

Inspirational motivation in peer-based, adult-supervised youth contexts: a model for social change

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to propose a new conceptual model – The Inspirational Motivation Model – for driving social change among youth.

Design/methodology/approach – Through literature review and related analysis, this paper advances two propositions that explain how youth exercise inspirational motivation, a dimension of transformational leadership.

Findings – The core contributions of this paper are propositions suggesting that youth leaders' inspirational motivation fosters shared vision development and persuasive communication to facilitate social change in peer-based, adult-supervised youth settings.

Practical implications – We recommend that leadership educators utilize the proposed model when teaching transformational leadership to college students, particularly undergraduates. Moreover, we urge researchers to empirically test the propositions of our model, as well as other dimensions of transformational leadership.

Originality/value – Transformational leadership is often conceptualized in terms of a clear leader–follower hierarchy characteristic of adult organizational settings, which may limit its applicability in youth contexts. To enhance the relevance of transformational leadership (TL) theory in youth settings and fill a gap in the literature, this paper explains how inspirational motivation – a key dimension of TL – can be expressed by youth leaders to facilitate social change in peer-based, adult-supervised contexts.

Keywords Transformational leadership, Behaviors, Strategies, Social change, Inspiration

Paper type Conceptual paper

Introduction

Global challenges across sectors underscore the need for transformational leadership (Ngayo Fotso, 2021; World Economic Forum, 2023). In response, most studies focus on adult organizational and societal leaders (Korejan & Shahbazi, 2016). This emphasis is reflected in dominant definitions and models of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Riggio, Bass, & Orr, 2004). For example, Bass (1985) defined transformational leadership as a leader's ability to:

Broaden and elevate the interests of their employees, when they generate awareness and acceptance of the purposes and mission of the group, and when they stir their employees to look beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group. (p. 21)

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The term “employees” in this definition reflects a reliance on hierarchical and positional power, and illustrates how transformational leadership has been conceptualized through the lens of organizational sciences and adult leadership, thereby limiting its usefulness among youth (Korejan & Shahbazi, 2016).

Consequently, leadership education reflects this emphasis on adult-centered models with little content dedicated to youth transformational leadership. However, youth-focused programs and organizations primarily serve youth who lack the organizational leadership experience assumed in these models (Lee & Chan, 2023; MacNeil, 2006).

In recent years, youth have increasingly engaged in social causes (Woodman, 2020). For example, Greta Thunberg has inspired global youth climate activism. Similarly, Malala Yousafzai has advocated for girls’ education from a young age. Despite growing investment in youth leadership development (United Nations, 2022), existing transformational leadership conceptual models remain limited and insufficiently grounded in youth experiences (Karagianni & Montgomery, 2018).

This paper extends the model of transformational leadership by proposing a youth-focused model of inspirational motivation, one of the core dimensions of transformational leadership identified by Bass and Avolio (1995), with a specific focus on pre-college and college-aged youth. Since research suggests the need for youth to be prepared to solve present and future organizational and societal problems (Bates, Anderson-Butcher, Ferrari, & Clary, 2020; Carroll & Firth, 2021), this paper offers a new perspective on how youth lead social change in peer-based, adult-supervised contexts through inspirational motivation, as well as how leadership educators can intentionally foster development in this area.

Review of literature

To effectively conceptualize the framework, we review literature on youth leadership, existing discourse on transformational leadership, and scholarship aimed at conceptualizing youth transformational leadership.

Youth leadership

There is an absence of consensus on the definition of “youth,” and this has led researchers to operationalize the concept in ways that suit their respective studies (Igwe & Usoro, 2021). For instance, while some researchers have adopted the United Nations’ definition of youth as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 (UNESCO, n.d.), others have utilized the Malaysian Government’s categorization of youth to fall within the age bracket of 15 to 30 (Arshad, Ismail, Fesol, & Ismail, 2021). Other scholars have defined youth as the transition from adolescence to adulthood (Bounds & Posey, 2022; Eva & Sendjaya, 2013; Sun & Shek, 2012). Nevertheless, this model adopts the World Health Organization (WHO) definition of youth as ages 10 to 19 (WHO, n.d.). This definition aligns with this paper’s focus on pre-college and college-level youth who operate in peer-based, adult-supervised settings. This period is most often characterized by positive energy, as well as a willingness and motivation to drive positive change and exhibit effective leadership within organizational and societal contexts (Cheah, Lim, & Kee, 2018).

In terms of leadership development at the youth stage, many scholars (e.g. Escobar Vega et al., 2025; Warneken & Tomasello, 2009) have established that youth rely on socialization, interaction, and exposure in shaping their leadership behaviors and perspectives over time. These leadership behaviors, developed at this stage, have a tremendous impact on their long-term workplace behaviors when they become adults (Karagianni & Montgomery, 2018).

Given their importance, several youth leadership models have been developed. One example is the Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework, which emphasizes strengths, identity, and social connectedness (Lines & Jardine, 2025; Redmond & Dolan, 2014; Waid & Uhrich, 2020). Several models have emerged to define and guide core areas of youth

development (Lerner, Phelps, Forman, & Bowers, 2009; Seymour, 2017). Other models (e.g. servant leadership) integrate individual traits with collective processes (Libby, Sedonaen, & Bliss, 2006; Mortensen *et al.*, 2014). Many youth development organizations often combine these approaches in their programmatic efforts. The current model seeks to contribute to the general body of youth leadership literature by exploring how youth can exercise one of the components of transformational leadership, Inspirational Motivation, in driving social change.

Existing discourse on transformational leadership

The discourse on transformational leadership is well-established. The concept was first introduced by Downton (1973) and later expanded upon by Burns (1978) in his seminal work, *Leadership*. Burns characterized transformational leadership as the capacity of an individual to foster meaningful connections and engagement with followers, thereby enhancing their motivation to exceed performance expectations. As scholarship on transformational leadership advanced, most has concentrated on adult populations (e.g. Bass & Avolio, 1995; Stock, Banks, Voss, Tonidandel, & Woznyj, 2023).

Where transformational leadership studies have involved youth populations, the focus has typically been on examining how adult leaders enact transformational leadership behaviors that influence youth's performance, engagement, and creativity – positioning youth primarily as followers (e.g. Turnnidge & Côté, 2018). These investigations have yielded insights and significantly contributed to the state of knowledge, particularly within the context of vertical relationships (i.e. between adults and youth or leader and subordinate). However, the dominance of this vertical perspective in transformational leadership research has created a gap in the literature, with only a few studies (e.g. Alegbeleye & Kaufman, 2022; Perreault, Cohen, & Blanchard, 2015) examining transformational leadership from a horizontal perspective – focusing on how it manifests among peers, specifically among youth and young adults.

Inspirational motivation conceptualized

Bass and Avolio's (1995) full-range model of transformational leadership identifies four dimensions (or four I's): idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and inspirational motivation. While these dimensions apply to youth contexts, they are often described in terms of a clear leader-follower hierarchy characteristic of adult organizational settings (Iwasaki, 2015; Meyer & Rinn, 2021; Powell, 1993). Because the expression of these transformational leadership behaviors differs between youth and adult contexts (Reichard *et al.*, 2011), there is a need for conceptual models that apply them to youth settings. Therefore, to enhance the relevance of the Transformational Leadership (TL) model in youth settings, this paper examines how inspirational motivation, a core dimension of TL, can be expressed by youth leaders to facilitate social change in peer-based, adult-supervised contexts. We focus specifically on this dimension because, in peer-based, adult-supervised settings where power is less stratified (Alegbeleye & Kaufman, 2022), youth's ability to inspire and motivate their peers becomes crucial for driving social change.

Research suggests inspirational motivation is particularly salient for youth-driven social change. Notably, youth's ability to "connect the dots between [social] issues and constituencies," document social issues and organize campaigns targeted at addressing these issues has made them increasingly inspirational to both their peers and adult leaders (Coalition & Zimmerman, 2007, p. 130). Moreover, Popielarz and Solomon (2024) argued that through involvement in grassroots development and activism, youth have served as inspiration and attracted collaboration from peers and adults, bridging the gap in intergenerational leadership. Similarly, Ponton and Raimo (2024), in their positive discourse analysis, justified how inspirational motivation through visioning and persuasive communication can lead to social change and ultimately influence others to take action. In support, other studies have highlighted the benefits of cultivating inspirational leadership qualities among youth. Buheji

(2017) asserted that when young people are trained to lead with inspiration, they develop the capacity to engage more effectively with others, increase their productivity, and demonstrate a greater openness to new ideas. Moreover, Aloysius (2018) emphasized that inspirational motivation can manifest in youth through their desire to drive change, envision a better future, and remain committed to achieving defined goals. Whitehead (2009) found that successful young athletes often develop the inspiration to lead their peers, contribute to positive social outcomes, and confront opposition. Furthermore, Yeager and Callahan (2016) found that effective organizational leaders often embrace the inspiration to lead early in life. Various youth leadership models have advocated for the development of the inspirational capacity of youth to implement social change and work with others in achieving worthwhile goals. For instance, the social change model (SCM) developed by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI, 1996) underscores a developmental leadership process that gradually equips youth to become citizen leaders, beginning with inspiring themselves and extending to inspiring others. Likewise, Wang and Wang's (2009) conceptual model for youth leadership development highlights the empowerment of youth to be inspirational as a critical component of effective team leadership.

In the process of leading social change, other components of transformational leadership, such as idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, tend to develop from inspirational motivation. Based on research from Buheji (2017), Jung, Petkanic, Nan, and Kim (2020) and Sabherwal et al. (2021), inspirational motivation among youth begins with effective socialization, goal development, change-making involvement, and reflective exercises. In addition, Bonau (2017) asserted that inspirational leadership involves youth motivating others toward a common purpose and performing beyond expectations. Over time, these relationships tend to become more enduring and can cascade into the expression of other components of transformational leadership (Olesen et al., 2016; Ryder, 2015). Notably, at the fundamental level, youth can express inspirational motivation by developing a shared vision and communicating the vision persuasively to motivate their peers and drive social change. Thus, this model conceptualizes inspirational motivation in peer-based, adult-supervised youth contexts as comprising two core behaviors: vision development and persuasive communication (Figure 1).

Leading and following among youth. While research on leader-follower dynamics among youth is limited, a few studies show that youth develop their identity and self-esteem through strong group identification and engagement. Most notably, they thrive in groups where they feel valued and their voices are heard (Black, 2026). In youth-led groups with minimal adult involvement, members collectively determine who leads and follows. Although the selected

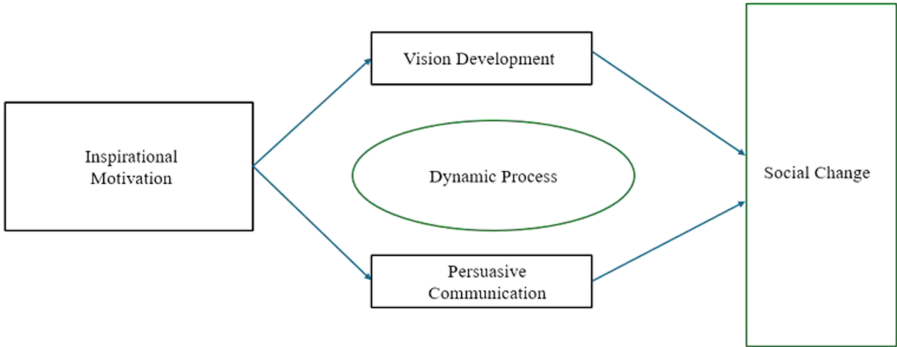


Figure 1. Conceptual model of inspirational motivation as a vehicle for social change. *Note.* The model illustrates how youth inspirational leaders engage in vision development and persuasive communication to drive social change. This model has not yet been applied or tested and thus remains theoretical

leader may have a formalized status, the collective group retains the power to revoke or change that status if dissatisfied (Zhou, Chen, Li, Liu, & Cui, 2024). Similarly, the group members (followers) may exhibit resistance behaviors, particularly when leaders make decisions or take actions that conflict with shared group values (Bell & Baron, 2015; Sumter, Bokhorst, Steinberg, & Westenberg, 2009). Conversely, youth groups operating under adult supervision tend to have more formalized rules and structures. In these contexts, adults intentionally create opportunities for youth to experience both leadership and followership roles, often by delegating guided authority to one or a few individuals while rotating opportunities over time (e.g. Gould & Voelker, 2010; Oyedare, Kaufman, & Council, 2025). However, in organizations such as 4-H, Lewis *et al.* (2022) found that youth often perceive leadership opportunities as unevenly distributed, with adults tending to entrust familiar participants with responsibilities more readily than unfamiliar ones.

Additionally, Young, Levitt, Kodeeswaran, and Markoulakis (2023) highlight a tension between youths' desire for autonomy and adults' responsibility to provide structured guidance. Drawing on DeRue and Ashford's (2010) leadership identity construction model, youth transformational leaders may deliberately claim leadership influence, in which case peers must reciprocate by either granting or denying that claim. The reciprocal process of claiming and granting leadership underscores the importance of developing youths' inspirational leadership skills. In particular, the ability to engage in vision development and persuasive communication becomes especially salient in youths' emergence as transformational leaders, as they must motivate others in ways that foster a willingness to be led and to perform beyond expectations. The prioritization of group interests forms the foundation of transformational leadership and is evidential to leadership identity development among youth, which Komives, Longerbeam, Owen, Mainella, and Osteen (2006) describe as a movement away from hierarchical leadership perspectives toward an interdependent and relational process that is "purposeful, process-oriented, inclusive, empowering, and ethical" (pp. 412–413).

Vision development

One of the distinguishing characteristics of transformational leaders is their ability to create a vision (Bottomley, Burgess, & Fox, 2014; Kouzes & Posner, 2023). This emerges through a relational process in which leaders build relationships, identify shared motivations, and define higher-order goals. In youth contexts, vision development includes goal setting, purpose definition, and collective visioning to guide action, from local projects to broader social change. Vision development among youth involves cultivating trust, understanding peer needs, and fostering connectedness and a sense of mattering (Lord, Epitropaki, Foti, & Hansbrough, 2020; Strobel, Osberg, & McLaughlin, 2006; Toseef *et al.*, 2022). This process is often driven by a desire to experience and contribute value (Prilleltensky, 2019).

Research suggests that youth engaged in community initiatives are motivated by shared goals that also inspire peer participation (Al Naqbi & Awashreh, 2024). Youth also benefit from flexible, imaginative thinking that supports goal setting and anticipation of consequences (Galotti *et al.*, 2009). This is reflected in their ability to plan and implement community-based projects (Burke *et al.*, 2022). Although youth often lack formal authority, they can collaboratively develop compelling, shared visions (Aguas, Zapata, & Arellano, 2017; Lehmann-Willenbrock, Meinecke, Rowold, & Kauffeld, 2015).

When youth collectively identify challenges and develop strategies, they can also attract adult collaboration and resources (Collura, Raffle, Collins, & Kennedy, 2019). For instance, youth-defined goals in community food initiatives have prompted adult partnerships to support implementation (Peterson, Baker, Leatherman, Newman, & Miske, 2012). Other studies similarly show that youth-defined goals can prompt adult collaboration (Agostini *et al.*, 2026; Hennes *et al.*, 2013). Research also suggests that vision development varies across developmental stages (Malin *et al.*, 2014; Burrow, Ratner, Porcelli, & Sumner, 2022). Early

adolescents are often motivated by empathy, whereas older youth become more role- and responsibility-driven in developing vision (Malin *et al.*, 2014).

At larger scales, youth visioning often centers on ambitious social change goals. For example, the founders of Bye Bye Plastic Bags developed a vision to eliminate plastic waste, leading to global recognition (Rubenstein, Katherine Johnson, Southworth, & Ramirez, 2024). Similarly, eight-year-old Ami George had a goal “to convince the UK Government to provide free menstrual products in schools” (Smallman, 2019, p. 1774), and six-year-old *Xiuhtezcatl Martinez* (2017) envisioned breaking down barriers to environmental actions. These examples illustrate that vision development is a central pathway through which youth facilitate social change.

Thus, we propose that youth leaders’ inspirational motivation fosters shared vision development for facilitating social change in peer-based, adult-supervised youth settings (Proposition 1).

Persuasive communication

Social psychology research suggests that persuasive communication fosters social identity (Haslam *et al.*, 2023; Seyranian, 2014). Language and word choice can mobilize groups toward shared goals, reinforcing social identity (Haslam *et al.*, 2023). Over time, groups develop shared patterns of perception and judgment (Postmes, 2014). This process is particularly salient among youth. Through repeated interaction, youth groups develop shared identities and pursue collective goals (Tarrant *et al.*, 2001). Identity formation is especially strong during adolescence (Tanti, Stukas, Halloran, & Foddy, 2011). Youth identity and self-worth are continually shaped through group affiliation and peer interaction (Albarello, Crocetti, & Rubini, 2018; Prilleltensky, 2019).

Persuasive communication is both a core attribute of transformational leadership and a key mechanism for inspiring others toward shared goals (Bass & Avolio, 1995; Lerner *et al.*, 2009). Transformational leaders communicate compelling visions that motivate others to exceed expectations (Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson, 2003). Communication with both peers and adults is central to inspiring social action (Holmberg & Alvinus, 2020; Neas, Ward, & Bowman, 2022). This communication often involves framing social issues and solutions in ways that mobilize collective action (Han & Ahn, 2020).

In increasingly connected environments, youth leverage digital tools to communicate persuasively, enabling direct, interactive engagement that increases awareness and participation (Cortés-Ramos, Torrecilla García, Landa-Blanco, Poleo Gutiérrez, & Castilla Mesa, 2021; Zarouali, Poels, Walrave, & Ponnet, 2018). Youth leaders often combine verbal and nonverbal strategies to inspire peers (Ponton & Raimo, 2024). Youth activists’ communication strategies are shaped by power dynamics and participation in online communities where they share experiences and coordinate action (Liou & Literat, 2020). Youth also engage in structured communication practices, such as collective messaging and advocacy writing, to advance social causes (Collin, 2014).

Given that the success of transformational leaders is largely dependent on their ability to persuasively communicate (Jensen, Moynihan, & Salomonsen, 2018), youth development organizations are increasingly incorporating communication skills into their curricula (Radhakrishna & Doamekpor, 2009; Smith *et al.*, 2024). Youth are also being trained in storytelling approaches to drive change within their communities (Gonzalez, Kokozos, Nyota, & Byrd, 2023). Notably, persuasive communication among youth often differs from that of adults. While adult leaders tend to rely on formal language and institutional platforms, youth are more likely to use informal, relatable language and leverage digital and social media to inspire their peers (James, 2022). Thus, we propose that youth leaders’ inspirational motivation fosters persuasive communication for facilitating social change in peer-based, adult-supervised youth settings (Proposition 2).

Social change

Research suggests that youth who develop shared visions and communicate persuasively are more likely to generate social impact (Ho, Clarke, & Dougherty, 2015; Konorti & Eng, 2008). Bennis and Nanus (2007) refer to these youth as change agents and social architects, with the potential to impact multiple contexts (DeGennaro, 2019; Ledwith & Springett, 2022). At a foundational level, youth can participate in social change by championing and actively engaging with their communities through volunteerism, advocacy, civic engagement, and political formation (Morsillo & Prilleltensky, 2007).

Our model positions social change as the outcome of interactions among inspirational motivation, vision development, and persuasive communication. For example, Malala Yousafzai (2019) developed a vision for girls' education and communicated it through blogging, advocacy, and public engagement, ultimately mobilizing global support for educational equity (The Nobel Prize, 2014). Similarly, Greta Thunberg has mobilized global climate action by articulating a clear vision and leveraging persuasive communication across digital and institutional platforms (Sabherwal *et al.*, 2021; Thunberg, 2023; United Nations, 2019). Nässén and Rambaree (2021) referred to her as a young transformational leader who embodies a great level of moral authority.

Although many young people have served as change agents, the experiences of Malala Yousafzai and Greta Thunberg stand out, as they have achieved sustained recognition among both scholars and practitioners in youth development and related fields. In the context of leading social change, awareness of social issues is a key precursor to being a young inspirational leader (Puxley & Chapin, 2021; Redmond & Dolan, 2014). Such awareness increases youths' capacity to critically evaluate solutions and navigate leadership complexities (Buzinde, Foroughi, & Godwyll, 2019; Ricketts & Rudd, 2002). Adult mentorship can further support this process through knowledge transfer and guided reflection (McNae, 2018).

Consequently, when youth are motivated to solve social problems, they exhibit a willingness to embark on social change actions with little or no supervision (Aloysius, 2018; Bates *et al.*, 2020). Sherif (2019) explains this motivation to mean internal or external stimuli such as curiosity, emotional fulfillment and recognition, while Demir, Özen, Doğan, Bilyk, and Tyrell (2011) posits that the motivation may be the desire for a sense of perceived mattering to friends and close associations. However, youth may develop the motivation to solve societal problems through genuine care and compassion for humanity. Consistent with Lerner *et al.*'s (2009) 5Cs of positive youth development, thriving youth are motivated by their sense of empathy or sympathy for people affected by social problems. Similarly, Kowasch *et al.*'s (2021) study found that emotions and feelings of solidarity and collective aims were common motivations for youth to embark on climate change actions. Importantly, drawing from the social learning theory, youth can develop the motivation to solve problems by understudying an adult leader and reproducing their observed behaviors over time (Nabavi, 2012; Rumjaun & Narod, 2025).

Agenda for future research

This paper has presented a conceptual model of inspirational motivation among youth within peer-based, adult-supervised contexts, in relation to social change. The model proposes that youth leaders' inspirational motivation fosters shared vision development and persuasive communication for facilitating social change in peer-based, adult-supervised youth settings. We outline two pathways for future research: theoretical testing and morality and transformational leadership.

Theoretical testing

The conceptual model proposed in this paper provides numerous opportunities for empirical testing. While past research has examined how adults practice transformational leadership

with youth (Perreault *et al.*, 2015; Turnnidge & Côté, 2018), there are limited studies accounting for peer transformational leadership among youth. Within the broader leadership literature, this framework represents an initial step toward developing a youth-focused model that draws on one of the core dimensions of the transformational leadership model—Inspirational Motivation. Therefore, we urge leadership educators and scholars to explore the applicability of the other dimensions of transformational leadership in youth contexts. The following recommendations are proposed for scholars seeking to advance this model through theory testing.

First, future quantitative studies can test the relationship between inspirational motivation (predictor), vision development and persuasive communication (mediators), and social change (outcome). These studies may examine whether youth inspirational motivation predicts vision development and persuasive communication, and whether these in turn predict participation in social change. Qualitatively, researchers can interview youth inspirational leaders or individuals who have worked with them to examine how they describe their leadership style and how they develop shared visions and communicate persuasively. In addition, discourse analysis of content such as speeches, social media posts, and meeting transcripts can be used to identify persuasive communication tactics, thereby providing a rich description of persuasive communication in the context of inspirational motivation among youth.

Second, given that social issues are highly contextual and may vary across environments and societies, future research may explore how environmental and social factors may hinder or promote youth's ability to exhibit the inspirational motivation attributes outlined in the model. Conducting a person-environment fit study may reveal the degree of compatibility between successful youth inspirational leaders and their environment, and how this compatibility leads to interactions that inspire social change (VanVianen, 2018). Exploring this line of research may also reveal processes for adaptation, congruence, and behavioral adjustments youth must go through for social change to occur.

Lastly, given the early stage of theorizing in this area, there is substantial opportunity for youth development practitioners and leadership educators to employ diverse methodological approaches to evaluate the model's components. Experimental designs may be used to examine how youth enact inspirational motivation and how peers respond under varying contexts and scenarios. Moreover, pre- and post-program surveys can be developed to assess the impact of vision development and persuasive communication on the intention to engage in social change. These approaches can strengthen our understanding of how youth engage with these attributes and clarify the model's applicability in fostering social change.

Morality and transformational leadership

A fundamental premise of transformational leadership is its focus on high standards of ethics and moral conduct in leader-follower relationships (Bass, 1999; Burns, 1978; Sendjaya, 2005). Specifically, Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) argued that true transformational leadership is characterized by the moral character of leaders, concerns for others, ethical values embedded in the leader's vision and communication, and the morality of the processes through which leaders and followers collectively pursue social goals. Similarly, Bass (1999), while emphasizing moral education and development, asserted that within the leader-follower relationship, leaders have a moral obligation to protect their subordinates, who in turn are expected to reciprocate with loyalty and commitment. Moreover, Stewart (2006, p. 9), in a review of Burns' (1978) work, observed that "the result of this [transformational] leadership is a mutual relationship that converts followers to leaders and leaders into moral agents."

While some scholars (Khoo & Burch, 2008; Price, 2003; Tourish, 2013) have critiqued the moral dimensions of transformational leadership models, particularly the potential for leader reverence to be abused, most of the existing research in this domain has focused on adult populations, with limited attention to how morality manifests among youth. Although there are numerous examples, as highlighted in previous sections, of young transformational leaders who

have demonstrated advocacy for social justice and upholding of moral standards, there remains a need for research examining the interplay between components of our model (inspirational motivation, vision development, persuasive communication) and morality. For instance, studies exploring the relationship between youths' exercise of inspirational motivation and their propensity to engage in unethical behaviors would be particularly valuable. Engaging in this kind of research may enhance understanding of Inspirational Motivation, a key dimension of transformational leadership, among youth. Moreover, greater insight into when and why attributes such as vision development and persuasive communication may be misused would better inform leadership educators and youth development practitioners in designing effective transformational leadership development curricula and initiatives.

What this means for leadership education and why it matters

This conceptual model has important implications for leadership education and development in that the proposed model can be used by leadership educators to teach youth inspirational motivation, a core dimension of transformational leadership, as a concept to pre-college and college-level students. Prior studies (Alegbeleye & Kaufman, 2022; Perreault *et al.*, 2015) highlight the need for transformational leadership models that emphasize youth-to-youth relationships, which the proposed model addresses in part. Moreover, unlike adult-centric models that include complex elements that may not align with undergraduate students' experiences (Aloysius, 2018), the proposed model presents simplified, relatable concepts (such as inspirational motivation, vision development, and persuasive communication) tailored for high school students and undergraduates. Leadership educators can reinforce these concepts through case scenarios drawn from students' own experiences and from youth transformational leaders, such as Greta Thunberg and Malala Yousafzai (Ponton & Raimo, 2024; The Nobel Prize, 2014). Practically, through service-learning opportunities and community-project assignments, leadership educators can intentionally develop their youths' competencies across our inspirational motivation components. These experiences, which foster awareness of social issues, collaboration and partnership building, and motivation to address those issues (Godley, 2018; Hood & McNeil, 2005; Selen & Devayani, 2010), will provide youth with practical skills to be inspirational, develop a vision, and communicate persuasively.

Conclusion

Youth reflect a dynamic category and an instrumental force for driving transformative social change (Lalitha, 2023). As a result of globalization and the proliferation of social issues, more youth are channeling their energies and enthusiasm toward a social cause (Woodman, 2020). Consequently, this has led to an increase in the attention given to youth's transformational leadership development, with for-profit and nonprofit organizations beginning to maximize avenues for developing transformational leadership behaviors among youth (United Nations, 2022).

In response, this paper presents a conceptual model of inspirational motivation – a core component of transformational leadership – as a tool for social change. The model proposes that inspirational motivation fosters shared vision development and persuasive communication for facilitating social change in peer-based, adult-supervised youth settings. The model provides a foundation for future research in this area and offers practical guidance for leadership educators and youth development practitioners seeking to develop youth transformational leaders.

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