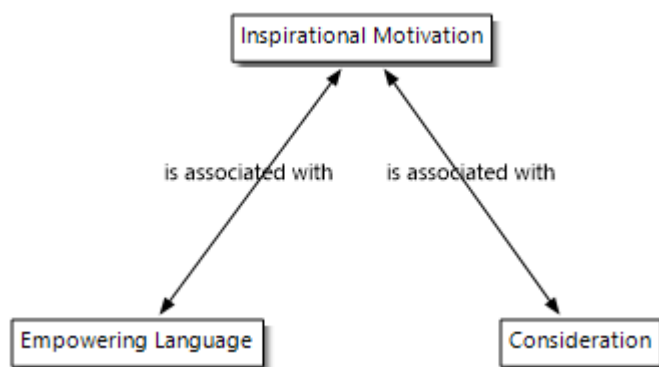
Figure 4. Inspirational motivation.

    Inspirational motivation was the fourth theme that emerged from participants'

responses. According to Mousa and Puhakka, (2019), inspirational motivation is related

to leaders' abilities to inspire confidence, motivation, and a sense of purpose in their

followers. Moreover, transformational leaders must develop a clear vision for the future,

keep clear lines of communication with followers concerning expectations of the group,

and demonstrate a sense of responsibility and commitment to the goals that have been

laid out. The codes under this category were *consideration* and *empowering language*.

Gloria said, "The organization gives official recognition. Sometimes, the organization

only provides verbal recognition, but that is very positive and very important to motivate

the employees and it has affected in a positive way to the organization." Yanira added,

"Well, as a program, we cannot provide incentives beyond the incentives provided by the

organization, but we always provide public recognition and that affects the organization

in a good manner." Mara said, "The reinforcement and positive feedback generates

levels of behavioral learning much better than punishments, such as repression, negative

feedback, etc. I have some knowledge in organizational psychology, and I know

perfectly the dynamics of work motivation. Therefore, I already know that incentives are

the best strategy to obtain a good performance into my organization." It was evident

based on faculty directors' responses, that the fact of motivating employees by providing

positive and sensitive feedback produces a positive motivation which allows

inspirational motivation to take place within their organizations with the aim of

obtaining successful results. Participants considered that empowering languages included

open and good communication strategies within the organization to enhance its

productivity and to achieve positive outcomes. Cristian said, "It is important to consider

the opinion of others because others can contribute positively to achieving the objective

of an organization. I believe that people have different points of view. Then, I believe

that sharing or allowing others to contribute to the achievement of the objective allows to

have a good communication into the organization, and it impacts in a positive way."

Sarah stated, "I believe that having a permanent dialogue is fundamental into an

organization because that allows us to clarify doubts, concerns, and also unify

perceptions, and then we continue with monitoring and verification of results to improve

our tasks." Cristian added, "Having a successful communication is essential to reach a

consensus around goals and to know that all people may provide interesting ideas."

Pedro said, "Speaking with conviction is critical to keep an open communication because

I can demonstrate that I am sure about what I am doing, and about the results that I

expect from my employees. Conviction when leading is important and has affected my

organization positively." Deans and faculty directors showed that motivation, conviction,

and communication are critical aspects related to consideration and empowering

language, all of which have positively affected their organizations. Figure 5 shows the

relationship between the codes and the fifth theme: intellectual stimulation.
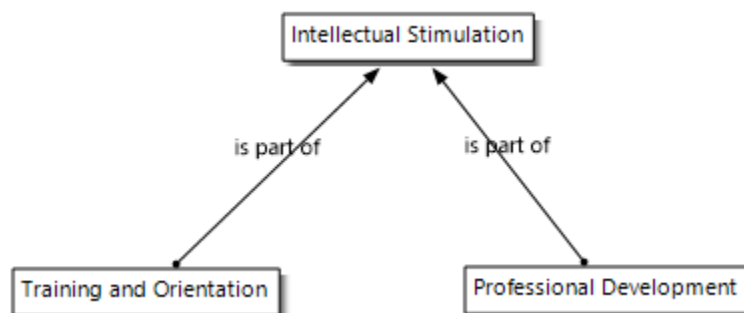
Figure 5. Intellectual stimulation.

Figure 5 showed that there was a direct relationship between the theme

intellectual stimulation and the codes *training and orientation* and *professional*

development. According to Sánchez-Cardona, Salanova Soria, and Llorens-Gumbau,

(2018), intellectual stimulation refers to some aspects and skills that a transformational

leader needs to hold such as innovation, creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Besides, intellectual stimulation involves arousing followers 'skills by stimulating their ability to identify and solve problems creatively through professional development and intellectual growth. Gloria said "in the globalized world in which we live, there are many possibilities of scholarships. courses, etc. I really try to support employees to improve professionally by offering them the alternatives of increasing their knowledge". Mara mentioned "professional development alternatives are offered every semester by the organization. Professionals who work with us are allowed to choose any type of course to improve as professionals. Therefore, having better professionals has affected in a really good way to our organization". Yanira said "investing on human capital is the best alternative to guarantee an organization's success". Based on deans and faculty directors' responses, professional development alternatives have affected their organizations effectively by having a skillful and well-prepared human capital which has risen its options to succeed. Figure 5 shows the relationship between codes and the sixth theme in this study: organizational performance.

Figure 6. Organizational performance.

 Organizational performance was the sixth theme that emerged in this study.

Transformational leadership influences the relationship of organizations and their

associated success. Transformational leaders are those who shape institutional strategies,

including their execution and effectiveness by determining values, culture, change

tolerance, and employee motivation (Al Khajeh, 2018). Figure 6 showed a direct

relationship between organizational performance and organizational development.

According to Subramony, Segers, Chadwick, and Shyamsunder (2018), transformational

leadership practices play a significant and crucial role in the development of any

organization. Organizations without effective leadership cannot work efficiently.

Transformational leadership is an important function of the educational management,

which helps to enhance productivity and to achieve organizational goals (Kim & Thapa,

2018). Based on faculty directors' responses, Figure 6 also showed that the code *strategic*

plans was associated with performance, and the code *performance* were part of

organizational development. Don said, "This organization is not managed by itself; the

organization has been built by a team and the team has contributed with their ideas, and

the results achieved are not the achievements of the leaders but are the achievements of

the whole team." Yanira mentioned, "Each academic term required of an action plan

where the objectives are set up. I consider that initial goals need to be clear into an

organization, and the role of a leader is to make sure those goals are not only clear, but

also are achieved during a certain period of time. As a leader I do not use improvisation,

everything obeys to very well developed and planned strategies." As evidenced from the

participants' responses, practicing good leadership strategies enhances organizations'

performance and effective development, which contributes to ensuring the positive

functioning of any organization. Figure 6 shows the relationship between codes and the

seventh theme in this study: future orientation.
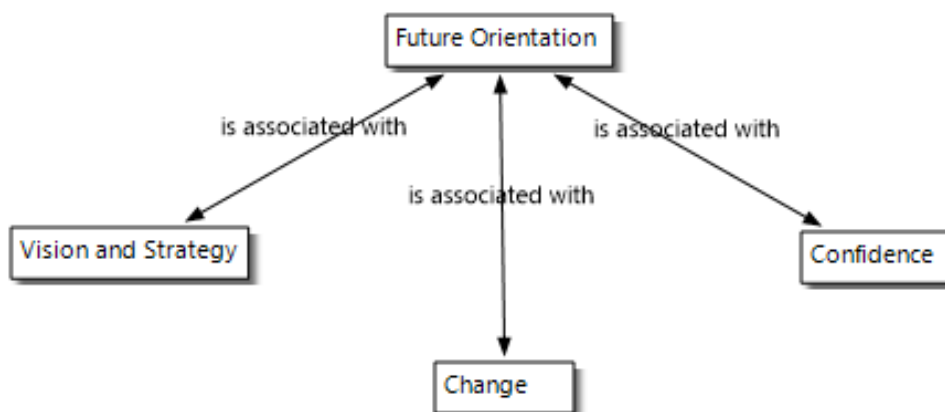
Figure 7. Future orientation.

     Future orientation was the seventh theme that emerged in this study.

Muralidharan and Pathak (2018) stated that future orientation refers to the degree to

which strategies that a transformational leader uses to encourage and reward future-

oriented behaviors from their followers helps enhance planning and creating a vision for

their organizations. Figure 7 presented a direct relationship between the theme *future*

orientation and the code *change*. According to deans' responses, change is a critical

element that must take place within the organization to dynamize the structure of the

organizations, to innovate, to achieve better results, and to be in line with the progress of

the society. Maria mentioned, "Nothing keeps working good all the time. We always

have to change; obviously, we have to take some time to analyze whether a change that is

implemented is working or not, but situations, things, nothing can be eternal and even

more in this society where everything goes really fast, so leaders and organizations need

to understand that change is important to grow as an organization." Faculty directors

thought that taking risks is always important to achieve change and to dynamize the

working climate because it allows transformation and improvement. Don added,

"Transformation is indispensable. We cannot pretend to be static and to manage things in

the same way over and over. If we want that our organizations progress over time, it is

necessary to implement new strategies, policies, rules, and processes that allow us to

innovate and be more creative." Roald mentioned, "Many new things occur into the

society, and into the field of education. Many aspects need to be renovated constantly

because technology advances and innovations require our organizations to adapt to

change; otherwise, we will be stuck in the same conditions under the same rules without

progressing." Mario stated, "Change is important, but we need to be careful when

implementing change. Change cannot be implemented too constantly. It is necessary to

analyze change implementation within a specific period of time, and then if what was

implemented did not work, modifications and interventions can be used. We need to be

flexible, but we also need to be cautious." Based on the participants' responses, the codes

confidence and *vision and strategy* are associated with the future orientation and change of any organization. Maria said, "I think that if we are not convinced of what we are doing, it is difficult to do things well, take risks, and implement changes. I think that conviction goes with my ideology, and having a strong confidence in myself has affected my organization positively because I provide trust among my employees." Ronald mentioned, "As educational leaders, we need to challenge ourselves to do new things, and I am sure that bring new challenges to the organizations will always have a positive impact." Sarah said,"Taking risks and facing challenges are part of my everyday tasks. As a leader, I must know that many things can happen, and I have to be wise enough to face those situations, avoiding negative consequences to the organizations. Yanira stated, "I am sometimes afraid of implementing change and take challenges into my organization because I am afraid of failure. At the beginning of the semester, some challenges are presented to us in order to plan strategies and assume them along the semester. However, when new challenges just appear on the way, I feel a little insecure to face them. I always ask for advice." Maria said, "In order to implement change, as leaders, it is important to motivate our team work and make them understand that the specific change is necessary to improve, and that it will be the best for the organizations. It is necessary to present the advantages that the change will bring into the future. Therefore, motivation is an important aspect to consider when trying to implement any type of change within an organization." Juan said, "at my organization, before implementing any type of change, I need to make sure, those changes are aligned to the organization standards and compile to the organization vision and mission." Ronald stated, "Sometimes, I want to implement

changes into my organization, but I cannot because I have to look for the changes to be

validated by the president of my organization. Most of the time, plans have to be

approved by the president of my organization before being implemented. There is not too

much independence into my organization. As it is evidenced on deans' responses, change

is a critical factor that may be integrated into any organization with precaution and

analysis. Change needs to be aligned to the organization standards and processes to make

sure leaders and followers work together towards common organizational goals and

achieve a future oriented organization.' Liseth said, "Efficient workers are a reflection of

their leaders. If we are not good leaders, we cannot expect to have good results into our

organizations because the people, the management, the tasks, nothing will work

appropriately. Leaders are the main keys to make sure an organization works well and

have a clear vision towards the future." As noticed, participants agreed that being

confident of followers' and leaders' skills when managing an organization is critical for

planning its future. Moreover, participants thought that holding a vision for the future of

the organization allows leaders to formulate strategies that guarantee the success of the

organization.

  According to the data analysis, among deans and faculty directors, the codes with

the highest number of quotations that were considered to answer RQ1were *inspiration*

and *managing situations*. This meant that all participants discussed these aspects with a

higher frequency because for the participants these two aspects needed to be emphasized

during their discussion as their present a high level of knowledge on these two topics

within their transformational leadership understanding. I presented a summary of codes

and quotation by participants in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Summary of Codes and Quotations

Codes	Sarah	Juan	Jorge	Mario	Ronald	Yanira	Gloria	Don	Mara	Pedro	Liseth	Cristian	Totals
Change Adaptability	2	3	3	4	3	4	2	1	1	1	1	2	27
Commitment	2	1	1	2	0	2	1	1	0	1	1	3	15
Decision-Making	1	3	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	1	2	3	14
Effective Communication	2	2	3	1	1	1	3	1	3	0	2	2	21
Encouragement	1	1	1	1	1	3	0	1	2	0	1	1	13
Ethics	2	4	3	1	2	3	1	2	0	1	1	2	22
Feedback	2	2	1	2	2	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	15
Idealized Influence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Inspiration	2	2	2	4	2	3	3	2	5	1	2	1	29
Leadership Commitment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Managing Situations	2	3	4	2	3	6	1	3	2	2	0	1	29
Shared Vision	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Team Working	3	1	2	1	1	3	2	1	3	0	2	3	22
Totals	19	22	20	18	15	25	15	15	18	8	13	19	207

Based on the results, among deans and faculty directors, the codes with highest

number of quotations that were considered to answer RQ2 were *team working* and

training and orientation. This meant that all participants discussed these aspects with

more frequency than the rest of the codes because for the participants, these two aspects

presented a high importance when leading an organization. I presented a summary of

codes and quotation by participants in Table 4 which appears below.

Table 4

Summary of Codes and Quotations

Codes	Sarah	Juan	Jorge	Mario	Ronald	Yanira	Gloria	Don	Mara	Pedro	Liseth	Cristian	Totals:
Change	3	2	2	0	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	1	12
Confidence	1	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	6
Consideration	1	2	3	2	1	2	1	0	3	1	2	0	16
Decision Making	1	2	3	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	10
Development	4	3	3	1	3	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	16
Effective Communication	3	1	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	8
Empowering Language	3	1	1	2	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	11
Future Orientation	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	7
Inspirational Motivation	2	0	2	0	0	2	2	2	3	0	0	0	13
Intellectual Stimulation	3	0	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9
Organizational Performance	2	0	2	0	0	3	0	0	2	0	2	0	12
Performance	4	1	4	2	2	2	0	0	2	1	1	0	19
Professional Development	2	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	9
Strategic Plans	1	2	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	8
Team Working	3	4	1	5	4	1	0	1	1	1	3	1	25
Training and Orientation	1	1	3	2	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	17
Vision and Strategy	4	2	2	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	12
TOTALS:	31	24	26	18	18	13	3	7	9	8	9	3	169

Summary

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore deans' and faculty directors' perspectives on their practice of transformational leadership in higher education institutions in Colombia.

The analysis of this research identified important results in relation to the two research questions and the two participants' groups. Seven major themes emerged from the data: (a) leadership commitment, (b) shared-vision, (c) idealized influence, (d) inspirational motivation, (e) intellectual stimulation, (f) organizational performance, and (g) future orientation.

Concerning RQ1, three major themes were considered to answer RQ1: (a) leadership commitment, (b) shared-vision, and (c) idealized influence. In regards to RQ2 four themes were considered to answer RQ2 (a) inspirational motivation, (b) intellectual stimulation, (c) organizational performance, and (d) future orientation.

Concerning RQ1, both, deans and faculty directors evidenced a positive understanding of transformational leadership by recognizing transformational leadership's key aspects within the identified themes of commitment, positive communication, encouragement, ethics, and change adaptability. Faculty directors revealed that these aspects allowed them to carry out their leadership tasks effectively into their organizations. Faculty directors also understood the necessity of communication with employees to plan, design, and carry out tasks within their organizations with more efficacy. They also knew that inspiration was a key factor that enhances employee's productivity and increases job satisfaction. This group of

participants identified change adaptability as a key element that is necessary within every organization to bring innovation and creativity. Deans recognized that taking cautious risks to avoid failures is important, but according to them, challenges and risks are important for an organization and may bring many advantages to the organization. Deans recognized that a transformational leader must inspire others through example, and they knew that they should motivate their followers by providing them incentives, treating them with respect and dignity, and valuing all their efforts within the organization. Four deans considered that other people should recognize them as leaders. Jorge said, "I consider that a leader needs to be identified as a leader by the followers, but it is not appropriate that the leader identifies him/herself as that." This is an aspect that leaders must improve upon because according to the transformational leadership characteristics, a transformational leader should feel, act, and recognize their leadership skills. A transformational leader must identify themselves as a leader (Hillis, 2018). In general, deans also presented a positive understanding of transformational leadership. Participants evidenced a higher level of understanding on transformational leadership factors such as inspiration and managing situations, citing them as critical aspects in their leadership roles.

Regarding RQ2, the main aspects identified were consideration, empowering language, professional development, training and orientation, development, performance, strategic plans, confidence, vision, and strategy. According to the participants, decision makingteamwork, effective communication, and change are aspects that have affected their organizations positively. Faculty directors recognized the difficulty of maintaining

open and positive communication all the time with followers, but they understood that

maintaining positive communication with employees is a key factor in transformational

leadership practices and that this aspect affects organizations deeply. Faculty directors

described the importance of offering alternatives to professional development, so

personnel within the organization improve their skills and knowledge to offer better

services to the educational community. Faculty directors recognized that their

organizations cannot be static. They must change and acquire technology, establishing

new strategies to progress and improve with the aim of achieving a future-oriented

organization. Deans considered that sometimes they do not like to take risks in order to

avoid failure, but they recognized that this factor may affect organizations positively

because innovation, creativity, and change must be implemented. Deans and faculty

directors understood that inspiration is a significant aspect for leading an organization and

enhancing teamwork and cooperation. However, deans recognized that behaviors such as

authoritarianism or strong attitudes toward followers restrict the opportunity to maintain

positive communication with them and that this aspect has influenced their organizations

negatively. This is an aspect that must be improved upon to achieve better results. Deans

explained that being flexible and patient with their employees may empower

organizational performance and inspirational motivations, which are key factors that

enable an organization to advance and succeed. Deans were in agreement with faculty

directors about the high relevance of factors such as teamwork and training and

orientation, as these two elements presented the highest level of quotes among

participants.

In this section, I presented the setting, participant demographics, data collection, and analysis for this study, as well as provided a description of the evidence of trustworthiness and the results in relation to the two research questions. The interpretations of findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, as well as implications are discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Chapter 5 presents the interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, implications, and conclusions based on insights obtained from the interviews conducted. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore higher education deans' and faculty directors' perspectives on their practice of transformational leadership in higher education institutions in Colombia. Considering the importance of transformational leadership in educational organizations, this study was conducted to increase the body of knowledge about this leadership style within higher education institutions in Colombia. Based on the literature review, there was a lack of information about transformational leadership practices in Colombian higher education institutions at the leadership management level (Gaviria-Rivera & López-Zapata, 2019). Therefore, this study was conducted to gain information about transformational leadership that supports leaders to enhance their leadership roles, improve their decision-making practices, increase motivation, and enhance organizational commitment and effectiveness within their educational organizations.

Interpretation of the Findings

To interpret the findings of this study, I considered the two research questions. RQ1 allowed for exploration of deans' and faculty directors' perspectives on their transformational leadership understanding. RQ2 allowed for the exploration of deans' and faculty directors' perspectives on how their transformational leadership practice has impacted their organizations. The findings of this study in relation to RQ1 were consistent with reports in existing literature, which were related to the effective practices

of transformational leadership that occur when a leader inspires and motivates other people to share a vision and gives them the resources needed for developing their full potential and achieving a common goal. According to deans and faculty directors interviewed in the study, a transformational leader should be an example to others and become a role model who inspires others to be better human beings and professionals. This finding was consistent with the literature, which indicated that transformational leaders become role models within their organizations, they are optimistic and cooperate to generate organizational commitment, and they focus on their subordinates' needs for growth and improvement (see Rosenbach, 2018). According to Ghavifekr et al. (2017), transformational leaders encourage problem-solving practices and accept new ideas from their followers. The findings in the current study were consistent with this part of the literature review because deans and faculty directors considered the importance of accepting other people's ideas to enhance communication and promote problem-solving strategies within the organizations.

Deans and faculty directors in the current study recognized the importance of promoting professional learning, orientation, and training in the organizations to achieve better results from their followers and improve job performance. This finding was consistent with the literature that indicated a transformational leader is an individual who generates and facilitates learning opportunities for followers and may play the role of a coach or a mentor. The findings were also consistent with the literature because the current study participants had an understanding of the four transformational leadership dimensions promoted by Bass (1985). The first dimension is charisma. The charismatic

leader inspires, gains respect and trust, and increases optimism. Inspiration is the second dimension, which focuses on leaders' behavior as a role model for followers and subordinates. The third dimension is individual consideration. This dimension enables leaders to recognize and determine followers' needs and provide them with opportunities for customized training sessions and activities for their growth within their positions. The last dimension of transformational leadership is intellectual stimulation, which focuses on decision, creativity, and innovation.

Based on the literature reviewed, I discovered that transformational leaders who recognize themselves as leaders are strong individuals who are able to stimulate and inspire their subordinates to achieve extraordinary results while developing their leadership skills (see Nguyen et al., 2017). Deans in the current study highlighted the importance of improving this aspect because they considered that leaders need to be recognized by others and not by themselves. Deans understood the importance of improving this transformational leadership practice through achieving a deeper sense of leadership and self-recognition.

Findings in the current study were consistent regarding the importance of having positive and open communication with others. According to deans and faculty directors, establishing dialogue and providing positive feedback creates debates, discussions, meetings, and other means of communication; reduces the risks of issues and misunderstanding; and enhances comprehension among employers to set up clear and coherent goals. Based on the literature review presented in this study, leaders must have strong skills of communication to guide the direction of the organization through their

leadership practices. According to current study participants, transformational leadership practices enhance creativity and motivation, which enables employees and other leaders to achieve better results within their organizations. This finding was consistent with the literature, which established that transformational leaders create an environment conducive to innovation because they generate positive perceptions and job satisfaction by properly driving feedback that serves to guide followers and keep them motivated toward achieving the goals of the organization (Tintoré, 2019).

Regarding RQ2, the findings in this study were consistent with the literature review concerning the importance of analyzing the leadership style of an organization because it is reflected both in the culture of the organization and in its relationship with society; in this way, if a leader distrusts their power, it is likely that other members of the social organization will act in a similar way when interacting with colleagues, as well as with the community (Bligh et al., 2018). If a leader works collaboratively and is open, they are likely to promote the same attitudes among staff and may collaborate with other organizations. In most cases, organizational culture is defined by the style of its leader. If the organization is faithful to its philosophy and mission, the style of its leader must be consistent with them (Contreras et al., 2016). Deans and faculty directors in the current study recognized the critical role that a leader has in organizations because their behavior may impact the correct functioning of the organization, its organizational culture, and its vision. Deans and faculty directors described the significance of cooperation, teamwork, and working collaboratively to achieve better results within the organization. Moreover, deans and faculty directors reflected on the critical role that adapting to change means to

an organization and its members. According to participants, change is a strategy that brings to the organization innovation, creativity, and progress. Deans and faculty directors thought that changes should be carefully implemented within the organization in order to avoid failures, even though it was understood that failing would always be part of the risks taken in the process. According to the literature reviewed in this study, leaders of the organizational field agree on the changes they are experiencing and how those changes have been opportunities to progress and succeed (Shanafelt & Noseworthy, 2017).

Based on the literature reviewed, transformational leaders should motivate followers to go beyond their self-interests and attend to their necessities. This motivation should be implemented using positive reinforcement and avoiding negative behaviors, such as punishment or authoritarianism (Espinoza-Solis & Elgoibar, 2019). Consistent with the literature review, deans and faculty directors thought that effective leadership practices encourage leaders to work toward achieving goals to improve the quality of organizations through the ideals of equality, fairness, and justice. Participants noted that some behaviors recognized among their leadership practices, such as authoritarianism, must be changed.

The findings in this study also increased the body of knowledge concerning transformational leadership at Colombian higher education institutions. Research on transformational leadership in Colombian higher education institutions has focused on professors' perception of this leadership style within their instructional activities, but there was a lack of information on how Colombian higher education leaders at the

management level perceived and practiced transformational leadership within their

leadership roles (Mesa et al., 2017). Therefore, this study may contribute to the expansion

of knowledge regarding this topic. Additionally, the findings in this study increased

knowledge concerning transformational leadership in Latin American countries such as

Colombia because this style of leadership has been explored mostly in elementary and

secondary educational settings and has focused on instructional practice (Bernasconi &

Rodríguez-Ponce, 2018).

The conceptual framework that informed this study was based on transformational

leadership theory. Burns introduced the theory in 1978, and Bass (1997) later expanded

on Burns's work. I selected the transformational leadership theory to serve as the

conceptual framework for this study because this theory focuses on leaders' perception

and practice of transformational leadership, which is reflected in the exceptional output

of the leaders' followers. Positive perception of transformational leadership also

improves leaders' decision-making, motivation, organizational commitment,

organizational climate, and ability to enhance the quality of education (LePine et al.,

2016).

The findings in this study supported the transformational leadership theory as they

expanded knowledge regarding transformational leadership style. The findings presented

perspectives from deans and faculty directors concerning their transformational

leadership practices at Colombian higher education institutions and promoted the

importance of the five elements of the transformational leadership theory: (a) idealized

influence or attributed charisma, (b) idealized influence or behavioral charisma, (c)

inspirational motivation, (d) intellectual stimulation, and (e) individualized consideration (Mahmood, Uddin, & Fan, 2019). Deans and faculty directors reported that holding and promoting positive attitudes may influence followers and enhance job performance in organizations. Participants also noted that motivating followers and considering their needs and weaknesses may increase their motivation, commitment, and quality of service. Participants acknowledged that authoritarianism was a negative aspect of their behavior and a factor that needed to be improved. Moreover, participants identified professional development opportunities as an important aspect to improve human capital and ensure high quality in their organizations.

The findings aligned with transformational leadership theory because the themes that emerged from the participants' responses focused on the transformational leadership dimensions and principles that best describe leaders, such as respecting others, having positive communicative skills, inspiring and motivating followers, improving self-recognition as leaders, having a vision, and working collaboratively with others to achieve common goals. Moreover, the findings reflected the importance of transformational leadership in organizations because this approach generates change in people's lives and within organizations (see Khalili, 2016). Transformational leadership restructures values, perspectives, expectations, and aspirations of employees to contribute to building and practicing effective leadership skills. The components of the transformational leadership theory supported this study to facilitate the exploration of transformational leadership practice and determine participants' perceptions concerning the outcome of their transformational leadership skills to contribute to improving the

quality of Colombian higher education institutions. The findings in this study also supported transformational leadership theory because they provided an understanding of effective leadership practices and relationships between school leaders and those involved with the educational community (see Galli, 2019).

Limitations of the Study

While completing the study, I confronted some limitations that arose due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I had to limit data collection to two higher education institutions. Moreover, the data collection process was carried out virtually due to the social distancing protocols. Under these conditions, I could not visit higher education institutions and conduct face-to-face interviews. Alternatively, I conducted virtual interviews with the 12 participants (six deans and six faculty directors) using online video conferences.

A second limitation was that only deans and faculty directors were included as data sources for this study. Other forms of data could increase a broader understanding of the phenomenon. Interviews with other members of the higher education institutions could contribute to gain a more extensive understanding of transformational leadership practice, but they could detract from the actual perspectives of the leaders who were at the management level.

The third limitation was research bias. I was the sole person responsible of collecting and analyzing the data comprising this study and I was currently working at a Colombian higher education institution. Therefore, potential for researcher bias existed.

To minimize researcher bias and to strengthen the reliability and validity of this study, I had no relationship or connections with the locations or the participants.

Recommendations

I recommend that this study be replicated in higher education institutions in different geographic areas to better understand deans' and faculty directors' perspectives on their transformational leadership practices. Including more leaders at the educational management level may yield additional information. A replication of this study in a different geographic area would reveal best leadership practices that differ from those that I gathered and may add transformational leadership practice perspectives missing from the present study.

I suggest that this study be replicated in higher education institutions around other Latin American countries in which there is evidence of deficient leadership practices. Perspectives toward best transformational leadership practices may be different in universities that function with a lack of support for quality education. Further research may uncover additional information about transformational leadership perspectives.

I also recommend a comparative study that includes the perspectives of faculty and staff regarding the transformational leadership practices developed by their leaders. Evidence gathered in this study suggests that faculty and staff input may be important when trying to find the best transformational leadership practices into higher education institutions in Colombia. Systematic analysis of followers' opinions would contribute to the literature on transformational leadership practice.

Implications

Implications for Social Change

The results of this study could potentially be used by educational managers and those responsible for holding leadership roles into higher education institutions. Deans and faculty directors may consider their leadership skills and reevaluate the effectiveness of their current transformational leadership practices. Actively involving followers in the planning and curriculum design could improve job performance, commitment, organizational performance, and motivation, as well as enhance positive communication among educational managers, professors, and positively impact the quality, effectiveness, and success of the educational organizations. Professors may feel more committed and encouraged to advance professionally within their organizations because their experiences, concerns, and needs would be met and students learning might improve. Developing a deeper understanding of the perspectives about transformational leadership practices from deans and faculty directors may contribute to enhance higher education quality by improving decision-making practices, motivation, and potentially enhance organizational commitment and effectiveness leading to a positive social change. Effective transformational leadership practice into educative organizations is said to be responsive to the educational members' necessities and causes positive change in management practices that meet followers need (Adhikari, 2019).

Effective transformational leaders within the higher education field must work toward adapting positively to a rapidly changing environment. They must understand and effectively manage internal and external social changes to ensure success into the

educational organizations and the society in general (Heaton, 2020). Additionally, transformational leaders into the educational field must understand the phenomenon of transformational leadership and learn effective practices that enable them to deal with the issues that sometimes may surround them, to find problem-solving strategies, to move forward and make progress within and outside of their organizations, and to manage future-oriented organizations that contribute to positive changes in the community at all levels.

Methodological, Theoretical, and Empirical Implications

      Methodological implications. As a basic qualitative case-study inquiry, this study could provide comparative literature for other scholars who need to use a basic qualitative methodology in their research projects. This study focused on one single element as the central part of the issue studied. Highlighting the transformational leadership practice of deans and faculty directors into Colombian higher education institutions. This methodological choice could be a guide for other researchers or students to apply a basic, qualitative research approach in exploring the significant element of a particular phenomenon to be studied.

      Theoretical implications. This study is a scholarly attempt to support the body of literature in relation to transformational leadership in higher education. Transformational leadership practices from deans and faculty directors in Colombian higher educational institutions included all perspectives to understand current educational leaders' skills and practices, while combining the existing literature to increase the knowledge into this field.

Practical implications. The practical implications of this study encompass a reference for Colombian and Latin American educational leaders to examine their current transformational leadership practices and improve their performance regarding their leadership role and avoid the pitfalls of inadequate educational leadership. To some extent, the findings of this study add to the body of literature for transformational leaders who support and wish to improve quality education.

Recommendations for Practice

This study may contribute to enhance quality education by enforcing the practice of transformational leadership within higher education institutions. This study may provide information for educational leaders to understand the importance of transformational leadership style and the principles that conform it to enhance and improve leadership practices within educational organizations. Furthermore, this study may uncover effective transformational leadership practices already used by deans and faculty directors that can be used by other leaders to improve their leadership roles.

The results of this study may improve transformational leadership practices, such as communication, teamwork, training and orientation, inspiration, change adaptation, and achievement of a vision of the future to realize positive outcomes and sustainable goals within higher education institutions.

Conclusion

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore higher education deans' and faculty directors' perspectives on their practices of transformational leadership in higher education institutions in Colombia. As the findings confirmed, transformational

leadership understanding and practice by deans and faculty directors in Colombian higher education institutions are positive with only small percentage of these leaders reporting negative views of transformational leadership behavior, such as authoritarianism and lack of leadership self-recognition.

This study is important as it may increase understanding of the knowledge of deans and faculty directors related to transformational leadership in Colombian higher education institutions at the management level. Based on deans and faculty directors' perspectives on their transformational leadership practices, this study may contribute to increase the body of knowledge about transformational leadership, which may enable leaders within educational environments to enhance quality education by improving decision-making practices, motivation, job performance, and potentially organizational commitment and effectiveness leading to progress and success. The results of this study indicate that best transformational leadership practices within higher education institutions are necessary to establish and maintain an open communication among leaders and followers, to improve team working, to implement professional development opportunities and to work actively toward achieving common goals with the aim of creating future-oriented educational organizations.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

I used this protocol for each of the interviews.

Date: _____ Time: _____ Location: _____ Interviewer:

_____ Interviewee #: _____

1. Interviews were conducted mutually agreed upon times and locations.

2. The interview lasted around 60 minutes. However, this time may vary

3. The aim of the interview was to discuss with the participant.

4. Authorization to record the interview was attained.

5. Participant questions were answered before the interview begins.

6. Open-ended questioning technique was used.

7. The researcher asked follow-up questions when necessary to maintain the flow

of communication.

8. The researcher made note of any useful information like voice inflections,

hesitancy, and feelings.

9. Due to COVID-19 pandemic. The interviews were conducted through online virtual

conference.

Appendix B: Formal Email Invitation to Participate in a Doctoral Study

Dear Sir/Madam,

This invitation is in connection with my conversation with the principal of your organization and with you regarding a proposed research project involving participants at ------------------------. My name is Darling Viviana Delgado Alban, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership, Policy, and Management program at Walden University. As part of my doctoral study at Walden University, I would like to formally invite you to participate in a research study I am conducting about Perspectives of Colombian Higher Education Deans and Faculty directors on their Transformational Leadership Practice. The focus and topic of this basic qualitative study are the perspectives of deans and faculty directors on their practice of transformational leadership. I already contacted you in person to participate because you are a higher educational leader from Colombia with a minimum of 1 years of leadership experience at higher education level. Participation in this research study is voluntary. This is a formal invitation sent to you because you verbally agreed to participate in this study, thus in the study you will be asked to:

• Participate in a semi-structured individual virtual , recorded interview

with the researcher. The interview will be scheduled in a private location of

your choice. The duration of the interview will be around 60 minutes.

Participants in this study must be Colombian higher education leaders (I.e., deans and faculty directors) with a minimum of one year of leadership experience.

Since you satisfy this criterion and you verbally agreed to participate in the study, please

notify me via e-mail your formal participation. I will contact you again to deliver a

formal participation invitation, the Informed Consent form, and the interview protocol.

Then, I will proceed to set up the individual interview of around one hour. Due to

COVID-19. This interview will be conducted through online virtual video conference.

There is no obligation to participate in this study, and there will be no negative

consequences if you decide to withdraw at any time.

The interview will be audio recorded, and participants will have the opportunity to review

the transcribed interview interpretations for accuracy before inclusion in the study. I

sincerely appreciate your valuable time and thank you in advance for your cooperation.

If you have any questions before acting on the invitation to participate, please do not

hesitate in contacting me.

Sincerely,

Darling Viviana Delgado Alban

Appendix C: Interview Questionnaire

Study: A basic qualitative study of the Perspectives of Colombian Higher Education

Deans and Faculty directors on Transformational Leadership Practice: Thank you for

participating today! I am currently working on my Doctoral Project Study through

Walden University. The purpose of my study is to explore higher education deans and

faculty directors' perspectives on their practice of transformational leadership in higher

education institutions in Colombia. Today I will be conducting an initial and unique

interview. I will be audio taping the interview, as per your consent, so that I can more

accurately transcribe our conversation. All information shared today will be confidential

as I will not include any names in my study. I will send you a copy of the interview

transcript to review to ensure I accurately recorded today's interview. You can withdraw

from the study at any point if your desire to do so with no negative consequences.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

What are Colombian higher education deans and faculty directors' understanding of

transformational leadership?

1. Do you consider yourself an example of what you expect of others? Why?

2. Do you consider that a transformational leader goes beyond self-interest for the good

   of the group? Explain.

3. How does a transformational leader see the moral and ethical consequences of

   decisions?

4. How do you consider that a transformational leader should examine critical

   situations?

5. How does a transformational leader perceive and assume change?

6. Are you clear about your philosophy of leadership? What are your leadership weaknesses and strengths?

7. Do you ask for feedback on how your actions affect other people's performance? Why?

8. Do you build confidence by following through on your promises and commitment that you make? How?

9. Do you seek out for challenging opportunities that test your own skills? How? Why?

10. Do you take risks even when there is a chance of failure? How? why?

11. Do you listen to several points of view? Why?

12. Do you treat others with dignity and respect?

13. Do you consider that you have built consensus around values and common goals for running your organization? how this situation has affected your organization?

14. Do you speak with conviction about the purpose of your work and other peoples' work at your organizations? How this aspect has affected your organization?

15. Do you make sure that people work with adhere to the standards agreed on your organization? How this has affected your organization?

16. You ensure others understand what you expect from them by using mutual agreement?

17. Do you appeal to others to share or build common goals related to the future of your organization? How this aspect has affected your organization?

18. Do you provide opportunities for people to improve and develop themselves in their jobs?

19. Do you provide incentives to other people for a job well done? How this has affected your organization?

20. Do you demonstrate appreciation and support for other people's contributions to your organization? (contribution to projects, plans, new ideas. Etc.)

21. As long as things are working at yur organization, you do not try to change anything? Why?

22. How do you feel when the members of your organization meet agreed-upon standards? Why?

23. Do you help members at your organization to learn by coaching and mentoring them? If yes, How?

24. Do you create challenging environments to help members at your organization to reach their full potential? If yes, How?

Thank you very much for your participation. Is there anything else that you would like to say? Do you have any comments?

If you have any questions or doubts about this interview, please do not hesitate in contacting me. My phone number is 3106845266, and my e-mail address is vivialban12@gmail.com.

Thank you